

Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School



RESOURCE GUIDE



Connect with Kids

- Fact Sheet
- Parent Tip Sheet
- Grades 3-5 Lesson Plan
- Grades 6-8 Lesson Plan
- Grades 9-12 Lesson Plan
- Discussion Questions



Character Traits

All Connect with Kids programs address these 26 character traits:

Caring/Compassion

Civility

Cooperation

Courtesy

Freedom

Helpfulness

Honor

Justice/Fairness

Loyalty

Peace

Respect

Self-Control

Tolerance

Citizenship

Conviction

Courage

Diligence

Generosity

Honesty

Integrity

Kindness

Patience

Perseverance

Responsibility

Togetherness

Trustworthiness



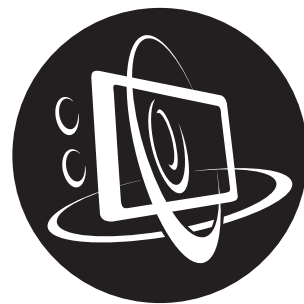
Connect with Kids

Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

In America, it's estimated that about 4 million children miss school every day... one million drop out every year.... 160,000 stay home because they're afraid. Countless additional students may be present at school but are indifferent and disengaged. In the end, those absences — that disconnect — too often lead to kids dropping out of school, greatly diminishing their chances of success in life. What's happening inside and outside of schools today that promotes attendance and helps to create an all-important emotional connection to school? What more can parents — and kids themselves — do to keep students in school and help remedy the situation?

This resource guide is designed to accompany the video entitled “Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School.” This resource guide includes:

- Fact Sheet
- Parent Tip Sheet
- Grades 3-5 Lesson Plan
- Grades 6-8 Lesson Plan
- Grades 9-12 Lesson Plan
- Discussion Questions



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Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Fact Sheet

WHAT WE KNOW

The United States currently ranks tenth place in the world for high school completion rate. Most students drop out of school because of a combination of problems in school itself and personal problems, but overwhelmingly students who drop out began as truants: those who skip school.

Students gave the following reasons for skipping school and dropping out, in response to a survey conducted by the Educational Testing Service and the National Center for School Engagement :

- They disliked the school they attended or had a general dislike of school.
- They were failing, had bad grades or could not keep up with schoolwork.
- Most felt strongly that they did not and could not get along with teachers or that their teachers disliked them.
- Their parents did not make school a priority and they missed many days to help with family matters or to deal with family issues.
- They did not have any friends in school.
- They had multiple disciplinary problems including suspension or expulsion.
- They did not feel safe in school.
- They had to get a job to support the family or could not manage both work and school.
- Pregnancy, marriage or becoming a parent.
- Problems with drugs and/or alcohol.

WHAT WE CAN DO

Studies have found that the most successful programs for keeping students in school have similar components. The No. 1 intervention is to create a personal focus where the child was made to feel like an important, integral part of the school community. Most programs include a combination of the following approaches:

- **Personal:** These components provide some kind of individual counseling, regularly scheduled class based discussions, group retreats to enhance self-esteem and community building, and participation in an interpersonal relations class.
- **Academic:** Every school wants its students to learn, but the schools that provide special academic courses, individualized methods of instruction, tutoring, vocational education and alternative programs found most success.
- **Family Involvement:** When parents are included in the education process, given regular reports and are required to participate, education becomes a priority for the student, as well. Many successful programs include home visits by teachers, social workers or counselors. If necessary, the law and/or the courts become involved.
- **School Structure:** Alternative education programs are considered a right, not a punishment, class sizes are smaller and homeroom teachers have redefined roles.
- **Mentoring:** Adults are recruited as mentors, advocates and tutors.
- **Safety Measures:** Steps are taken to make students and faculty feel safe, especially in urban environments.



