

Merrimack College

Merrimack ScholarWorks

Criminology Student Work

Criminology

Spring 2021

Pride Star

Katelyn Fisher

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.merrimack.edu/crm_studentpub

 Part of the [Secondary Education Commons](#)

Pride Star

Katelyn Fisher

Master of Science in Criminology & Criminal Justice

Merrimack College

May 2021

Pride Star

The start of a child's educational career begins with kindergarten at the age of five or six. This educational path continues on until high school, and if desired college. A problem some children are faced with along their journey is dropping out of high school. Studies indicate that on average approximately every nine seconds, an individual drops out of high school (Hickman, 2008). What has been believed by many is that dropping out of high school leads to criminal and delinquent behaviors. The relationship between delinquency and dropout rates is well-researched and much of the research conducted has been able to pinpoint some of the most common reasonings behind why an individual drops out.

Understanding the correlation between high school dropouts and delinquent behavior is essential for prevention and treatment programs. Through the extensive exploration of previous literature, the most efficient way to assess the risks high school dropouts are at risk for is with the comparison of high school graduates to high school dropouts. Much of the previous research has used the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth from 1997 as a source of methods (Jarjoura, 1993; Jarjoura, 1996; Sweeten et al., 2009). This dataset however, is more than ten years old. This increases the chances new influences or reasons for dropping out are not included in the methodology. Evaluating the relationship between high school dropouts and delinquency could determine risk factors for other potential dropouts, as well as help with prevention in the future. As society brings about new challenges to high school students daily, the inclusion of these troubles could only benefit students, as well as dropout prevention programs.

Future studies on the association between dropouts and delinquency should begin by outlining the reasoning behind why the individual dropped out of high school. This will provide

insight and predictors for an individual's later involvement in either crime or delinquency. This distinct connection was measured by Jarjoura (1993, 1996) in two studies. Jarjoura (1993, 1996) focused on the demographic variables as well the overall influence dropping out has on criminal and delinquent behaviors. His first study was conducted during 1993 using two waves from the highly used Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997). Jarjoura (1993) focused on both high school dropouts and graduates. The subsamples of high school dropouts were divided into groups based on their reasoning for leaving school (Jarjoura, 1993). Overall, findings discovered that delinquent behavior increases when previous misconducts, such as prior arrests are reported (Jarjoura, 1993). Based on the measures of the high school dropouts included in the study, dropping out was found to be a direct result of higher involvement in delinquency (Jarjoura, 1993). Comparing the delinquency rates between high school dropouts to high school graduates provides strong validity for Jarjoura's (1993) study.

Maynard, Salas-Wright, and Vaughn (2015), and Hickman, Bartholomew, Mathwig, and Heinrich (2008) compared high school graduates to high school dropouts within their studies as well. Jarjoura's (1996) study addressed the demographics and additionally certain theories to explain the dropout and delinquency relationship. The methods in this study were again the two waves selected from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (Jarjoura, 1996). In this study, the dropouts were additionally separated based on their socioeconomic status (Jarjoura, 1996). Findings indicated that high school dropouts with low economic status or living in poverty were not at greater risk for committing violent offenses (Jarjoura, 1996). Jarjoura (1996) and Sweeten (2009) both discovered that if the reasoning behind the dropout is due to personal reasons, subsequent violence or delinquency has a high chance of occurring later on in life. The work

conducted by Jarjoura (1993, 1996) has provided new insight on dropout and delinquency issues. Assessing the reasoning of why an individual has dropped out of high school can provide awareness towards his or her later delinquency or criminal actions.

The focus of dropouts is attentive to the high school age due to the compulsory school age limit (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). The compulsory school age limit as defined by NCSL (2014) is the mandatory school age that an individual can make a decision to drop out of school. The age still varies by state, however in 2013, a majority of states changed the age from sixteen to either seventeen or eighteen years of age (NCSL, 2014). The National Education for Statistics has been a commonly used measure to gauge the common dropout ages (Anderson, 2014). Increasing the minimum dropout age has been found to negatively affect juvenile arrest rates (Anderson, 2014). The dataset used by Anderson (2014) for the juvenile arrest data was the Uniform Crime Report. The downfall is that the UCR includes only crimes that were reported to and shared by police agencies. The disadvantage here is the fact that there are many crimes that juveniles may often commit that are not reported to the police. Therefore, there is no concrete research that supports a specific dropout age that can determine when high school dropouts will become involved in delinquent behaviors. Research has been able to discover a close age range, but has been limited as it is common for delinquent acts committed by youth to not be reported.

