

Update on Compulsory Attendance Age (CAA) Research

**Presentation to Governor's P20 Council
Data, Assessment & Graduation Compact Committee**

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Summary of Findings

- States that have a compulsory attendance age of 18 in place and have been reporting graduation rates since 2003 or earlier have higher graduation rates overall than states that do not.
- The median graduation rates reported for states with Age 18 compulsory attendance as well as for states with Age 16 compulsory attendance are both higher than Arizona's most recently reported graduation rate.



Age Distribution of States

- Prior to 2000, 10 states had an upper compulsory attendance age of 18
- Four more states have extended compulsory education to age 18 since 2000
- As of Sept 2006, 14 states have a CAA of 18, 10 states have a CAA of 17, and 26 states have a CAA of 16

Age Distribution of States



Age 18	Age 17	Age 16	
California	Arkansas	Alabama	Missouri
Connecticut	Colorado	Alaska	Montana
Hawaii	Illinois	Arizona	New Hampshire
Kansas	Maine	Delaware	New Jersey
Louisiana	Mississippi	Florida	New York
Nebraska	Nevada	Georgia	North Carolina
Ohio	New Mexico	Idaho	North Dakota
Oklahoma	Pennsylvania	Indiana	Rhode Island
Oregon	South Carolina	Iowa	South Dakota
Texas	Tennessee	Kentucky	Vermont
Utah		Maryland	West Virginia
Virginia		Massachusetts	Wyoming
Washington		Michigan	
Wisconsin		Minnesota	

Correlation Between CAA and Graduation Rate



- Those states with Age 18 CAA and reporting graduation rates in 2003 or earlier report a median graduation rate of **86%** for the years 2000-2005
- Those states with Age 17 CAA and reporting graduation rates in 2005 or earlier report a median graduation rate of **81.3%** for the years 2000-2005
- Those states with Age 16 CAA and reporting graduation rates in 2005 or earlier report a median graduation rate of **81%** for 2000-2005
- Arizona's median graduation rate for the years 2000 – 2005: **72.7%**
- Arizona's most recently reported graduation rate for 2005: **76.8%**

Enforcement



- Violation of compulsory attendance laws results in misdemeanor criminal charges in most states
- Penalties range from fines of \$25 per occurrence to \$1150 for repeat offenders and from 5 days to one year of imprisonment
- Several states also require community service, counseling, tutoring, and/or parenting classes for truants and their parents/guardians
- Three states, Arkansas, Massachusetts and Texas, require compliance with attendance laws for driver's licenses and/or learner's permits

Arguments in Favor of Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



Right now, we are telling students it is important to finish high school yet Arizona law also tells them they are allowed to drop out of school at age 16. Raising the compulsory attendance age to 18 will send a more consistent message to students.

Arguments in Favor of Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



The compulsory attendance age in other states is correlated with graduation rates. A higher compulsory attendance age is correlated with higher high school graduation rates and lower compulsory attendance ages are correlated with lower high school graduation rates.

Common Arguments Against Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



Older children who do not want to be in school can cause classroom disruptions or violence, making learning harder for students who truly want to learn.

Arizona schools have policies in effect to deal with students who are disruptive in class. Alternative programs and charter schools are available to those students who do not “fit” in the traditional classroom setting. Raising the compulsory age of attendance sends the message that we are not giving up on those students who might not “fit” traditional schools.

Common Arguments Against Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



Some students are not academically inclined and might benefit more from gaining work experience rather than being forced to sit in a classroom. Raising the compulsory attendance age removes parents' freedom to decide if their 16-year old is ready for the workforce.

In today's knowledge-based economy, employers and technical training programs alike are looking for the same skills necessary for traditional post-secondary education.

Common Arguments Against Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



Raising the compulsory attendance age will lead to an inevitable tax increase to pay for more classroom space and teachers to accommodate the additional students required to attend public schools. It's a waste of taxpayer money.

Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated, to rely on public services, to live in poverty, etc. They pay fewer taxes and use more resources, which is ultimately a bigger drain on taxpayer money than it would cost to educate them. The average high school dropout costs society from \$243,000 - \$388,000 over his lifetime in public services, assistance, programs, etc.

Common Arguments Against Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



We need to focus on better strategies to keep students in school rather than simply raising the compulsory attendance age.

Yes, we do need more strategies to help students stay in school, but this is not an either/or proposition. As part of a package of changes intended to encourage students to stay in school, raising the compulsory attendance simply makes it more difficult for students to give up on getting an education.

Common Arguments Against Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



Raising the compulsory attendance age will not reduce the dropout rate.

Raising the compulsory attendance age sends the message that we believe all students can and should get an education and graduate prepared to go on to contribute to the workforce or pursue technical training or post-secondary education. A student who has dropped out of school is much harder to re-engage in his own education. A student in the classroom may hear the message that someone believes he can learn and make a difference in his own life.

Common Arguments Against Raising Compulsory Attendance Age



Raising the compulsory attendance age will actually increase the dropout rate instead of improving it.

In Arizona, a student is considered a dropout if they are enrolled in school at any time during the year and leave without transferring schools, graduating or dying. A student who leaves school at age 16 is still considered a dropout even if he is legally allowed to do so. Raising the compulsory attendance age will not increase the dropout rate, but will make it harder for students to choose to leave school at an early age.

Questions and Discussion?



Thank You

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