

KET



**DROPPING
BACK IN**





DROPPING BACK IN!

A Guide to Using the Videos

The people and programs featured in Dropping Back In can create interest as well as inspire action in your community around the issue of helping adults without high school diplomas succeed in school and the workplace. This guide identifies topics explored in the series and provides lists of related video segments along with possible discussion starters.

You can screen the full half-hour programs—each has a specific focus—or view shorter video segments, depending on your audience or type of event. Videos are accessible online at www.droppingbackin.org. DVDs of the programs are also available. Contact us at droppingbackin@ket.org for information on how to get DVDs.

Use this guide to facilitate panel discussions at screening events or to spark conversations in more informal “salon” gatherings, in person or online.

This guide includes background information and suggestions for discussion questions around the series' programs:

NEW! Premiering in August 2015:

- Building a Better Life

Premiering August 15, 2015 (Check local listings) with English and Spanish versions

- Second Chances
- More than a Statistic
- Complicated Lives
- Working for the Future
- Building a Better Life NEW!

And the following topics:

- Economic Impact
- Opportunity Youth
- Breaking the Generational Cycle
- Supporting Adult Learners
- Poverty and Dropping Out
- Beyond a High School Diploma or Equivalency



Recommendations for Using the Videos

Screening Events

For a screening event, consider a 90-minute agenda that would include a full program or longer segment followed by a panel of experts discussing the issues raised in the video. You will need a moderator for the panel discussion. Be sure to allow time for a question-and-answer period.

If you plan to invite **professionals** (e.g., from business, education, and government), consider holding the event at the end of a weekday—this audience would likely consider the event an extension of their workday. Provide light refreshments. (Watch the video, “Screening of Dropping Back In, Louisville, KY” for an example of this type of event.)

For a more **general audience**, consider partnering with libraries, adult education centers, and/or community organizations to help you promote and host the event.

You can download a template for a flyer promoting screening events in the Community Engagement Toolkit at droppingbackin.org.

Guest Speaker Presentations

Offer to be a guest presenter at regularly scheduled meetings of various organizations in your community. Choose the topic with your audience in mind. Since you will be fitting into their agendas, use this guide to

provide some background information on the topic and select a video segment based on the amount of time you are given.

Potential audiences include:

- Civic organizations, e.g., Rotary Club, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, League of Women Voters, local senior centers, local urban leagues
- Government officials/staff, e.g., local legislators, city/town councils, mayors and other elected officials
- Business organizations, e.g., chambers of commerce, local business networking clubs, professional clubs
- Educators
- Youth agencies
- Faith communities

Online Discussions

Choose a video segment to start a conversation on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media. You can post the video or link to the video online. Choose different topics and videos every week, and send invitations to new audiences of people and organizations that fit the topic.

You also can use social media to promote a broadcast or screening of **Dropping Back In** and start a discussion thread. Pick a hash tag to track the conversation.

Economic Impact

Background

Nearly 40 million adults in America lack a high school diploma. And every year, almost a million more students drop out of high school. People without a high school diploma or equivalency are twice as likely to be unemployed. They are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, become teenage parents, and live in poverty; an estimated three out of four prison inmates are high school dropouts.

A 2009 report by the Center for Labor Market Studies estimates that each dropout's lifetime cost to society is \$292,000, taking into consideration lower tax revenues and higher cash and in-kind costs for welfare programs, health care, and incarceration.

Having a large and growing population of under-educated adults, as well as the group's non-participation in the economy, is clearly a burden America cannot afford now and must address for the future.

In the program "Second Chances," Kavitha Cordoza, a journalist and expert on the dropout crisis in America, asks, what is the cost of what might have been?

"That can't be measured," she says. "How do you measure what someone could have been had they lived up to their potential?"

Recommended Segments

- "Second Chances" episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- Facts about America's Dropout Crisis (2:36)
- Dropping Back In Preview (short) (6:22)
- Dropping Back In Preview (long) (16:48)
- Profile of Kellie Blair Hardt (6:39)
- Profile of Hasan Davis (7:21)
- Interview with Dr. Ronald Ferguson (10:58)

Discussion Starters

Discuss the difference between "achievement gap" and "opportunity gap."