Alongside the school age, school engagement and involvement can be a determinant for subsequent school dropout as well (Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012). For example, according to the National Educational Statistics, only thirty-four percent of eighth-grade students have been proficient in the subject of math (Henry et al., 2012). Henry and colleagues (2012) used datasets

obtained from the Rochester Youth Developmental Longitudinal study beginning in 1988 along with the school disengagement warning index. The school disengagement warning index includes students' eighth and ninth grade school records, along with five risk factor indicators (Henry et al., 2012). The results of the study found that the school disengagement warning index was a strong predictor of determining a high school dropout (Henry et al., 2012). Additionally, dropping out of school is an early mediator for the relationship between school disengagement and violent crimes (Henry et al., 2012). The school disengagement warning index may be used in future research as a predictor scale for high school dropouts. Furthermore, being able to determine if a student is at risk for dropping out of high school can prevent subsequent delinquent behavior or criminal involvement.

A significant amount of research conducted has discovered the withstanding consequence for high school dropouts is to be delinquent or criminally involved. However, in the exploration of this relationship, many researchers have also discovered a strong involvement of adolescent drug use. Maynard, Salas-Wright, and Vaughn (2015) examined the correlation between substance use and high school dropouts. Maynard and colleagues used the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health public dataset, which included questions asking participants to self-report their use of certain substances and to describe the amount of daily use (Maynard et al., 2015). The substances included were cigarettes, marijuana use, alcohol intake, opiates, and methamphetamines (Maynard et al., 2015). The findings discovered that high school dropouts were more likely to report daily cigarette use and less likely to report binge drinking (Maynard et al., 2015). Additionally, Drapela (2005) used two different groups of eighth graders selected through a nationally representative panel sample. Results of this study uncovered that dropping

out of high school had no substantial impact on individuals' drug use (Drapela, 2005). Furthermore, that dropouts' drug use does not vary by time elapsed since leaving school (Drapela, 2005). It is presumed that the dataset used by Drapela (2005), similar to Maynard and colleagues (2015), only included reported drug use, meaning that many students may not be as willing to share their drug involvement or usage at their age. Previous literature often focuses on delinquency as being the downfall effect for high school dropouts, however, substance abuse may be a prominent factor as well.

Many of the extant literature focuses on the intermittent effects that high school dropouts face. Few studies tackle the research on the effects high school dropouts face later on in life. Bäckman (2017) examined specifically at the connection that dropping out of high school had on later aspects in life, such as further education and employment. The study was conducted in Sweden and the dataset contained information on all individuals at the age of sixteen between the years of 1980-1985 (Bäckman, 2017). The information included criminal convictions, incomes, school results, education levels, and demographic variables (Bäckman, 2017). The results that Bäckman (2017) found were that conviction rates were higher for high school dropouts than nondropouts in both males and females. In terms of later life effects, having a high school diploma or education strongly influenced the involvement in subsequent delinquent behavior (Bäckman, 2017). Bäckman (2017) discovered that when it comes to later delinquent effects, such as being employed or receiving an education, are two deterrent factors for crime and delinquency.

Hickman, Bartholomew, Mathwig, and Heinrich (2008) looked specifically at the pathways of both high school dropouts and graduates. These researchers examined each year of

the individual's academic career alongside confounding variables the individuals had along his or her academic pathway (Hickman et al., 2008). The study used a cohort of students who were measured and assessed from kindergarten up until high school (Hickman et al., 2008). Results showed that high school dropouts had a large difference in GPA scores along with all overall course grades (Hickman et al., 2008). Researchers also noted that these differences became evident as early as kindergarten and ninth grade (Hickman et al., 2008). Maynard, Salas-Wright, and Vaughn (2015) established that emerging adult dropouts were more at risk for criminal behavior. High school dropouts according to Maynard and colleagues were more likely to be male and minority, have a low income, and more likely to be unemployed (Maynard et al., 2015). Moreover, Sweeten, Bushway, and Paternoster (2009) found that those who dropout of high school overall are more delinquent than those who did not drop out. Jarjoura (1996) and Sweeten (2009) also discovered that with personal reasons being the motive for the dropout, the chance for subsequent violence or delinquency to occur later in life.

