



Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence

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Philadelphia Law Enforcement: Dropout Rates Fueling Violent Crime

Police Commissioner, District Attorney back early education to boost graduation rates, cut crime

Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles H. Ramsey and District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham joined together for a press conference today in support of programs designed to increase high school graduation rates, while cutting violent crime.

They released a report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids showing that by increasing graduation rates 10 percentage points, 150 murders and 5,900 assaults will be prevented in Pennsylvania every year. This includes 75 prevented murders and 2,030 prevented assaults in Philadelphia each year. The new report, entitled *School or the Streets: Crime and Pennsylvania's Dropout Crisis*, includes research showing that high quality pre-kindergarten is the most effective strategy to increase graduation rates.

According to a long-term study following at-risk children through age 40 who attended the High/Scope Perry Preschool program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, children enrolled in the program were 44 percent more likely to graduate from high school than similar children randomly assigned not to participate.

"It is time to boost our graduation rates to cut the cycle of violence by increasing state and federal investments in quality pre-kindergarten programs," said Commissioner Ramsey. "Increasing Philadelphia's graduation rates by 10 percentage points would reduce murder and assault rates by about 20 percent."

Research shows that high school dropouts are three and a half times more likely than graduates to be arrested and eight times more likely to be incarcerated. In our nation's state prisons, 68 percent of all inmates failed to earn a high school diploma.

In Philadelphia, approximately 38 percent of students fail to graduate in four years, and overall in Pennsylvania, about 20 percent of students do not graduate on time.

"If we can increase our high school graduation rate only 10 percentage points, we will have a great impact on driving down homicides, assaults, property and other major crimes to reduce the cycle of crime and violence in Philadelphia and across Pennsylvania," said Abraham. "Providing high quality pre-kindergarten programs is one of the few interventions we know works to increase high school graduation rates."

The law enforcement officials called on Congress and the Pennsylvania General Assembly to expand quality pre-kindergarten programs for at-risk kids. Also participating in the event was Donna Piekarski, Officer in the Philadelphia School District's Office of Early Childhood Education.

Long-term benefits of quality pre-kindergarten programs include higher graduation rates, college enrollment and income levels, as well as significant reductions in crime.

The law enforcement leaders are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania, a statewide anti-crime organization made up of over 200 police chiefs, district attorneys, sheriffs, and violence survivors.

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