What job opportunities are available in your community for adults without a high school diploma or equivalency?

What are the costs and/or benefits of concluding a person is a "lost cause"?



Opportunity Youth

Background

There are 6.7 million American youth aged 16 to 24 who are “neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market.”

The long-term economic prospects of this population is unlikely to improve and most likely will worsen, according to *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*, a research report prepared in 2012 for the White House Council for Community Solutions.

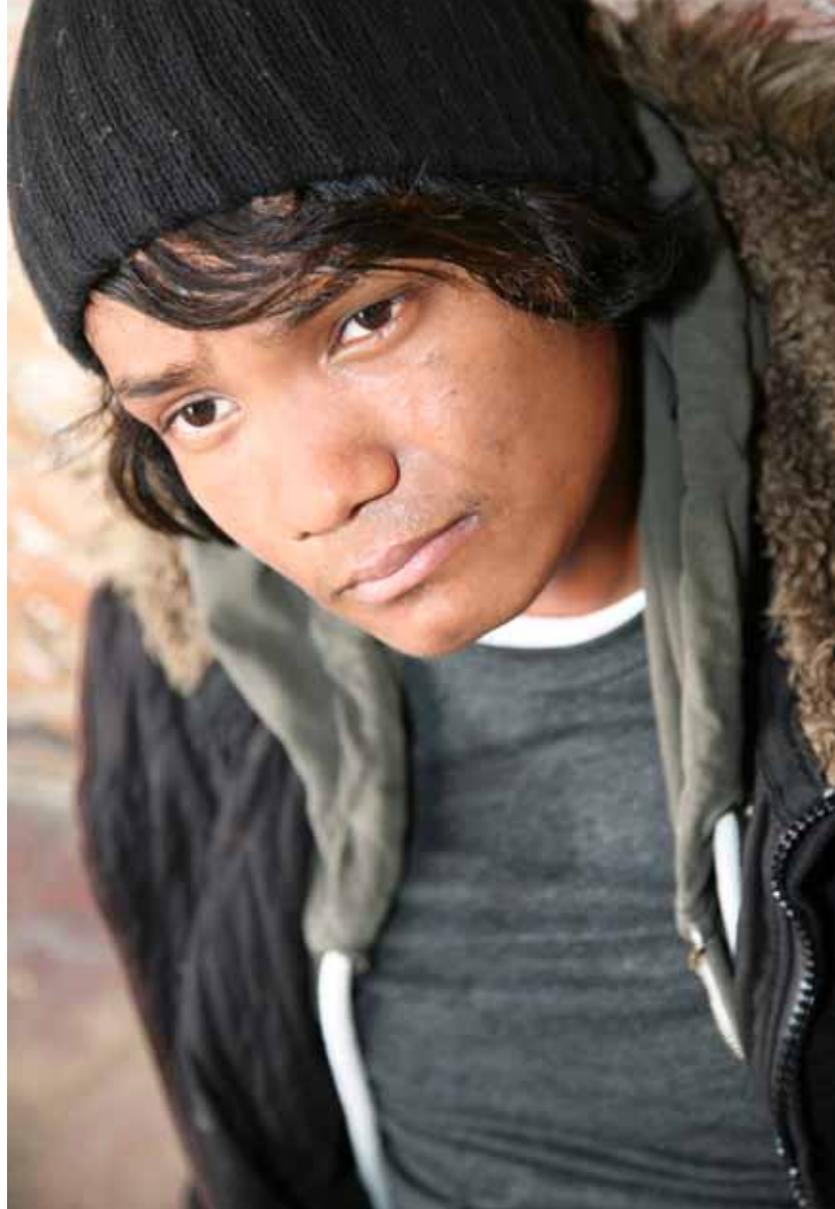
Having a high school diploma as well as an additional investment in human capital, such as college and job training, is essential for youths to make the transition to a productive life. Without those things, we know they are more likely to be un- or under-employed and suffer the other negative economic and personal consequences that occur because they dropped out of school and failed to transition successfully to adulthood. And, without intervention, those negative costs will continue throughout their lives.

