

Thinking about dropping out?

Here are Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Should I drop out of school?

A. There is no set answer to this question. For some, dropping out may be the only feasible solution to their particular situation. However, every alternative solution should be considered before actually dropping out. Check with your school counselor and see if there is additional district or local resources for someone in your situation. Check to see if there is a nearby diploma completion program or community learning center that offers options for dropouts to complete their high school education. Many Kansas school districts are in partnerships with area education service centers to provide these programs.

Q. How old does a student have to be in order to legally drop out of school?

A. It is illegal for a student to drop out before reaching the minimum age of 16 in Kansas. The student, parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must attend an exit counseling meeting with the local school district administration.

Q. I really want to drop out of high school because: I want a new car, I'm pregnant, I need to work and help support my family, I'm not learning anything in school anyway, I'm way behind in some of my classes and will fail them anyway, or fill in the blank with your own situation.

A. There are many options that you can explore through your local high school and other resources. Some would include vocational training programs, internships or work study programs. Some schools offer after school tutoring or help sessions if you are having problems in a class or two. Talk to your teachers and see if you can do some additional work to improve your grade. Many districts offer summer school or other forms on credit recovery that can help get you back on schedule to graduate with our class. Trying to stick it out to earn that high school diploma in a couple of years will probably be the best investment you will ever make in yourself and your future.

Q. What type of job can I realistically hope to get as a high school dropout?

A. Unfortunately in the current economic climate with many unemployed adults, finding a good job as a teenager has become very difficult. Laid off workers are now taking those jobs to feed their families. The few remaining jobs are minimum wage positions with little potential for career growth. As a dropout the chances of climbing the corporate ladder in today's world are very slim.

Q. OK, if I stay in school, how am I going to get back on track to graduate?

A. Check with your school counselor to see what options they offer for making up those missing credits. Summer school through the local district might be an option. If the district participates in a diploma completion program or a local community learning center you can make up credits by attending there in the evening during the school year or during their summer school program. Your local counselor should be able to give you what options are available in your area.

Q. Can I just take my GED and be done with it?

A. The GED is a multi-part examination that covers the main core content areas of study: reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies. If a student passes all the parts of the GED at the same time, they are awarded a Kansas diploma from the Kansas Board of Regents. Having a GED is certainly better than not having it but an actual high school diploma is generally regarded as better than the GED. This is true for employers and the military. Given a choice, they prefer a high school diploma. Visit the following web site to learn more about the GED in Kansas: www.kansasregents.org/adult_ed/ged.html.

Q. So what are the differences between a GED and a high school diploma?

A. Check out the power point presentation titled “Diploma versus GED” for more information about both.

Q. Is it possible to get my high school diploma if I’ve already dropped out?

A. Absolutely! It is very possible. Kansas is a state that believes in education for all of its residents and is willing to pay to provide that opportunity without regard to age. Many of the education service centers in Kansas offer such programs for adults. They are sometimes called community learning centers or diploma completion programs or some other name. Their common goal is to provide a welcoming environment for any adult to complete their high school graduation requirements and then be awarded their high school diploma. These centers have had graduates from 19 to 74 years of age. They have had students enroll with no credits or only lacking one half credit toward graduation. There is no “average” diploma completion program student! The other great news about these programs is that they cost \$20 per year or less to participate. The programs are self-paced and are usually open about 12 hours per day.

Q. How do I find one of these center or programs in my area?

A. If you are in south central Kansas or in the Topeka/Lawrence area go to www.getmydiploma.org to find a diploma completion program. If you are in the Salina area or north central Kansas go to www.smokyhill.org and check out their community learning centers. If you are in the Hutchinson or Emporia areas go to www.essdack.org. In the southwest part of Kansas go to www.swprsc.org and in the southeast part of Kansas go to www.greenbush.org. Most of these regional service centers have many programs and you should be able to find a program near you.