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Fact Sheet *(cont.)*

RESOURCES

Alliance for Excellent Education

www.all4ed.org

Civic Enterprises

www.civicenterprises.net

Educational Testing Service

www.ets.org

Focus Adolescent Services

www.focusas.com

National Association of Social Workers

www.socialworkers.org

National Center on Secondary

Education and Transition

www.ncset.org

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

www.dropoutprevention.org

National Education Association

www.nea.org

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

www.nwrel.org

National Center for School Engagement

www.truancyprevention.org



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Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Parent Tip Sheet

WHAT WE KNOW

A review of *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, a March 2006 study conducted by Civic Enterprises for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and additional studies conducted by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network reveal:

- A lack of commitment to school is an early indicator of risky behaviors such as truancy, drug/alcohol addiction, early pregnancy, dropping out. (*Truancy Prevention, 2004*)
- Truancy has been clearly identified as an early warning sign of a student's likelihood to drop out of school. (*Truancy Prevention, 2004*)
- Close to one-third of all public school students will not graduate with their class.
- The national graduation rate is between 68 to 71 percent.
- High school dropouts are four times as likely to be unemployed as those who have completed four or more years of college.
- High school graduates earn an average of \$143 more per week than high school dropouts; college graduates earn \$479 more per week than high school dropouts.
- High school dropouts are more likely to receive public assistance than high school graduates.
- High school dropouts are more than three times more likely than high school students to be arrested in their lifetime.
- Students who stay in school are connected through a combination of academics, personal relationships, activities, family involvement and goal setting. (*NEA, 2006*)

We also know that parents are the best indicator of whether or not a child will graduate: if parents care and are involved, children are more likely to care and graduate.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Experts offer the following advice for parents of school age children and teens:

- **Make school a priority.** Get your children to school daily, on time, and with the appropriate materials. Be involved in their homework and ask about their classes.
- **Be involved.** Start early and continue through their high school years. Get to know teachers, counselors and administrators. Attend parent nights and other school functions. Join the parent teacher association of your child's school. Volunteer as often as possible, including at events and for field trips.
- **Communicate.** Find time to listen. Allow your child to vent about a problem with a teacher or a class. Find out about problems and work with the school and the teacher to find a solution and if necessary, work with a professional counselor.
- **Find help.** Arrange for help for your student to make up missed work by finding a tutor. Arrange for placement in a special or alternative program. Transfer to another school if necessary.
- **Help with scheduling.** Make sure work and family obligations do not interfere with school time or homework time.
- **Help them manage their choices.** Marriage, becoming a parent, failing courses, behaving badly, suspension or drug/alcohol abuse can seriously impact their ability to finish school. If they do become pregnant or become parents, find school programs that will meet their needs.
- **Find a GED.** If all else fails, help your child find a General Educational Development (GED) program and stick with it until the high school diploma is in hand.

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Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Parent Tip Sheet *(cont.)*

**For the
Classroom**

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National Association of Social Workers

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*National Center on Secondary Education
and Transition*

www.ncset.org

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Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Lesson Plan Grades 3-5

Connecting Squares

For the
Classroom

PURPOSE

Students will recognize the things that keep them connected to school and create an advertisement for one of their connecting facets.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Complete the “Connecting Squares” worksheet
- Describe and discuss the facets that keep them wanting to come back to school each day
- Create a poster for one favorite thing about school

MATERIALS

- “Connecting Squares” Worksheet
- Pens, pencils
- Paper
- Colored construction paper, art supplies, glue

PROCEDURE

1. Open a discussion by asking, *Have you ever stopped to think about what keeps you coming back to school? What connects you to this place? Is it the subjects? Is it the chance to see and spend time with a particular friend? Is it a teacher? Is it the games in PE? Is it your parents?*
2. Collect the students’ responses and write them on the board.
3. Distribute the “Connecting Squares” worksheet and ask students to fill in as many boxes as possible of the things that keep them coming back to school. If they need to, they may work in pairs. Allow about 10 to 15 minutes to complete this task.
4. At the end of the allotted time, have students share their responses with the class.