In 2008, less than half of out-of-school youths aged 16-24 without a high school diploma or equivalency were employed compared to 68 percent of high school graduates and nearly 87 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher. For those without a diploma who did work, they earned on average less than \$8,500 per year; those with a bachelor's or higher degree earned almost \$25,000.

The institutionalization of 16-24-year-olds who dropped out of high school was 63 percent higher than those with a four-year college degree. (Of those who were institutionalized, 93 percent were in correctional facilities.)

Recommended Segments

- “More than a Statistic” episode of *Dropping Back In* (30 minutes)
- *Dropped Out or Pushed Out?* (5:28)
- *Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School* (6:54)
- *YouthBuild Louisville* (7:13)
- *Interview with Dr. Victor Rios* (13:39)
- *Interview with Judge Greg Mathis* (6:00)



Discussion Starters

Are you surprised to learn that some students are “encouraged” to leave school before graduation? Is that an acceptable method of dealing with difficult and/or poorly performing students? If not, how should these students be dealt with?

Do you think that the structure of large public schools contributes to student failure? Why or why not? What role do alternative schools play in your community?

What can be done to support young women who become pregnant to enable them to remain in school and continue their educations beyond high school? How can education institutions re-engage single mothers who have already dropped out?

Poverty and Dropping Out

Background

Poverty in America is increasing more rapidly now than at any other time in history.

U.S. income inequality has been increasing steadily since the 1970s and now has reached levels not seen since 1928. Recovery from the 2008 recession (2009 to 2012) was uneven: the top 1 percent incomes grew by 31.4 percent, and the bottom 99 percent grew by only 0.4 percent. Hence, the top 1 percent captured 95 percent of the income gains in the first three years of recovery.

Income and education inequality usually starts in the crib. "America is the land of opportunity, just for some more than others," according to a recent article by Matt O'Brien in The Washington Post.

Not only do more affluent parents spend more money on their children, they talk to them three more hours a week, on average, than poor parents, which is critical during a child's formative early years. Poor children live in low-income neighborhoods that keep them disconnected from opportunities.

As O'Brien writes, "it's an educational arms race that's leaving many kids far, far behind."

In the program "Complicated Lives," journalist Kavitha Cardoza says, "A lot of people say, 'Why can't they pull themselves up by their bootstraps?'. A lot of people don't have bootstraps, or even boots."

A recent New York Times article explores how education is no longer a path to upward social mobility; in fact, education seems to be fortifying class barriers. While achievement gaps between black and white students are still large, the gaps between high- and low-income groups are larger. For black and white students, gaps in reading and math achievement are actually decreasing. But reading and math gaps between high- and low-income students have grown more than 40 percent.

Recommended Segments

- "Second Chances" episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- "Complicated Lives" episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- Dropped Out or Pushed Out? (5:28)
- Academy of Hope (6:36)
- Interview with Judge Greg Mathis (6:00)
- Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School (6:54)
- Screening of Dropping Back In, Louisville, Ky. (9:45)
- Interview with Dr. Ronald Ferguson (10:58)
- Interview with Dr. Victor Rios (13:39)

Discussion Starters

There are many studies about the relationship between income and educational attainment. Which, do you think, comes first? Is poverty a cause of failure in school or is low attainment in school a cause of poverty?

Why does the notion of "The American Dream" survive despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary? How does this thinking make it even more difficult for children born poor to rise above their circumstances?



Breaking the Generational Cycle

Background

“My personal obsession right now is how disconnected we are from what we really need to be talking about with poverty. We talk about work or training for parents, or we talk about early childhood for kids. But I don’t see how we can help the children without trying to help their parents as well. We have to have a serious national discussion about helping families together.”

— Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize Winner and Columnist, New York Times

According to the 2006-07 American Community Surveys, young high school dropouts were nine times more likely to have become single mothers as their counterparts with bachelor’s degrees, and a high percentage of these young women were poor and dependent on government assistance.