Students who are struggling in high school are often overlooked. This is simply not because teachers do not care, but rather that there is not enough time or that public schools have a large number of students. Schools have come a long way in providing resources to students and assisting them in any way possible. However, those who are often skipped over are those who are no longer interested in remaining in school, or struggling with a certain subject in his or her high school career. These are the students that are at risk of dropping out or do in fact drop out of high school. Many presume that students who do drop out of high school do so as a result of failing grades. However, many students have passing grades but rather lose interest in the way the material is presented or taught, or simply cannot keep up. Each student learns differently, and

what many high school teachers struggle with is giving each and every student the appropriate amount of understanding and assistance they may need. Students are encouraged to ask for help or reach out to his or her teacher when they are struggling, but some students may not be comfortable with this. As a result, they may become disengaged in the subject, discouraged, and eventually drop out. Therefore, dropout prevention programs should look to extend their missions beyond just dropout prevention by providing students with the proper attention and support they may need to continue on in his or her high school career.

Based on the previous research, there are a number of programs that have been developed in hopes of deterring children who do drop out from becoming criminally-involved. However, there has been limited research conducted on the overall effectiveness of these programs. Creating a new diversion program to deter high school dropouts from becoming involved criminally will be extremely beneficial for, not only young people, but society as well. There are limited scholarly reviewed journals focused on individual dropout diversion programs around the country. To date, there is no review board or annual review of these dropout programs. As a result, these programs are in place but there are no criteria to be met by the programs, or any improvements or additional resources for other programs to potentially use in the future. Setting a minimum requirement that each program must meet would entail reassurance for all high school dropouts.

As stated above, there has been limited program evaluations conducted on the efficacy of the current dropout programs across the country. The National Dropout Prevention Center (2021) has created a database that includes all recorded dropout prevention programs within the United States. The information on the website about these programs is not information gathered by the

Dropout Prevention Center, but readily available data pulled from each program's website. The National Dropout Prevention Centers Model Program database has a total of 273 programs overall, with 65 of them including the age groups of 9-12 and ages 18 and over (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2021). For the purposes of this paper, three different programs have been selected for program analysis. All programs are found in the southern part of the United States, which often carries the highest rate for troubled juveniles (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2021). The strengths and weaknesses of each program are discussed below.

Current Programs

The Academy of Creative Education (ACE) was developed in 1991. Since its establishment, the program has helped over 4,400 students graduate (ACE, n.d.). The academy itself is a model high school created for students who have dropped out or at risk of dropping out (ACE, n.d.). The academy is made up of both educators and community representatives who work together to provide nontraditional educational opportunities for the at-risk youth (ACE, n.d.). The academy is based out of San Antonio, Texas, and receives grants from both the Texas Education Agency and the Education Economic Policy Center (ACE, n.d.). The age group the academy assists is youths between the ages of sixteen to twenty-one years old (ACE, n.d.). The Academy of Creative Education itself is intertwined with the Academy Advisory Corporate Council (AACC). This council specifically assists the program, volunteers, and staff of the ACE. The AACC is made up of a number of different representatives including students, staff, family members, and even alumni. Both the council and the academy work together to create a positive role model and outlook for the youth in the academy (ACE, n.d.). In order to be enrolled in the ACE academy, one must receive a referral from either a counselor or administrator at his or her

current school. Those who are closest to graduating will have his/ her applications considered first (ACE, n.d.). The application if submitted by the students' previous school, his or her current grades, as well as his or her personal graduation plan will be included (ACE, n.d.). The website specifically states for current students not to unenroll from their old school until they are accepted into the ACE program (ACE, n.d.). Those who are referred to the ACE program by others will then be interviewed for placement into the academy (ACE, n.d.). Students who are enrolled in the ACE academy are on a flexible schedule tailored to his/ her needs. A student exit survey, service hours, a resume, and scholarship applications are all tasks that students complete while enrolled at the ACE academy (NDPC, 2021). The ACE program has over 250 to 500 students that they help per year, and each year a significant number of students graduate successfully from the ACE program. The Academy of Creative Education is part of the North Independent School District of San Antonio, Texas.

