The Danger of a Poor Education
The correlation between Education and Crime in today’s society

Education is critical in ensuring the nation’s success. Unfortunately, our system is not fully providing the education students need to succeed, thus the nation is forced to address economic and social consequences. Recent studies indicate that a poor education can lead to a steep increase in criminal behavior, and the expense of incarcerating an individual greatly outweighs the cost of providing an education for the same person. During a time when crime prevention and a decrease in spending are high on the political agenda, investing in sound education policy simply makes sense. Receiving an adequate education is a civil right and a matter of public safety. Below are recent findings regarding the correlation between education and crime.

- Research indicates that about 75 percent of America’s state prison inmates, almost 59 percent of federal inmates, and 69 percent of jail inmates did not complete high school. Increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students by only 5 percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost $8 billion each year.
- A ten percent increase in the male graduation rate would reduce murder and assault arrest rates by about 20 percent, motor vehicle theft by 13 percent, and arson by 8 percent.
- State prison inmates without a high school diploma and those with a GED were more likely to be repeat offenders than those with a diploma.
- Pennsylvania spends about $2.6 billion on prisons and jails annually; in Pennsylvania, the average annual cost of incarcerating an individual is about $32,000 while the average annual cost to educate a student is about $9,500.
- Over a third of jail inmates said the main reason they quit school was because of academic problems, behavior problems, or lost interest.
- Increasing the high school completion rate by just 1 percent for all men ages 20-60 would save the U.S. up to $1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime.
- Preschool programs create economic benefits—including reduced costs of crime, drug use and teen parenting—that range as high as $7 for each dollar invested.
- A one-year increase in average years of schooling for dropouts would reduce murder and assault by almost 30 percent, motor vehicle theft by 20 percent, arson by 13 percent, and burglary and larceny by about 6 percent.

These facts and figures provide insight into one of many reasons why public education is a worthwhile investment. With high crime rates and a strained economy, public education must be a priority to avoid some of the palpable effects facing the country today. By providing a better education for our children we provide these students with the tools to function successfully in society.

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