In a 2013 article in The Washington Post, “What your first-grade life says about the rest of it,” Emily Badger wrote about a 25-year-long research project at Johns Hopkins University centered on children growing up in poverty-stricken areas of Baltimore.

The study began with 790 children. “Over time,” she writes, “their lives were constrained — or cushioned — by the circumstances they were born into, by the employment and education prospects of their parents, by the addictions or job contacts that would become their economic inheritance.”

“Less than half of the group graduated high school on time. Before they turned 18, 40 percent of the black girls from low-income homes had given birth to their own babies. At the time of the final interviews, when the children were now adults of 28, more

than 10 percent of the black men in the study were incarcerated. Twenty-six of the children, among those they could find at last count, were no longer living.”

Recognizing that most poor and under-educated parents hold the same hopes and dreams for their children as those in more educated and affluent households, the Family and Child Education (FACE) initiative, profiled in the program “Complicated Lives,” uses a multi-generational approach to improve the educational attainment of both parents and their children.

Recommended Segments

- “Complicated Lives” episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- Profile of FACE program and Tricia Amos (7:18)
- Profile of Ebony Nava (3:31)

Discussion Starters

Tricia Amos broke a generational cycle of under-education when she earned her GED® credential and continued on to post-secondary study. Think of the barriers she faced, and discuss issues that keep people from completing their educations or returning to school in your community and what can be done to overcome them.

Brainstorm ways to break the generational cycle of under-education and poverty among families in your community. What can individuals do? Civic groups? Government? Faith communities? Schools?





Supporting Adult Learners

Background

Most adult learners face a number of roadblocks, both internal and external, as they work to get their lives on track. And, despite a strong desire to do so, many cannot succeed without the support from caring individuals.

Barriers, both academic and non-academic, complicate the pursuit of more education. There are institutional barriers like inconvenient schedules, inaccessible locations, and tuition costs as well as problems with childcare, transportation, and a lack of flexibility.

There are emotional barriers as well. Throughout the series, you hear stories of adult learners who had learning disabilities that were undiagnosed or unaddressed during their school years. Many fear returning to an educational system that failed them before. Many face disapproval from their families and friends. And many more lack important non-academic skills, such as problem-solving and organizational skills.

Victor Rios, a former gang member and dropout who is now a college professor and author, is featured throughout the series. He says, "The difference between myself and some of my friends that ended up dead or in prison is that I was fortunate to run into programs and people that cared."

Recommended Segments

- "Second Chances" episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- "Complicated Lives" episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- "Working for the Future" episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- Academy of Hope (6:36)
- Profile of Kellie Blair Hardt (6:39)
- Profile of Hasan Davis (7:21)
- Profile of FACE program and Tricia Amos (7:18)

Discussion Starters

A common thread in the profiles of those who succeeded in getting their lives back on track is that there were people along the way who provided the right support at the right time. Most dropouts pursuing a GED® credential are doing so voluntarily—they have the desire, but they need additional support and encouragement.

What are some ways individuals and groups in your community can provide this much-needed support?

Who are or can become "encouragers" in your community to those without a high school diploma?

Beyond a High School Diploma or Equivalency

Background

Today's economy demands more than a high school diploma or equivalency in order to support a middle-class lifestyle.

By 2022, eight out of 10 U.S. jobs will require education beyond a high school diploma. Yet, the U.S. is projected to have a shortage of 5 million workers with the necessary training or education to fill available job openings by that time.

Ron Ferguson, a Harvard economist focusing on factors affecting educational achievement, argues that a four-year college degree is not for all young people, and that the American education system should "face that fact."

He says, "The fact that we resist facing that fact means that we fail to prepare the way for young people who need options other than a four-year college degree... Every job has meaning."

Sociologist Russell Rumberger of the University of California, Santa Barbara continues, "College for all has diminished the value of more traditional, vocational areas like welding and auto mechanics, where jobs are available in our economy."

Ferguson adds, "Two-thirds of adults don't have a college degree. And most of them have jobs."