COPES, a nationally recognized program in Louisville, Kentucky, has a number of different programs. COPES (2021) agency is known as a national preventative agency focused on reentry and rehabilitation. COPES (2021) agency was founded in the 1970s, before the program extended and included a council for prevention and education in the early 1980s, which is entitled "Creating Lasting Family Connection" (COPES, 2021). This reentry program focuses on the family and community piece of high school dropouts. This program is not as successful as others, but provides different insight due to the approach the program has taken at tackling high school dropouts for delinquent behaviors. There are programs across the country that acknowledge the connection between high school dropouts and delinquency, but it often ends there. The CLFC takes this one step further and looks at the root of the problem and the

reasoning behind specific actions or behaviors rather than just recognizing them. A program like the CLFC, addresses the potential drug and substance problem that some high school dropouts may be at risk for (COPEES, 2021). The CLFC program focuses on the children, families, and community as a whole (COPEES, 2021). The CLFC program places emphasis on the nurturing environment and the family relationship. The main focus of the program is on the effect certain behaviors can have on later life decisions (COPEES, 2021). For example, this program addresses the impact that alcohol or substance abuse can have on both children and families and the direct effect on decisions later on in life, such as academics (COPEES, 2021). The program is tailored for youth, parents or guardians in order to work together to build a healthy and stable environment for the child (COPEES, 2021). The program seeks to build an emotional support system and prevent a negative family environment. A negative family environment along with academic struggles runs the risk of delinquent behaviors occurring as a result (COPEES, 2021). The program includes models for both children and adults to complete with the inclusion of all different management and style types (COPEES, 2021). The CLFC has created different branches to assist different populations and ethnicities as well (COPEES, 2021). CLFC is used in all 50 states in the United States and across different school districts, recreational centers, churches, juvenile justice facilities, and other social services. The CLFC is a program that is not entirely focused on education but is beneficial in regards to helping with the community and societal influences that youth and even more so high school dropouts may face.

The Sunshine Alternative Education and Prevention agency is a non-profit agency that includes a number of different programs for both teens, adults, and children (Sunshine, 2021). One of the key programs tailored to helping high school dropouts and delinquency is the program entitled “Prevention not Suspension” (Sunshine, 2021). This program is an alternative

program for high-risk youth between grades nine to twelve (Sunshine, 2021). The program provides emotional and educational support to those individuals who are at risk of being suspended. The program helps those who are at risk of being suspended from school whether it is educational related, truancy, lack of effort, or low commitment to school (Sunshine, 2021). The program includes supporting and caring adults to positively influence and help these children at risk get back on track (Sunshine, 2021). There is limited evidence on the effectiveness of the program, however. The program has not been evaluated in a number of years. The concept and mission behind the program seem ideal for the number of at-risk youths. However, with there being limited evidence for the program it is hard to conceptualize certain concepts as a result. Additionally, all of the program's funding and support comes from volunteers. Much of the support staff in programs, such as the Prevention not Suspension program, are in fact volunteers, and often have other commitments or jobs, thus preventing full commitment to the program and those involved. This program is off to a good start and with more support or evidence for the effectiveness of the program has a chance for success.

The programs described above both have their own strengths and weaknesses. However, there has been no official reviews done on any of the programs. With limited reviews done it is hard to determine their success rates. Many of the program's success rates are self-reported. Similar to self-reporting on crime, it can do more harm than good. Programs will more than likely want to post only their positive outcomes, therefore, making the program from the outside look great, but the program may not be as good as it has been presented.

