

The Economic Benefits from Halving Omaha's Dropout Rate

A BOOM TO REGIONAL BUSINESSES

"The best economic stimulus package is a high school diploma."

GOVERNOR BOB WISE
PRESIDENT, ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION

January 2010



In the Omaha metropolitan area, an estimated 3,200 students dropped out from the Class of 2008 at great cost not only to themselves but also to their communities. Reducing the number of dropouts by 50 percent for this single high school class would result in tremendous economic benefits to the Omaha region. Below, see the likely contributions¹ that these 1,600 "new graduates" would make to their regional economy:

**\$15 MILLION
IN INCREASED
EARNINGS**



This single class of new graduates would likely earn as much as **\$15 million** in combined earnings in the average year compared to their likely earnings without a diploma.

**INCREASED
HOME SALES
OF \$27 MILLION
AND AUTO SALES
OF \$2 MILLION**



By the midpoint of their careers, these new graduates would likely purchase homes totaling a value of as much as **\$27 million** more than what they otherwise would have spent without a diploma. In addition, they would likely spend up to an additional **\$2 million** on vehicle purchases each year.

**\$2 MILLION IN
INCREASED TAX
REVENUE**



As a result of increased wages and higher levels of spending, state and local tax revenue within this region would likely grow by as much as **\$2 million** during the average year.

**AN ADDITIONAL \$10
MILLION IN SPENDING
AND \$4 MILLION
IN INVESTING**



Increased earnings would likely allow new graduates to spend an additional **\$10 million** and invest an additional **\$4 million** during the average year.

**100 NEW JOBS
AND ECONOMIC
GROWTH OF
\$18 MILLION**



This additional spending and investment would likely be enough to support **100** new jobs and increase the gross regional product by as much as **\$18 million** by the time these new graduates reach the midpoint of their careers.

**INCREASED
HUMAN
CAPITAL**



After earning a high school diploma, **57 percent** of these new graduates would likely continue on to pursue some type of postsecondary education.

Every Student Counts

Moving even just one student from dropout status to graduate status will make positive contributions to a local economy. This box offers a scaled-back look at the figures presented to the left, projecting the likely benefits if just 1,000 local dropouts had graduated. These 1,000 new graduates would likely

- earn **\$9 million** in additional earnings each year;
- spend an additional **\$900,000** each year purchasing vehicles and, by the time they reach the midpoint of their careers, would buy homes worth **\$17 million** more than what they would likely have spent without a diploma; and
- support **70** new jobs in the region, increase the gross regional product by **\$11 million**, and pour an additional **\$1.3 million** annually into state and local coffers, all through their increased spending and investments.

About the Omaha Metro Area

- Omaha's metro area includes the city and eight surrounding counties (see map above).
- The Omaha metro area is home to forty-nine high schools. Seven of these are considered dropout factories, i.e., schools where fewer than 60 percent of freshmen progress to their senior year on time.
- Twenty-six percent of high school students in the region do not graduate on time with a regular diploma.

¹These figures represent estimates of gross benefits to the regional economy and are not intended to reflect the net impact of additional graduates.