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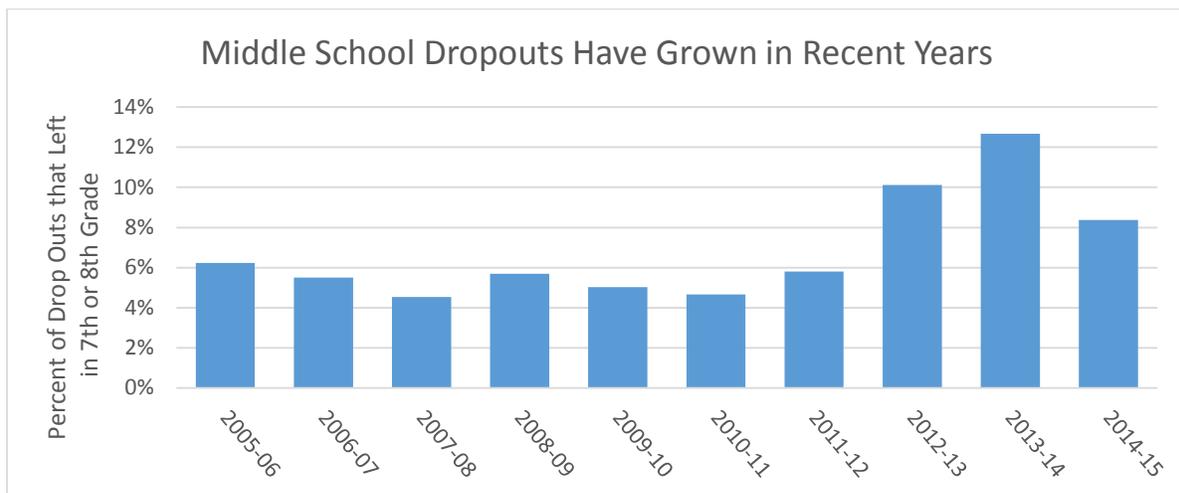
Testimony in Support of HB 2519

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CPPP supports HB 2519, a bill to study the best practices around dropout prevention and recovery for students before the ninth grade.

Last session, a lot of time was spent discussing the importance of Pre-K quality. The session before that, the legislature completely reformed high school graduation requirements. However, the unique needs of “tweens” in the middle grades have received little attention.

During the 2014-15 school year, over 2,500 students dropped out in seventh and eighth grade – that’s roughly 8 percent of all public school dropouts. The year before, nearly 4,000 students dropped out before even beginning high school. Yet the majority of programs and interventions to prevent students from dropping out are focused in grades nine through twelve.



Source: TEA Annual Dropout Rates, by Grade Span 2005-06 to 2014-15

Research out of John Hopkins University identified three early indicators that can predict risk of dropping out. Coined the ABC’s of secondary school success, these indicators include: Attendance, Behavior, and Course Performance. Students who are off-track on just one of these indicators in the sixth grade have only a 15-25 percent chance of graduating high school on time. Though districts are already collecting much of this information, it is not being used systematically as an early warning system.

Once a student drops out of school, too often our schools make little or no effort to bring them back into the educational pipeline. Dropout recovery is much harder than prevention. Schools lack information on students who have left, do not have resource or policies for getting these students caught up to grade level, and have few if any financial incentives to conduct outreach and re-engage out-of-school youth.

When students leave school before high school, the barriers to re-entry are even greater. In Texas, there is not a clear path back into the classroom for those who leave school before starting high school. Only a hand-full of alternative education programs, often referred to as Dropout Recovery Schools, accept students below the ninth grade level, and students need to be at least 16 years-old before they are eligible to earn a certificate of high

school equivalency. As a result, students that drop out in the middle grades can find themselves in educational limbo for several years before opportunities to continue their education are available.

HB 2519 is a strong first step in addressing dropout prevention and recovery for younger students by studying best practices and the feasibility of piloting an early warning data system.

For more information or to request an interview, please contact Oliver Bernstein at bernstein@cphp.org or 512.823.2875.

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