The number of programs that have been developed and created over the years all have the common goal of addressing the high school dropout and delinquency connection. It seems, however, that where one program has a strength another program is lacking. Additionally, there

is no consistent or concrete evidence supporting any specific program. Many of the established programs for dropouts and delinquency cannot be replicated for a specific population or area. As well, there are many programs that either cover one small age group, education level, or all education levels. This is beneficial in the sense that it is tailored specifically to the geographic area and population, yet the downfall comes with low likelihood of replication. Through concise analysis of different programs all across the United States, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, a new program is proposed. With the knowledge, pros and cons, and information from previous dropout programs, the new program will allot for easy replication and be applicable for use to all high schools across the country. The current program will focus on high school dropouts, as they are the most vulnerable to delinquency.

Pride Star “Whatever it Takes, No Matter Where”

Mission Statement

The mission of Pride Star is to assist at risk and current high school students who have decided to no longer continue their high school education at the traditional level. Students will not be labeled by the often-negative connotation of “high school dropouts” as this can be demoralizing. The goal of the program is to encourage students to continue their high school education and divert them from later dropping out or delinquency. The program assists and encourages students to learn at their own pace and in the most beneficial way for them. The program helps students reach their full potential and makes connections throughout the community, academic, and business worlds. Pride Star primarily serves students in the city of Boston, Massachusetts and surrounding cities in Metro-Boston area. Upon completion of the program, students are predicted to present with both a strong academic and social profile. Pride Star provides students with the confidence and encouragement that is often overlooked when

working with troubled students in the traditional high school setting. Students graduate from Pride Star with, not only a high school education but also, the tools they need to succeed both academically and socially. By providing them with resources in the community and the necessities towards being successful, the hope is that students will be less likely to dropout and, therefore, engage in delinquent behavior.

Program Objectives

1. Provide students with the academic support needed to complete their high school education per the state of Massachusetts.
2. Assist students in creating community and professional relationships to be utilized upon completion of the program.
3. Deter students from becoming involved in delinquency or criminal behavior following high school and into early adulthood.
4. Provide students with necessary learning accommodations or necessities needed to complete high school.

Target Population

The target population of Pride Star are students who have dropped out of high school or are at high risk of dropping out. Students can apply themselves, or have referrals made on their behalf from either school personnel or parents/ guardians. Much of the reasoning behind why young adults become involved criminally is because they are no longer enrolled in school or have decided to drop out and had no other school alternatives. Therefore, the mission of Pride Star is to keep these students in school at all costs and to keep them on the right track and prevent criminal involvement from occurring. The program will be implemented in Suffolk County, MA. first and then expand to other counties throughout the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts. Program approval has been received from the Board of Education, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Boston Mayor Kim Janey, and other important stakeholders, such as the Department of Children and Families. They will be asked to invest early on in the programs and become supportive in upholding the mission and goals of Pride Star.

Community Partnerships

Pride Star seeks to extend community partnerships with the Boston Police Department, and all local school districts in Suffolk County. Pride Star creates and disseminates a weekly newsletter letting both community partnerships and stakeholders know what is going on and any program changes that occur. The Boston Police Department School Resource Officer will be asked to provide a virtual seminar at the beginning of every school year, and explain all resources the Boston Police Department will offer to both the students and parents of the Pride Star program. Additionally, Pride Star seeks to build open communication and open relationship with high schools in Suffolk County. Thus, the hope is that these local schools will be willing to provide the Pride Star program with a list of students at the end of each month who may be at risk of failing or dropping out of high school. School counselors in each local school should feel encouraged to provide open communication with the Pride Star program in terms of referrals for students. The intake coordinator for Pride Star, alongside many of the local school counselors, work together to create the best education-based plan for each student at Pride Star.

Staffing

In its first pilot year, Pride Star is hoping to hire a total of 30 staff members. These staff members will include social workers, school counselors, school teachers, nurses, and mental

health workers. Staff members will be both full time and part time employees of the Pride Star program.