5. Now tell the group, *We need to let the rest of the school know what we think makes this school special. Pick your favorite thing on your worksheet. Your job is to create a poster about your favorite thing about school. You can think up a saying, like an advertising slogan, or create a poster that encourages other students to join your activity or find out more about your “connecting” quality.*
6. When they complete their posters, have students share their creations.
7. Mount their posters in the school cafeteria, the media center, or some other widely visited place in the school.

EVALUATION

- Did students participate in the discussion?
- Did students complete the worksheet?
- Was each student able to identify something that connects him or her to the school?
- Did each student complete the poster assignment?



Connect with Kids

Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Connecting Squares

Worksheet

**For the
Classroom**

Name _____ Date _____

Read the different information requests, discuss your ideas with your classmates, then fill in the blanks with details about the different things that make you feel connected to your school. Be prepared to talk about your choices.

<p>Academics What are the things you love to learn that keep you connected to school?</p>	Subject	Class	Project	Book	Other
<p>People Who are the special people that keep you connected to school?</p>	Teacher	Classmate(s)	Staff	Secretary	Other
<p>Facility What is your favorite room or area that keeps you connected to your school?</p>	Classroom	Speciality Classroom	Activity Room	Outside Area	Other
<p>Activity What activity, <i>before or after</i> class time, keeps you connected to your school?</p>	Sport	Arts	Club	Student Government	Other



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Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Lesson Plan Grades 6-8

My Connector

For the
Classroom

PURPOSE

Students will determine what or who keeps them connected to school and will write a letter of thanks to that person.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Brainstorm the people and/or activities that keep them connected to school
- Complete the “Connecting Squares” worksheet
- List the three to five ways that a selected person and/or activity keeps them connected to school
- Write a letter of thanks regarding how they think that connection will affect their futures and how they intend to stay connected

MATERIALS

- “Connecting Squares” worksheet (included in this guide)
- Paper
- Pens, pencils

PROCEDURE

1. Open a group discussion by asking, *Have you ever stopped to think about what keeps you coming back to school? What connects you to this place? Is it the subjects? Is it the chance to see and talk with a particular friend? Is it a teacher? Is it the games in PE? Is it your parents?*
2. Record the groups’ responses on the board.
3. Distribute the “Connecting Squares” worksheet and ask students to fill in as many boxes as possible of the things that keep them coming back to school. If they need to, they may work in pairs. Allow students about 10 to 15 minutes to complete this task.
4. At the end of the allotted time, have students share their responses with the class.

5. Next, say to the group, *Pick the one thing or one person from your list that stands out as your biggest connection to school. On the back of the page, list three to five reasons that person and/or activity has the ability to keep you coming back to school.*
6. Now ask the students to think about how this connection might impact their future. Ask, *How might that person or activity affect your life in the next two years? In the next five years? In 20 years? Do you think this person or this activity might influence your choice of career? What have you learned from that person or activity? How will those lessons be important to your life? Why? List at least three ways that person or activity might affect your future.*
7. Now tell them to imagine 25 years have flown by and they are adults. They are successful in a career and in their relationships with friends and family.
8. Their job is to write a letter to this person or the person in charge of their activity as if they are 25 years older than today, thanking them for being the “connection” they needed to stay in school and graduate. They should be very specific and use their lists they have created, citing the things that helped connect them to school during their school years — and subsequently lead them to happy adult lives.
9. Give students time to write their letters, edit as necessary and submit.
10. Upon completion, be sure to allot enough time for further discussion and individual responses.

EVALUATION

- Did students participate in the discussion?
- Did students complete the worksheet?
- Did students complete letters?
- Do students understand how staying connected to school will impact their future?



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Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Lesson Plan Grades 9-12

Dream Big

For the
Classroom

PURPOSE

Students will describe their dreams and list the steps they will need to take in order to reach those dreams.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Describe their talents, skills and abilities
- State their dreams for the future
- Chart the steps they will need to take to reach that dream

MATERIALS

- Pens, pencils
- “Connecting Building Blocks” worksheet
- Paper, two pieces per student
- Access to career information either through counselors, the Internet, research materials in the media center, etc.

