

## **The Denver Post - editorial**

### **Dropout studies food for thought**

**Research supports what teachers already know: Without proper intervention, students are much more likely to leave school early.**

[http://www.denverpost.com/lacrosse/ci\\_11114706](http://www.denverpost.com/lacrosse/ci_11114706)

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Just one "F" is all it takes to dramatically increase the chances that a middle-schooler or a freshman will never finish high school.

That's one of the powerful findings emerging from new Colorado-specific research being conducted in some of the more challenged school districts in the state.

The facts are interesting, but the real value from the data will be in how the state and districts use it.

We hope they'll harness the numbers to create systemic responses that will address the state's troubling dropout problem. As it stands, 30 percent of Colorado students leave high school without a diploma.

The studies are being conducted by Johns Hopkins University researchers, who are looking at the records of those who left school in districts in Aurora, Denver, Jefferson County, Pueblo and Adams County. They're checking grades, attendance and behavior, looking for trends.

And while some of the findings may not come as a surprise to those who are career educators, putting statistical heft behind their observations gives districts specific information about when to intervene and with whom.

The studies are being funded by private education reform advocates, including the Colorado Children's Campaign and the Donnell-Kay Foundation.

Alex Medler, a policy adviser at the Colorado Children's Campaign, said researchers are sharing the data with districts and the hope is the districts will use it to make targeted changes once the studies are complete and the data is digested.

Perhaps districts might decide to call parents in for a conference after a second unexcused absence, as opposed to an eighth unexcused absence, especially if a child has other markers that put him or her at higher risk for dropping out.

The information also might be the boost needed for the creation of more alternative school choices where dropouts can go to get their diplomas.

Defining problems is the first step toward solving them.

Practical solutions ultimately need to be the upshot of this intriguing research.

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