

Reach Potential Movement

A dream in every child's heart and a diploma in every youth's hand

Literacy, Drop Out and Incarceration Rates: What they have in common

What can a city or state expect when the half of its children are not reading or writing at proficient levels by third grade? Though it's an urban myth that prisons forecast their future inmate populations from third grade reading levels, there are some sobering warnings for communities that struggle to educate their children.

- **45.3%** of Mountain View Whisman School District (MWSD) students are English Learners (2009)
- Approx. **60%** of MWSD Title 1 school students scored below proficient in English Language Arts (2008 California STAR Test - CST)
- **70%** of prisoners scored in the lowest literacy levels of the National Adult Literacy Survey (National Assessment of Adult Literacy/NAAL, 2003)
- **68%** of state prison inmates do not receive a high school diploma.¹
- **37.1%** of Hispanic students in Santa Clara County drop out of school (Santa Clara County Office Of Education, 2008)
- **54%** of Hispanic males in California graduate from high school (A study by Harvard and the Urban Institute, 2005)
- **49%** of California K-12 public school students are Hispanic (Ca Dept of Ed, 2009)
- **85.1%** of CA English Learning students speak Spanish (Ca Dept of Ed, 2009)
- High school dropouts are **3.5 times** more likely than high school graduates to be arrested.²
- High school dropouts are more than **8 times** as likely to be in jail or prison.³

Educators often link student literacy levels with drop out rates. Schools make literacy a significant priority at all grades yet from kindergarten to third grade the priority is **learning to read** while from fourth to eight grade the priority is **reading to learn**. Fourth through eight grade students who struggle to comprehend what they read will struggle in all subjects—putting them on a spiraling path towards dropping out of school.

¹ 2008, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California is a bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization led by more than 400 sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and violence survivors

² Ibid

³ Ibid