PROCEDURE

1. Open a group discussion by asking the students, *What do you do well? What are your talents? What are your skills?*
2. Distribute the “Connecting Building Blocks” worksheet and have students complete step one: to write your three best talents, skills and/or abilities. Then have them turn to two other people in the group and complete step two.
3. In the third block on the worksheet, have them write down two or three things they would like to do with their lives in the future. Remind your students to dream big. Ask, *What would be your dream career or your dream future? What do you see yourself doing? Where will you live?*
4. Have them pick one of their dreams and ask, *How do your talents and skills fit in with your dreams? Explain your answer.*
5. On lines provided, students should write down five steps they will have to take in order to reach that dream. These might include things like, “Enlist in the Marines,” or “Get a job at a famous hair or beauty salon in Los Angeles,” or even “Win the lottery,” etc. They should list them in some kind of chronological order, such as, “This year I will...,” “In two years I will...,” etc.
6. Ask students to consider the most realistic first step they would need to take on the journey to achieve their dream. Ask, *How does school fit into your plan? Has anyone considered whether or not you will need a high school diploma or further education? Why or why not? Discuss as a group.*
7. In the space provided beneath the five steps, ask students to write down at least three people, either specifically by name (i.e., Dr. Farnsworth, our guidance counselor; Ms. Schuster, my ballet instructor; Bob, the manager at the store where I work; Ms. Bellamy, the French teacher; etc.) or by generic category (i.e., a guru, a fine chef/cooking instructor, a flight instructor, etc.) who can help them hone their skills, fine tune their talents and abilities, and keep each individual connected to his or her dream. Ask, *Why did you choose these people? Write that reason down next to that person’s name/title.*
8. In the last section, ask the students to list two things that might threaten their achieving their dream. Next to each, they should write a way they will overcome the threat.
9. Now ask the group to stop for a moment and look at their big dream and their lists. Their assignment is to create a strategy for achieving their dream and write it either as a formal paper or as a large chart. Be sure to give a due date and check points.
10. On the due date, have the students share their dreamworks and discuss how being connected to their dream will help them achieve their goals.



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**For the
Classroom**

Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Lesson Plan Grades 9-12

Dream Big *(cont.)*

EVALUATION

- Did students participate in the discussions?
- Did students provide suggestions for their peers' talents, skills and/or abilities?
- Could students list at least one dream?
- Did students list steps necessary to achieve one of their dreams?
- Do students understand the importance of school and education in achieving their dreams?



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Connecting Building Blocks

Worksheet

**For the
Classroom**

Name _____ Date _____

1. In this first block, write your best talents, skills, qualities and/or abilities.

2. Now ask two other people in class what they think your best talents, skills, qualities and/or abilities are.

3. Write down two or three things you would like to do with your life in the future. Dream big!



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Connecting Building Blocks

Worksheet *(cont.)*

**For the
Classroom**

4. Pick your favorite dream from question No. 3. List five steps you will need to take to make that dream come true.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

5. Write down at least three people, either specifically by name or by generic category, who can help you hone your skills, fine tune your talents and abilities, and keep you connected to your dream.

- _____
- _____
- _____

6. Write two things that might threaten your achieving your dream. Next to each, you should write a way you will overcome those obstacles to your success.



Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. What are your top reasons for coming to school each day? Is it a person? A class? A project? Explain.
2. Why do people say school is boring? Name at least three times you were *not* bored at school. What makes those times stand out in your mind?
3. What do you think are the main risk factors for dropping out of school?
4. Answer the questions the documentary poses:
 - Do you feel safe at school?
 - Do you have friends at school?
 - Do teachers know you and care about you?
 - Do you get support from your mom and/or dad?

Part I

1. Describe Danielle's story. How did people treat Danielle at school?
2. Can you blame Danielle for not wanting to go to school? Explain your answer.
3. Have you ever been afraid to come to school? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever been concerned about having someone to sit with at lunch? What did you do about it?
5. If you need help during the school day — beyond just your school work — who do you talk to or go to for help? Who do you seek out to really listen and help you when things get rough?