Recommended Segments

- "Building a Better Life" (30 minutes—Available August 2015)
- "Working for the Future" episode of Dropping Back In (30 minutes)
- Lake Area Technical Institute (7:31)
- YouthBuild Louisville (7:14)
- Profile of Ebony Nava (3:35)
- Ronald Ferguson interview (10:28)

Discussion Starters

Do you agree with economists and academics like Dr. Ferguson and Dr. Rumberger that not all students' educational goals lead to a four-year college degree and that jobs that don't require one have value? Should schools expand their curricula to better prepare students for alternatives to a four-year diploma?

How can local employers take an active role in developing a skilled workforce in your community, in both K-12 and adult education?

Are there risks in moving students into academic or vocational/technical tracks? How would you avoid racial or economic bias in doing this?



PROGRAMS

NEW! Building a Better Life

(available in August 2015)

Between 2012 and 2022, the U.S. is projected to need more than 500,000 new carpenter and construction laborers.

Yet, as Stephen Hernandez, director of the boatbuilding apprentice program at the Alexandria Seaport Foundation says, "People don't work with their hands anymore." In fact, there are two million jobs available today that are going unfilled because there are no skilled workers available.

This new program in the series looks at successful apprentice and training-based programs preparing under-educated and unemployed people for available jobs by teaching valuable skills.

Two of the featured programs work primarily with young adults, many of whom lack a high school diploma or equivalency, and help them improve their academic, life, and employment skills while learning a valuable trade. In addition to Alexandria Seaport Foundation's boatbuilding apprentice program, *Dropping Back In* features Café Hope, a culinary apprentice program in New Orleans.

Also featured is The Makers Coalition of Minneapolis, a training program in sewing manufacturing that began when a local company discovered a hugely successful niche in the clothing industry—hand-made, domestically manufactured—but couldn't find enough skilled workers. Their dilemma led to a partnership with a local technical college to develop a course and train people in need of marketable skills.

Second Chances

This program introduces the scope and huge personal and societal costs of adults not having a high school diploma or equivalency. National experts describe the economic strain on America, and educators and former dropouts provide additional context to two expanded stories of individual achievement:

Victor Rios, a professor of sociology at the University of California in Santa Barbara and a former dropout and gang member, is one of the experts featured in the series. He says, "Some of us get started so far behind that it can take a lifetime for us to just have that turning point to transform our lives."

The journeys of Hasan Davis and Kellie Blair Hardt are featured in the first program; they illustrate that the path from dropping out to realizing college and career success is not a straight one.

More than a Statistic

Tashira Valez got pregnant halfway through her sophomore year of high school. Her grades and attendance dropped, and she felt unsupported by the school, and, in fact, was encouraged to drop out.

"I thought, 'there's nothing for me to do,'" she says. "I'm going to be another statistic, another student who dropped out of school, pregnant." A few months later, on her initiative, Tashira dropped back in at Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School, an alternative school that takes an individualized, holistic approach to educating its students. She graduated in 2014 as an honor student with perfect attendance.

"More than a Statistic" focuses on institutions like Albizu Campos that successfully bring young people back to school and guiding them on the path to college and career success.

Also featured is YouthBuild Louisville. YouthBuild is a national program combining academics with mentoring and construction career training for young people 16 to 24 years old. YouthBuild participants work toward getting their GED credential or high school diploma, to prepare for college, to learn vocational skills, and to do hands-on work building low-income housing.

Complicated Lives

The challenges faced by many dropouts go far beyond academics. Most dropouts are un- or underemployed and many live in poverty. One featured expert notes that being poor is time-consuming — waiting for access to healthcare, transportation, food, and welfare programs. Meeting the many needs of their complicated lives is a key to success for many adult education programs.

“Complicated Lives” explores those and other challenges faced by adult learners, such as overcoming an unsupportive, hostile environment. Then, there’s fear — of failure, of returning to a system where they failed before.

The educational programs featured in “Complicated Lives” succeed in helping adult learners get their lives back on track because they understand and support their students beyond the classroom. GED® graduate and nursing student Tricia Amos is profiled in the program. She overcame personal tragedies and a generation of under-education with the help of the Family and Child Education program (FACE), located in South Dakota, which serves both caregivers and children.

