

# JPIC Corner

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## Coordinator's Note

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President Obama in his first address to Congress on February 24, 2009 noted, "Right now, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require more than a high school diploma. And yet, just over half of our citizens have that level of education. We have one of the highest dropout rates of any industrial nation. And half of the students who begin college never finish." While not attempting to enter into the politics of education, it is essential to realize the importance of education for the human community.

From a Catholic perspective, education "on all levels seeks to draw out the potential good in all of us, to replace error with truth to move from ignorance and incompetence to knowledge and competence. Beyond knowledge, education should lead to wisdom, which is the foundation of human good and happiness."<sup>1</sup> Both vocational and technological education must be integrated with the moral dimension for proper human development. When moral education plays an integral part of the whole of education, it reveals how all the arts and sciences reflect on who we are as human beings and how we need to act as human beings. For Pope John Paul II, "becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education."<sup>2</sup>

Education is a basic human right which cannot be denied to any person. Parents are the first and prime educators of children, especially in matters of faith and morals. Through word and example, parents have the responsibility and obligation to "lead their children to authentic freedom. . .



and cultivate in them respect for others, a sense of justice, cordial openness, dialogue, generous service, solidarity and all other values which help people to live life as a gift."<sup>3</sup> It is in the family where children are to first learn the lessons of virtues related to "practical wisdom."<sup>4</sup> Additionally, parents have a right to expect our schools to provide top quality education for their children. They have a right to have a voice in their children's educational upbringing.

[Read full article](#)

## Did You Know?

- 7,000 students drop out every day (US)?
- Over 500,000 students drop out of grades 9-12 each year in public schools in the US?
- 2,000 high schools in the USA produce over half of all drop outs nationwide?
- Out of 30 industrialized countries, the US ranks 25th in math and 21st in science?
- 75 million children worldwide fail to complete primary school, either because they drop out or never got to attend school at all?
- Dropouts are more than 8 times as likely to be in jail/prison than high school graduates?

1. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, Education, in *New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, Judith A. Dwyer (ed.) Collegeville, MN, 1994, p. 330.
2. Laborem Exercens, 10.1
3. Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 92.4
4. Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 210

## USCCB Education Agenda for the 111th Congress

Below is an excerpt from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Education Agenda for the 111th Congress, which was approved by the Committee on Catholic Education on December 2, 2008:

### Governing Legislative Principles

We Support Legislation that:

- allows all parents, but especially low and middle income parents, to choose the education they believe is best suited for their children.
- provides services to students and teachers in private and religious schools when services aimed at improving the educational environment or responding to catastrophic events, especially for those most at risk, are available to students and teachers in public schools

The USCCB also supports legislation that continues to fund the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, provides tax credits for donations to organizations providing scholarships for children, and provides refundable tax credits/deductions for families with children to help pay for various educational expenses.

For more information, please go to <http://www.usccb.org/education/parentassn/111th2.shtml>

## Justice Education

“In addition to providing moral education, many Catholic high schools also include a course on Social Justice for students to learn the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church.... These courses cover the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Students have the opportunity to understand and appreciate that the focus and vision of Catholic Social teachings are based on the Person of Jesus and that Jesus’ vision of God’s will is for a world of justice, goodness and peace. They also learn that we are each called to participate in the Church’s mission of justice through our words and our actions.”

Excerpt from *On Education*  
by Br. Warren Perrotto, MSC

[Read full article](#)

### Catholic Social Teaching Quotes

From Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*

“Education for justice is imparted first in the family.” #54

“But education demands a renewal of the heart.... It will also inculcate a truly and entirely human way of life in justice, love and simplicity.” #51

## Girls’ Education and Why It Matters

Worldwide, girls constitute 55% of all out-of-school children. In other words, for every 100 boys not in school, there are 122 girls. Although there has been progress (in 1999, girls constituted 59% of all out-of-school children), the difference in some countries is still much wider. For instance, in the following countries, for every 100 boys out of school there are:

- 270 girls (Yemen)
- 316 girls (Iraq)
- 426 girls (India)

According to the World Bank:

- The children of women with some formal education have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier.
- Mothers with a few years of formal education are more likely to send their children to school.
- Educating girls helps increase women’s participation in the workforce as well as their earnings.
- Educating girls “ranks among the most powerful tools for reducing girls’ vulnerability” to HIV/AIDS infection.
- Educating girls is correlated with lowering maternal mortality rates.

*The MSC in [Senegal](#) and [India](#) provide educational opportunities and support for boys and girls from poor backgrounds. Click the links to learn more.*

## Education Begins At Home

*85% of the brain's core structure is formed by the age of 3. State of the World's Mothers, 2009*

Parents and guardians play an important part in the education of their children, starting from infancy. As part of their role as educators, parents teach their children about faith, the difference between right and wrong, and moral values. Parents and caregivers also directly help children reach their cognitive potential, become life-long readers, and prepare them for (and support them during) formal education.