Part II

1. Have you ever been aware of your peers purposely performing poorly in school so that they will not stand out? What do you think about this attitude?
2. Have you witnessed other students being pressured by their peers to do poorly? How did you react? Why? What does this say about the people being pressured as well as the people doing the pressuring?
3. What is wrong with getting good grades?
4. What is the formula for being popular in the school discussed in the documentary? What is the formula for popularity in your school? How do they compare and contrast?
5. Have you ever stopped to focus on what you can become in the future rather than what you have done in the past? Why or why not? What did you 'see'?
6. What qualities do you look for in a good friend?
7. Do you know of a teacher or other adult in your school who lifts you up? Describe that feeling.
8. What talents did Gena's teacher see in her? How did her teacher's encouragement keep her focused on staying in school?
9. Gena Keane says, "Without a high school diploma you're nothing in life." What does that mean for your self-esteem? What does it mean financially? Career-wise?

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Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

Discussion Questions *(cont.)*

Part III

1. Describe Dwayne's earlier school and home life. What was he like? Why do you think he was like that?
2. Who do you have in your life that supports you the way that Dwayne's mother, his cousin and his teacher supported him?
3. What is a "tipping point?" What was Dwayne's tipping point? What have been some of your tipping points?
4. How did Dwayne's tipping point bring him back to a more focused, connected-to-school-and-success life?

Close

1. Name something or someone in your school that "needs" you. How does that make you feel?
2. How do you know when a teacher cares about you?
3. What is a parent's job in terms of helping a child stay in school?
4. Look at the advice of Judge Lester Langer, Truancy Court Judge: "You've got to get to know who your children's teachers are...you need to be there on parent teacher night...you need to be there, get involved with the PTA, know what's going on." Why do you think it is important for parents to be involved?
5. What are some other ways parents can be involved in their children's school?
6. What would you like to say to your parents regarding their involvement in your school and school work?

For more information



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on Connect with Kids or

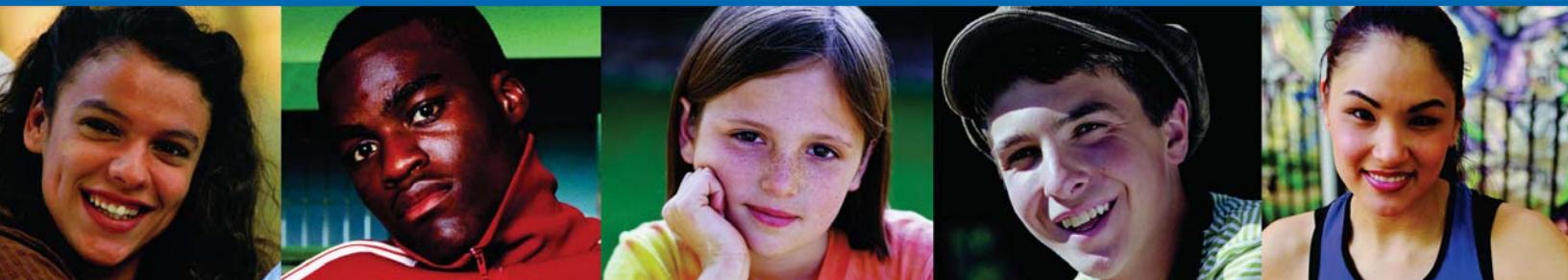
Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

please call (888) 598-KIDS (5437) or

email to sales@cwknetwork.com

dis·con·nect (dis'kə-nĕkt')

v. to sever the connection of or between something — perhaps relationships, activities, commitments; to become detached or withdrawn.



Disconnect: Why Kids Skip School

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This special program was produced by the highly skilled television and educational team at CWK Network, Inc.

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Phone 1.888.598.KIDS
www.connectwithkids.com