Also featured is the Academy of Hope in Washington, DC, a community-based adult education program based in one of the city’s poorest neighborhoods.

Working for the Future

Today’s economy demands more than a high school diploma or equivalency in order to support a middle-class lifestyle. Yet there are two million jobs that are currently going unfilled because of the lack of available skilled workers; only about half of all entering freshman finish college.

Helping America’s dropouts attain college and career readiness requires new thinking about high school equivalency and post-secondary education. As a result, community colleges and other institutions are changing.

This program looks at institutions that provide nontraditional ways to support student success in post-secondary education, from helping them learn to struggle without quitting to focusing on career guidance and hands-on learning.

Featured are the Academy for College Excellence at Cabrillo Community College in Aptos, California, a one-semester program that assists underprepared college students; City Colleges of Chicago Gateway program, which provides academic and financial assistance to degree-seeking students; and the Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, South Dakota, an award-winning institution that collaborates with local business and industry to focus on educating students so they get jobs upon graduation.





VIDEO SEGMENTS*

*All the video is accessible at www.droppingbackin.org and on DVD. For more information on getting DVD copies, contact droppingbackin@ket.org.

Academy of Hope

Located in one of the poorest areas of Washington D.C. with the highest dropout rates, Academy of Hope successfully creates a caring and supportive learning community. Since its founding in 1985, more than 560 adults have earned GED® diplomas through the Academy. (6:36)

Dropped Out or Pushed Out?

In this excerpt from "More than a Statistic," educators, academics, and students talk about confronting an education system that doesn't always work in the best interest of students. (5:28)

Dropping Back In Preview (short)

An overview of the dropout issue featuring the first segment of the program "Second Chances." (6:22)

Dropping Back In Preview (long)

Includes the above plus the segment on Hasan Davis (see below) (16:48)

Dropping Back In Screening Event Louisville, Kentucky

Event coverage (non-broadcast) of the panel discussion following the screening of *Dropping Back In*, September 23, 2014, at the Louisville Free Public Library. Educators, business, and civic leaders, including two former dropouts, discuss the *Dropping Back In* series, the social and personal costs of the dropout crisis, and effective initiatives focused on dropout prevention and re-engagement.

Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School

A Chicago alternative school uses a cultural and community focus to help young dropouts return to school and graduate. (6:54)

Facts About America's Dropout Crisis

This short and powerful video uses graphs and other strong visuals to report on the dropout crisis in America. (2:36)

Interview with Dr. Ronald Ferguson

Co-director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, Dr. Ferguson describes the current and future costs in America of having an undereducated population; he argues the need for career guidance for secondary students that includes options other than a four-year college degree. (10:58)

Interview with Dr. Victor Rios

A former dropout and gang member, currently a professor of sociology at the University of California at Santa Barbara and author of *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Dr. Rios discusses his research in juvenile justice and the policing of America's schools, specifically the school-to-prison pipeline. He also talks about youth who are "pushed out" of school, rather than dropping out, and outreach efforts in that area. (13:39)

Interview with Judge Greg Mathis

Judge Mathis talks about his journey toward earning a GED® diploma, a bachelor's, and a law degree. The former dropout was a district court judge in Detroit and now hosts a syndicated television show. (6:00)

Lake Area Technical Institute

The institute, located in Watertown, South Dakota, is an award-winning school focused on educating students so they can get a job upon graduation. (7:31)

Profile of Ebony Nava

Ebony only attended school to the second grade — her parents pulled her out to home-school, but they never did. Ebony earned a GED® credential and gained custody of her siblings. Now a college student, she tells how education has changed not only her life, but that of her siblings as well. (3:31)

Profile of FACE program and Tricia Amos

Tricia faced a dysfunctional and abusive family situation before dropping out. She was raped and later was in a shelter, when someone told her about the FACE (Family and Child Education) program at Enemy Swim Day School. This program serves both parents and children, so Tricia comes with two of her children. She has obtained a GED® diploma and is working toward a nursing degree. (7:18)

