Letter to the Editor

By Dr. Sandy Addis, Executive Director, National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

**Johnny Is Absent Today**

Johnny is absent today—again. He was absent yesterday and may be tomorrow as well. Johnny has begun the slow process of disengagement that can and often does contribute to dropping out of high school.

Unfortunately, Johnny’s not alone in his absences—or his disengagement from school. Juan, Susie, Omar, Pierre and many other students across the nation share his story. The unfortunate fact is that, once begun and without intervention, a student’s disengagement all too often culminates in that student dropping out of school. And while there are other equally important indicators, excessive school absence is a critical and obvious indicator of disengagement.

The good news is that, addressed early and systemically, Johnny’s outcome—and the outcomes of other students like him—to stay in school or not can be impacted. There’s more good news. When Johnny graduates from high school, he can expect to earn on average $8,000 more per year [(Alliance for Excellent Education, 2015a),](http://all4ed.org/publications/reports-fact-sheets/) contributing not only to Johnny’s economic stability, but also our nation’s. Johnny can also expect a longer lifespan (up to 9 years; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2015a), but the good news does not stop there. Johnny, like all high school graduates, can expect an overall better quality of life, making his graduation have lifelong benefits.

There are no simple answers or magic tricks for ensuring Johnny will stay in school. However, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, working with practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and researchers, has developed *15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention* to address not only the factors that affect Johnny’s graduating from high school, but also those that impact the nation’s dropout crisis as well. These *15 Effective Strategies* are supported by a wealth of tools, resources, and trainings offered by the Center. In 2015, a school system that utilized the *15 Effective Strategies* to guide dropout prevention efforts reported a graduation rate that improved from 56% to 94% over a ten-year period.

The [Fifteen Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention](http://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/) developed by the National Dropout Prevention Center provide a research-based framework that when applied systemically by practitioners, schools, or districts according to the unique needs of each becomes an effective tool for reducing the dropout rate. As a framework, the strategies encourage flexibility and applicability beyond formulas and prescriptive methodology. They offer insights based on 30 years of research and best practices. When the strategies are utilized together, they increase in effectiveness since the strategies themselves model a systemic approach to addressing school dropout. Positive outcomes and results are most likely when school districts or other agencies develop program improvement plans that encompass most or all of the strategies.

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network’s goal is a zero dropout rate, and we will continue to address the challenge of increasing the high school on-time graduation rate. Just as there are no tricks of the trade to address school dropout, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Students report a variety of reasons for dropping out of school; therefore, the solutions are multidimensional as well. As a nation, our obligation—our moral imperative—is to employ every strategy available to ensure Johnny, Juan, Susie, Omar and every other student earns a high school diploma.

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In October, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network celebrates 30 years as the nation’s oldest and most utilized resource for dropout prevention research, best practices, and innovation.

**About the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N)**

Established in 1986 with a mission to reduce dropout rates, the NDPC/N shares solutions for student success and dropout prevention through active research and evaluation projects, publications, and a variety of professional development activities and conferences. The organization’s website—[www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/)—is the nation’s leading resource in providing effective, research-based solutions to engaging students and reducing dropout. The NDPC/N is housed in the College of Education at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina.

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