Program Delivery

Pride Star is delivered as an online program alternative for high school students. Classes are held online, but there will be a variety of different resources, such as counselors that are in offices and available to students as needed. The program is twenty- four weeks in length in which students will complete at any starting point within the calendar school year September- June. The program runs according to the traditional school calendar year in order to be as similar to a high school setting as possible. If not possible and students start towards the end of the regularly scheduled calendar year, modules can be completed by students during both winter and summer months. Students will be encouraged to take as many classes as possible, but also do what works for them, within reason. Accommodations are provided and available to students who need them. Classes within the program include all necessary core classes needed for individuals to obtain a high school diploma in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Pride Star Curriculum

Participants in this twenty- four-week program complete a total of twelve modules within each of the five core subjects needed in order to receive a high school diploma in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). In Massachusetts, students are required to take the following competencies in order to be eligible to be considered a high school graduate: four years of English, four years of mathematics, three years of lab-based science, three years of history, two years of foreign language, and one year of an arts program (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Each student, depending on their previous high school or

education, will most likely be at different stages towards achieving their high school graduation requirements. Each Pride Star student will be required to take a pre-test upon entry and a post-test at the completion of the program. The pre-test assesses the foundational knowledge and understandings that the student already possesses. The pre-test assessment determines how many modules within each course subject the student will need to take. This will differ for every student as students will be at different stages throughout his or her high school career. The post-test assessment will not only be a measurement for the effectiveness of the program but will allow the student to see their academic growth upon completion of the Pride Star program.

Each module will be slightly different to keep the students engaged and interested. Material will be presented in a variety of ways to tailor to all learning styles. Students will be allowed to complete each module at their own pace, and each module will automatically save so the student can pick up where they left off. The number of modules that should be completed each week by the student will be discussed in an agreement created between the student and their academic advisor. Students will meet at the first of every month with their academic advisor to make sure students are held accountable and provided the opportunity to ask for help or resources. There is also the option for students to take additional modules if they feel they need more help in another subject or want to sharpen their skills and knowledge.

Modules will start off with a pre-test to assess how much the student already knows about the topic. Next, the module will have a chapter read on the topic followed by guided reading questions throughout to make sure the student understands the material. The module will then conclude with a post reading quiz or assessment, as well as practice problems (mostly for science and mathematics) for the student to practice. A video will often be included for topics, such as mathematics or science, that include formulas or a step-by-step process. All students who need

additional help with material will be encouraged to reach out to their academic advisor, or press the on-screen help button that creates a chat between the student and his or her teacher. Certain topics and modules will include a video pertaining to the subject and provide an alternative learning process for students.

The effectiveness of the online modules in the Pride Star program will be what keeps the program running smoothly and effectively every year. At the end of each module, students will be provided with a questionnaire asking their opinion on the module and asking students to rate their overall understanding of the topic. Students will be allowed to provide both negative and positive feedback. There will also be a space provided for students to express their concerns or suggestions on that specific module. The overall effectiveness of the program will be evaluated through another questionnaire that students who are graduating from the program will be asked to complete as part of an exit survey. The true test and effectiveness of the program will come from the grades that students receive in the Pride Star program. The program each year will be compared with local high school grades within Suffolk County. This will make sure that Pride Star is on the right track and obtaining the same goal that local high schools are as well. This will also ensure that Pride Star students are obtaining the same goal but still receiving the support or extra help he or she may need.

Massachusetts requires high school students in the state to complete and pass the MCAS in order to graduate. Students are required to receive a passing grade in the ELA and Mathematics part of the MCAS (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Students typically take the MCAS during the 10th grade and depending on if they pass or not, can retry and take the test in later grades (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). The MCAS is used as a Competency

Determination requirement (CD) (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021).

Pride Star will follow the guidelines of the 2022 and 2023 graduating classes in regards to the MCAS. There are different options for the ELA and Mathematics MCAS are available for the classes of 2022 and 2023 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Students at Pride Star will be provided with the choice to pick which option they want to complete per state MCAS guidelines (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Option 1 for ELA is for students to score a 472 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Option 2 for ELA is for students to score between 455 and 471, and fulfill the requirements that follow the educational proficiency plan (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Option 1 for Mathematics the score to be obtained by students must be 486 or higher (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Option 2 for Mathematics is to earn a score between 469 and 485 and again fulfill the educational proficiency plan. Pride Star students will have the option to take additional MCAS preparation classes that are not already included in the daily class materials to better prepare them. If students have already passed the MCAS at a previous high school, they will still be allowed access to the MCAS resources and additional courses provided by Pride Star.