Most people realize that proper nutrition, good care, play time and affection are all necessary for children's growth, but did you know that those things you do almost instinctively, such as singing or reading to a baby, are also important for cognitive development? There are many activities that parents, baby-sitters and others who care for young children can do to help children reach their full cognitive potential. It is helpful to have a good understanding of the timeline of child growth and development, so you can make sure to include activities that are age-appropriate.

Check out this page for examples of age-appropriate activities from Save the Children's *The State of the World's Mothers 2009* as well tips for encouraging reading in kids of various ages from [Reading is Fundamental](#).

## Examples: Cognitive Building Activities

**0-3 months:** Begin reading regularly to the baby and talk and sing to him or her.

**3-6 months:** Place the baby in different positions to help develop new skills such as rolling, creeping and crawling.

**6-9 months:** Comment on the baby's activities and give explanations for items the baby is curious about.

**9-12 months:** Name things the baby sees and hears and tell the baby what is happening.

**1-3 years:** Provide writing instruments and opportunities to practice. Establish a reading routine.

**3-5 years:** Play games with rules. Establish routines such as bedtime. Be sure to involve the child in daily activities that involve counting, sorting and identifying shapes.

Remember, pre-natal care is important too. If you are expecting a child, be sure to get adequate nutrition and avoid exposure to harmful chemicals.

[Read the \*State of the World's Mothers 2009\*](#)

[See the Talaris Institute's Child Growth Timeline](#)

## Get Involved: Encourage Life-Long Reading

*Only 33% of 4th-graders in the United States read at Proficient Level or above. 33% read below Basic Level. The Nation's Report Card*

The 2009 State of the World's Mothers Report estimates that 68% of 4th-graders in US public schools are not reading at grade level. The good news is that as a parent, you have a lot of opportunities to encourage your children to read. Check out [Reading is Fundamental](#) for more tips.

- Have children choose their own books as soon as they start showing a preference.
- Read aloud with your child every day.
- Model reading and writing. Let your kids see you reading for work and for pleasure.
- Use everyday opportunities for reading such as road signs or instructions for a recipe you cook together.
- Think outside the book. Encourage your children to read magazines, comic books, catalogues, song lyrics, newspapers, etc. Play games where you have to create words or read cards, spaces and directions.
- Encourage older children to read to their younger brothers and sisters.
- Create a special place in your home dedicated to reading.

## Why Do Students Dropout?

According to the report *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs*, risk factors are grouped in four areas: individual, family, school factors and community factors. The report indicates that there is no single risk factor that accurately predicts dropping out.

The report also discussed “pull” vs. “push” factors. When students leave school due to something in the school environment, they are considered to leave due to push factors. Pull factors are events or circumstances outside of school.

Students report more “push” factors than “pull” factors when asked why they dropped out. However, in a 2005 survey, 32% of drop outs left school because they had to get a job, 26% became a parent, and 22% left to care for a family member (all pull factors).

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## The United States Compared to Other Developed Countries

In December 2008, US News and World Report reported that out of 30 industrialized countries, the USA ranked 25th in math and 21st in science. The article also reported that economists estimate a growth in the US economy of 4.5 percentage points over 20 years if US students caught up to world leaders in math and science.

## Dropout Statistics in the USA

- 3.9% of high school students (grades 9-12) dropped out in the 2004-2005 school year.
- 74.7% of public high school students graduated with a regular diploma 4 years after starting 9th grade.

### *Dropout Statistics and Race/Ethnicity*

The dropout rates by race/ethnicity are as follows: 6.7% for American Indian/Alaska Native students, 2.5% for Asian/Pacific Islander students, 5.8% for Hispanic students, 6% for Black, non-Hispanic students and 2.8% for White, non-Hispanic students.

### *Dropout Statistics and Family Income*

Children from low-income families have a higher drop out rate than students from middle income and high income families. This trend is consistent since 1972. For instance, in 2006, drop out rates for low income students was around 9%, compared to a little under 4% for middle income students and 2% for high income students. ([View graph](#)).

Research shows that poor and minority students attend the 2,000 high schools that produce more than 50% of the dropouts in the U.S. at significantly higher rates. (Committee on Education & Labor)

*Want to share with us some of the things that you have done to help motivate kids in your neighborhood or family to stay in school? Email [jpic@misa-cor-usa.org](mailto:jpic@misa-cor-usa.org) and let us know what worked for you.*

## Significant Risk Factors for Dropping Out of School

Are you wondering why students dropout of school? Below are some of the 25 risk factors identified by the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University and Communities In Schools, Inc. ([See source](#))

1. Student has a high number of work hours
2. Student has a learning disability or emotional disturbance
3. Student's family has a low socioeconomic status
4. Parents have low levels of education
5. Student does not live with both natural parents
6. Family disruption
7. Student's family has low contact with school
8. Student's family has low educational expectations
9. Student is a parent
10. A sibling has dropped out
11. Student has low educational expectations
12. Student does not participate in extracurricular activities
13. Student has been retained/is over-age for grade
14. Student has a high-risk peer group

*See all 25 factors at the [National Dropout Prevention Center](#)*

## A Closer Look At Dropout Rates

Currently, not all states calculate dropout rates using the same method. Some states count students as drop outs only if he or she notifies the school. Former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings required that by 2011, all states use the same method to calculate drop out rates by tracking each student's progress. Initially, the new method may negatively impact graduation rates. For instance, in 2003, the District of Columbia reported a graduated rate of 73%, but the new national database calculated it to be 59%.

