APA Resolution on School Dropout Prevention

Whereas the education of this country's children and youth is a major public policy issue currently embodied in The National Education Goals (National Education Goals Panel, 1993);

Whereas education is a key factor in the continued economic development of this country and its ability to enhance the quality of life for its citizens as well as compete within global world markets;

Whereas the dropout rate has major implications on the development of a productive labor force currently and in the future (Perez & Salazar, 1993);

Whereas education remains a major component in empowering people and increasing the economic, social, and personal well-being of all citizens in a pluralistic society;

Whereas people of color are disproportionately represented in this country's dropout casualty rates, where 15.5 percent of African American males and 38.4 percent of Hispanic males dropout, in comparison to a white male dropout rate of 13.3 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990);

Whereas female dropout rates for women of color are also disproportionate, with 17.1 percent of African American females, and 29.6 percent of Hispanic females dropping out in comparison to a White female dropout rate of 11.1 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990);

Whereas early in the 21st century, one third of the population of the United States will be an ethnic minority group member (Sue, 1991), who typically suffer from staggering dropout rates that in some cities approach the 50 percent mark of its students (Chapa & Valencia, 1993);

Whereas a high dropout rate diminishes the pool of qualified people from diverse backgrounds who will enter the professional and political ranks, thereby making their representation among many of the policy and decision making agencies in this country limited;

Whereas certain populations of students including, but not limited to gay and lesbian youth (Remafedi, 1987), children and youth with disabilities (Wagner, Blackorly, & Hebbela, 1993), and children and youth from diverse economic backgrounds are also at risk of dropping out;

Whereas any dropout prevention policy formulation also needs to incorporate research on gender differences, teenage pregnancy, and the role of the family and community in rate differences, causes, and prevention strategies;

Whereas there is a lack of a well developed education policy dealing with dropout rates and prevention as they relate to specific at-risk groups and the need for program specificity (e.g., Chapa & Valencia, 1993);

Whereas there is a lack of coordination between researchers on child and adolescent development and educational policy makers (Wilcox & Vincent, 1987);

Therefore, be it resolved, That the American Psychological Association (APA) supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of school dropout prevention strategies. APA should work to increase the participation of psychology and psychologists in assisting in national, state, and local efforts to prevent school dropout. APA's efforts would involve consulting with leading experts and active inter-directorate collaboration within APA and with other major professional organizations involved with psychological aspects of children's schooling and development. The active involvement of parents and students as client/consumers in this process must also be a major component of any initiative undertaken by APA (DeLeon,1997).

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