Core Competency 1: Mathematics

In order to be considered a high school graduate in Massachusetts, students must complete a total of four years of mathematics (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Pride Star helps students achieve this through practice problems and step-by-step videos. The practice problems require students to complete the problem on their

own, but the answers will be provided in the form of multiple choice for students to select. Students will not be marked wrong for getting the wrong answer during practice, and when the right answer or wrong answer is selected, a brief blurb will appear explaining the rationale behind the answer. The assessment at the end of the module will be the one that students should try their best to get the correct answers. Students will still be given explanations for either right or wrong answers while completing the examinations within the modules. The exam will not be complete until the student themselves feels comfortable taking the exam and executing their full potential on the subject matter. Each module may be longer or shorter than others, depending on the mathematical topic.

Core Competency 2: English Language Arts (ELA)

English Language Arts includes reading, writing, speaking, listening and language standards. Each grade in Massachusetts has specific guidelines that outline all of the reading and writing standards that must be met (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework, 2017). The ELA module for Pride Star will include both reading and writing for the majority, but will differ for each grade in order to fulfil the requirements per the state of Massachusetts. Each module will be tailored directly towards the student based on their acceleration on the subject matter from their previous high school or educational experience. Many of the modules in the ELA portion of Pride Star will be short essay writing exercises, reading passages, and comprehension questions. There will also be some videos included in the ELA modules that may illustrate certain areas, such as grammar and vocabulary. The module will have a similar approach to the mathematics module where if the student selects the wrong answer, they will be able to see both the reasoning for the wrong and right answer. Activities in this module will include more writing assignments

and more time is expected to be spent on each assigned activity. Many of the assignments will give students a week at minimum to complete, as ELA portions often take longer to complete.

Core Competency 3: Science

The graduation requirements for science in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts includes a variety of different science and technology related fields. They include biology, chemistry, introductory physics, technology, and engineering. The module for the science core competency at Pride Star will include instructional videos. Those classes that require labs will often include class lectures followed by labs. This provides students with ample opportunity to apply class concepts directly to the lab work and to participate in a hands-on experience. Even though Pride Star is all online, labs will still be just as interactive and as real to in person learning as possible. Students will be able to conduct experiments and activities that will feel similar to an in-person stimulation. Activities will be interactive and allow students to make mistakes and learn at the same time. All students will take the entrance exam prior to registering for classes in the Pride Star program. With the science competency students will take an assessment to determine which courses they will take first, and which ones may require extra help if necessary. The science coursework that is math related will include similar activities that are included in the math modules.

Core Competency 4: History

Students in the Pride Star program will complete history modules based on their previous education experience. Students may be covering different eras throughout history and therefore will have and complete modules accordingly. Each student, however, will follow guidelines for high school graduation in Massachusetts. Modules in the history competency will mainly consist of reading followed by reading quizzes. Quizzes and tests will also be administered via the

program to attest the student's knowledge and understanding of the class material. There will be a number of videos throughout this module, as reading history material on end can cause the student to lose interest or disengage. Activities will include different subtopics that may be crucial or arise out of a different historical era.

Core Competency 5: Foreign Language

Foreign languages to be offered in the Pride Star program will be Spanish, French, and Italian. Students have the option to either continue on with a foreign language they may have already started or completed in previous education, or they can choose to take a new language. Selecting a new language can only be done if the student will be able to accomplish all Massachusetts language requirements per the graduation guidelines (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). Each module will have an interactive selection for students to understand and learn vocabulary and verbs in another language. Additionally, videos and activities included in the foreign language competency will be included to allow Pride Star students the opportunity to see, hear, and begin practicing the language.

All competencies will follow the Massachusetts guidelines to obtain a high school diploma and be considered a high school graduate. Students of Pride Star will be provided with any necessary services or extra help outside of the modules and activities requiring completion. Each module follows a similar pattern but again will be tailored to both the student needs and the specific core competency at hand. Students who complete modules early or excel in a specific subject area will also have the opportunity to take additional classes or modules if they wish. For example, even though there are only two years of foreign language required, students can have the option to take an additional year of a foreign language if they wish to do so. Pride Star will

provide course work to follow all requirements per the state of Massachusetts, while still providing students with the comfort to complete their education at their own pace.