*Get involved: In order to be part of the solution, you need to know the true extent of the problem. Find out your school's graduation rate and how it is calculated.*



## Educational Attainment in the USA

13% of people in the United States between the ages of 25 and 29 do not have a high school diploma or equivalent (2007). This rate has remained stable over the past few decades: the high school completion rate has stayed between 85% and 88% for the last 30 years.

Although over half of 25 to 29 year olds have completed at least some college, less than 1 in 3 held a bachelor's degree in 2007. While the percentage of 25- to 29-year olds who had a bachelor's degree rose from 17% in 1971 to 27% in 1996, it has remained between 27% and 30% ever since.

*What do you think? Is educational attainment stagnating? How important is it today to complete a college degree? What factors might contribute to completion rates staying relatively the same for the past 10 years?*

"If the dropout rate remains the same for the next 10 years, the result will be a loss to the nation of \$3 trillion. The government would reap \$45 billion in extra tax revenues and lower costs for public health, crime and welfare payments if the number of high school dropouts among 20-year olds in the US today, who number more than 700,000 individuals, were cut in half."

*Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis, p. 12*

## Dropping Out: Why It Matters

### Lower Rates of Employment

In 2008 and among out-of-school youths aged 16-24, only 45.7% of high school dropouts were employed, compared to 68.1% of high school graduates, 78.8% of those with some college education and 86.7% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

### Less Income

High school dropouts are estimated to earn \$400,000 less during a working lifetime (aged 18-64) than high school graduates. The average annual income of adults 16-64 in 2006-2007 was \$11,031 for workers with no high school diploma, \$23,059 with a high school diploma, \$50,863 with a Bachelor's degree and \$76,091 for those holding an advanced degree.

### Poorer Health

The National Center for Health Statistics reports that students who do not finish high school reported worse health outcomes, higher rates of unemployment, and reduced access to medical care compared to their peers who completed high school.

### Higher Rates of Teenage Pregnancy

Teens who have dropped out of school are more likely to become pregnant and have a child than their peers who stay in school. It is a vicious cycle. Children of teen mothers tend to do worse in school and are 50% more likely to repeat a grade than children born to older parents. Two-thirds of children of teen mothers earn a high school diploma, compared to 81% of children of older parents.



### Do you know more than a 4th grader?

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) survey of 204,000 U.S. students in 2007, only 36% of 4th grade students in the United States were able to answer the following multiple-choice question correctly:

The Ben Franklin Bridge was 75 years old in 2001. In what year was the bridge 50 years old?

- A. 1951      B. 1976      C. 1984      D. 1986

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### More Resources

- [The Nation's Report Card](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis](#)

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### Tell us what you think!

How can parishes and/or individuals help educate and support students in your community?



Email Br. Warren at [jpic@misacor-usa.org](mailto:jpic@misacor-usa.org).



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## You Can Make A Difference

### Tutor

Volunteer your time to help a current student (even a classmate) who needs assistance with homework, assist a former student preparing to take his/her GED exam, or help younger children practice reading so they don't fall behind.

### Have high expectations

Low parental expectations and permissive parenting styles have been linked to higher rates of dropout. Show that you value education. Also, let your child know that you expect him/her to graduate from high school. Get to know their teacher(s).

### Talk to your children about education & the future

Conversations about education are important. Talk to your child about their classes and what they are studying at school. Help your child plan for high school and set goals for after high school.

### Limit Work Hours

If your teenager works, make sure to limit the number of hours during the school year to allow enough time to complete homework assignments, etc. If you employ teenagers, be mindful of school when determining their work schedules.

### Read to your child

Starting when they are newborn, read to your children, nieces and nephews, younger cousins, etc.

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### College Dropout Risk Factors

According to a University of Michigan study, college students with depression are twice as likely to drop out of college than their classmates.

61% of community college students who have children after enrolling don't finish their education, which is 65% higher than the rate of students who didn't have children.

College costs are also rising. In 1986-87, the average tuition, fees, room and board (in 2006 dollars) was \$18,312, compared to \$30,367 in 2006-2007. (For 4-year public schools, the cost is \$7,528 and \$12,796 respectively.)

For more information about the MSC, please visit our website: [www.misacor-usa.org](http://www.misacor-usa.org)

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