Profile of Kellie Blair Hardt

Kellie overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles—homelessness, alcoholic parents, and expulsion from school—to return to school, earn a GED® diploma, and ultimately earn bachelor's and master degrees and a national award-winning teacher. She's currently a special education teacher and is pursuing a Ph.D. (6:39)

Profile of Hasan Davis

Hasan's family fell apart before he even started elementary school. He had learning disabilities, was arrested at age 11, and was expelled from every school he attended. Through the support of his mother and a principal who believed in him, he earned a GED® diploma, college and law degrees, and served as Commissioner of Juvenile Justice for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. (7:21)

YouthBuild Louisville

YouthBuild, a national program, combines academics with mentoring and construction career training for young people 16 to 24 years old. (7:13)



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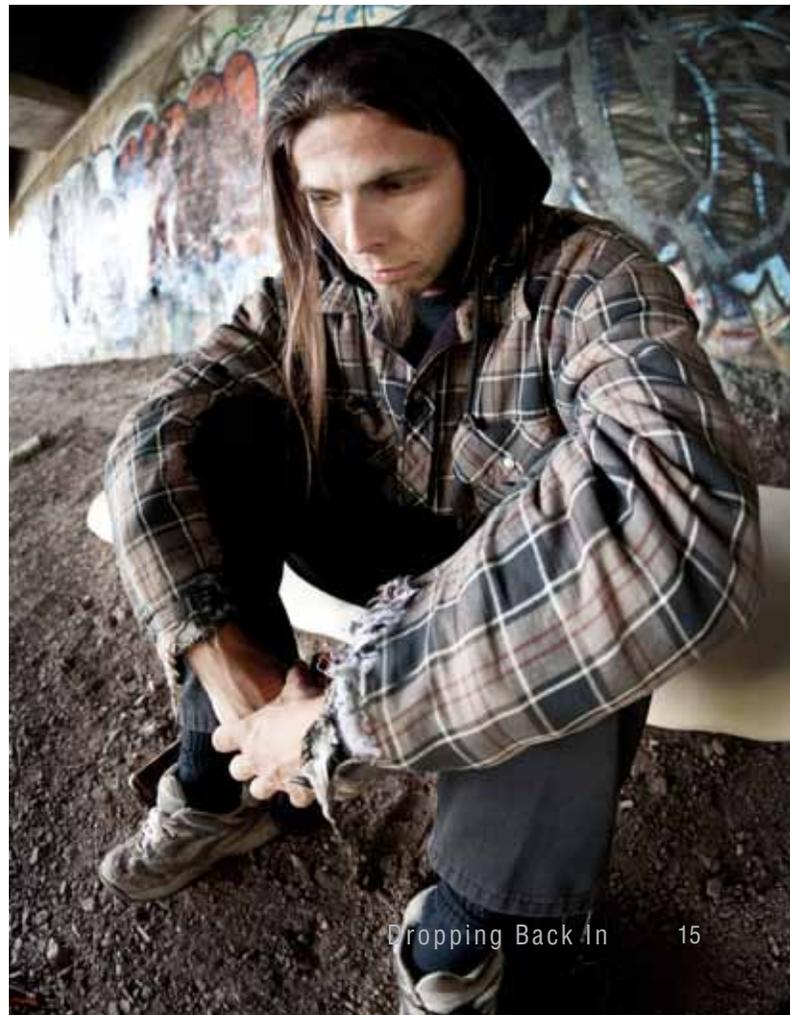
MORE INFORMATION

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Visit the Dropping Back In website:
www.droppingbackin.org

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For more information about studying for the GED® test, check out *Fast Forward*, an online study guide for the GED® test. (*Fast Forward* is also being used to prepare for the HiSET® and TASC high school equivalency tests.)



Even if someone has the persistence, courage, and optimism it takes to re-engage in learning after dropping out of school, they still need the support from caring people in order to successfully complete an adult education course and earn a high school equivalency diploma.

Everyone needs a champion. You can be that champion.

Give someone a ride. Pay a tuition fee. Go along for moral support. Tutor. Babysit. Tell someone you believe in them. Give someone a second chance.



No high school diploma? Don't let that stop you for reaching your dreams!

FASTFORWARD™

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