Discussion

Research has found that those who dropout of high school are at high risk for becoming criminally-involved or delinquent. This is not to state that all students who dropout of high school are going to become involved criminally. Rather, if they are no longer in school, they are more likely to become involved in other activities that are delinquent. Delinquent acts have a high chance of developing into criminal behaviors over the life course, and is often how juveniles will become involved criminally. Juveniles involved in crime and delinquent behaviors are not always caught and or punished. Research has found mixed reviews on the direct connection between high school dropouts and delinquency.

The declining numbers may be linked to dropout prevention programs. However, many of the dropout prevention programs have not been reviewed or checked for effectiveness. Therefore, while these programs exist there is limited research on the effectiveness for high school dropouts. Furthermore, there is no consecutive research on not only specific types of dropout programs, but also any specified state or area where dropout rates are high. The new program of Pride Star will address all current societal and educational issues. Many of the current programs may be outdated and not able to address the new influences and struggles high school dropouts may be having. The new program will need funding and approval in order for the program to grow and to begin changing lives of high school students. Pride Star will be a program to change the nation and be the change that Boston Public Schools will soon need.

References

- Academy of Creative Education. N.d. "What is ACE?" Retrieved from <https://www.neisd.net/domain/488>
- Anderson, Mark D. 2014. "In School and out of Trouble? The Minimum Dropout Age and Juvenile Crime." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 96(2):381-331.
- Bäckman, Olof. 2017. "High School Dropout, Resource Attainment, and Criminal Convictions." *Research in Crime & Delinquency* 54(5):715-749.
- COPES. 2021. "Creating Lasting Family Connections". Retrieved from <https://copes.org>
- Drapela, Laurie A. 2005. "does dropping out of high school cause deviant behavior? An analysis of the national education longitudinal study." *Deviant Behavior* 26(1):47-62.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (Crime Data Explorer). 2020. Retrieved from <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/explorer/state/massachusetts/crime>
- Henry, Kimberly L., Kelly Knight, and Terrence Thornberry. 2012. "School Disengagement as a Predictor of Dropout, Delinquency, and Problem Substance Use during Adolescence and Early Adulthood." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 41(2):156-166.
- Hickman, Gregory P., Mitchell Bartholomew, Jennifer Mathwig, and Randy Heinrich. 2008. "Differential Developmental Pathways of High School Dropouts and Graduates." *Journal of Educational Research* 102(1):3-11.
- Jarjoura, Roger G. 1993. "Does Dropping Out of School Enhance Delinquent Involvement? Results from a Large- Scale National Probability Sample." *Criminology* 31(2):149-172.
- Jarjoura G, Roger. 1996. "The Conditional Effect of Social Class on the Dropout- Delinquency Rate." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 33(2):232-255.
- Maynard, Brandy, Christopher Salas-Wright, and Michael Vaughn. 2015. "High School Dropouts in Emerging Adulthood: Substance Use, Mental Health Problems, and Crime." *Community Mental Health* 51(3):289-299.
- National Conference of State Legislatures. 2014. "Upper Compulsory School Age." <https://www.ncsl.org/research/education/upper-compulsory-school-age.aspx>

- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2017. "English Language Arts and Literacy." Retrieved from <https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf>
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2021. "MA Graduation Requirements and Related Guidance." Retrieved from <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html>
- Merriam-Webster. 2020. "Merriam Webster, Definition of Crime." Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crime>
- National Dropout Prevention Center. 2021. "Model Programs Database". Retrieved from <https://dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms/>
- Ngo, Fawn T., Raymond Paternoster, Francis Cullen, and Doris Mackenzie. 2011. "Life domains and crime: A test of Agnew's general theory of crime and delinquency." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 39(4):302-311.
- Sunshine Prevention Center. 2021. "Suspension Not Prevention". Retrieved from: <https://www.sunshinepreventionctr.org>
- Sweeten, Gary, Shawn Bushway, and Raymond Paternoster. 2009. "Does Dropping Out of School Mean Dropping into Delinquency?" *American Society of Criminology* 47(1):47-91.