

Exploring School Attainment in Racine

*A Report for the Racine County
Workforce Development Board
Planning Committee*

August 17, 2006

Introduction

Project Scope:

- 3 Months
- 160 Survey and Focus Group Participants
- 3 Principal Researchers, 2 Expert References, 11 UW-P Students, 1 transcriber, 1 community partner, 1 HS student
- Oversight from Alice Oliver, Beth Norris, and Tom Schnaubelt

Introduction

Research Methods:

- Survey
- Focus Groups
- Information Investigation
- Literature Review
- Program Search

Introduction

Presentation Outline:

- Questions Answered
- Racine Statistical Snapshot
- Survey Explored
- Focus Groups Explored
- Literature Review
- Model Programs
- Observations & Next Steps

Questions Answered

Question 1: *Is there additional information available that refutes, validates or further explains the 2000 United States Census data indicating 36% of 18-24 year olds in Racine, and 42% of males in that age group lack a high school diploma or GED?*

Questions Answered

Answer 1: *The Census data is:*

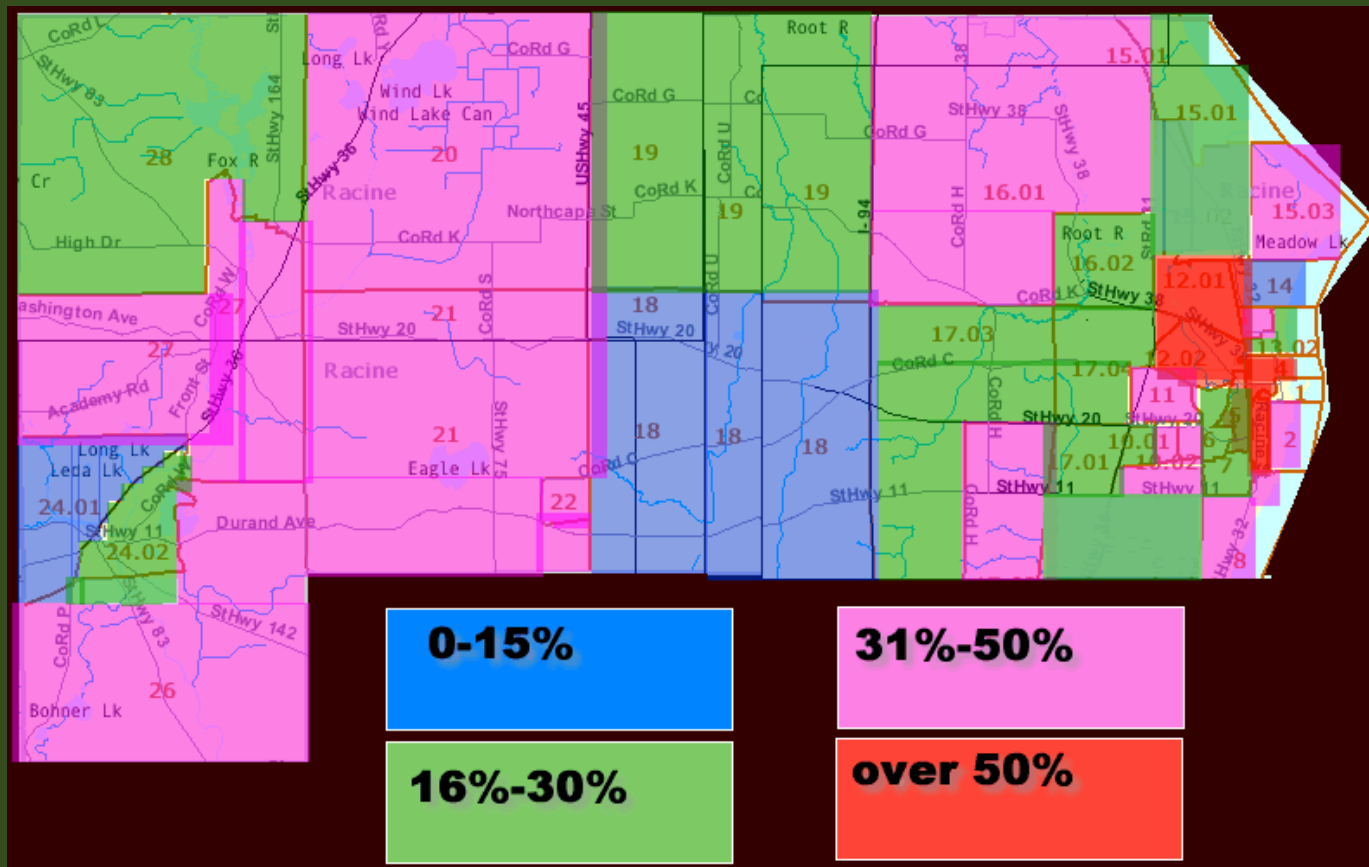
- Consistent with estimates from school counselors
- Higher than Racine Unified School District's statistics
- Biased against lower income family variables like dropout rates
- Difficult to compare with other data because of varied definitions

Questions Answered

Patterns In the Census Data:

Educational Attainment is statistically related to income and race/ethnicity in Racine County neighborhoods as shown in the following maps:

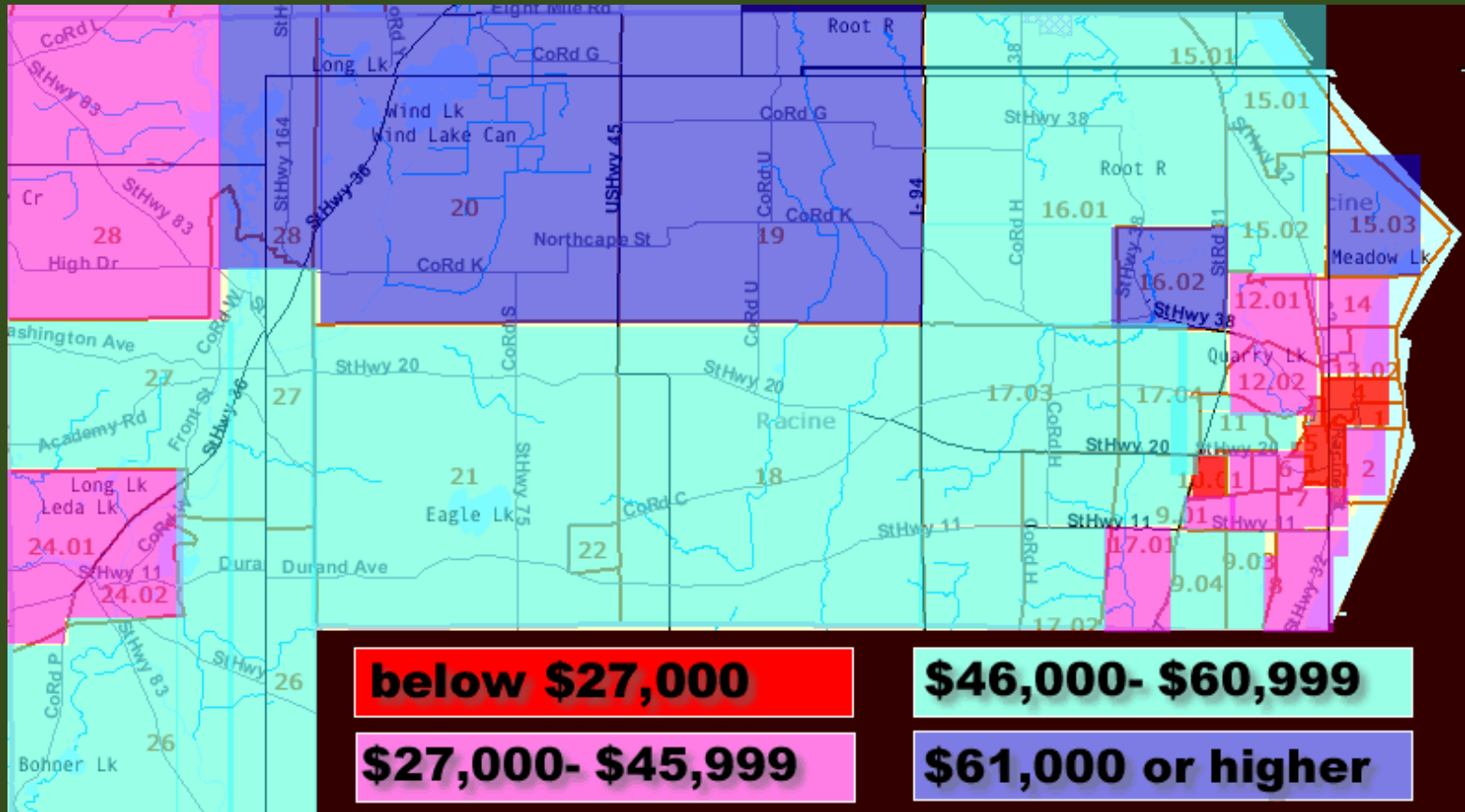
Racine County – Percent of men ages 18-24 lacking a High School Diploma



Generated by Mary Kay Schleiter using data and maps from detailed tables and maps on the US Census Website (www.census.gov): Original data which formed the basis for the calculations in this graph were downloaded from the U.S. Census 2000, SF3, Table PCT25 on July 13, 2006.

Racine County

Median Household Income: 1999



Generated by Mary Kay Schleiter using data and maps from detailed tables and maps on the US Census Website (www.census.gov): Original data which formed the basis for the calculations in this graph were downloaded from the U.S. Census 2000, SF3, Table P53 on July 13, 2006.

Questions Answered

Additional Observations:

- Racial differential in dropouts is highest in WI
- High incarceration rates of African Americans impact unemployment race differential
- Educational attainment critical to Racine's long run labor market performance; student performance also critical

Questions Answered

Additional Observations:

The racial gap in educational attainment is caused by:

- Poverty and its consequences
- Economic segregation of schools & classrooms
- Stereotypes, educational climate, gender roles, relationships
- Stressed families and communities

Questions Answered

Question 2: *What efforts exist in Racine, including those offered through schools, the workforce development system, and other community based programs, to address the problem of low educational attainment of 18-24 year olds?*

Questions Answered

Answer 2: What are the efforts?

- Schools (Gateway, Parkside, high schools, middle schools, pre-schools)
- County Agencies (Workforce, Human Services, Jails, Police, Parks, PSG, OIC)
- Nonprofits (Scouts, Ys, Literacy, HALO)
- Community Centers
- Religious Organizations (Racine Interfaith)

Questions Answered

What's the effectiveness of these efforts?

- Poor collaboration and communication
- Not enough attention on parents, system
- Comparative Analysis indicates Racine lowest in state
- Recognition of improvement and increased attention in last year and a half

Questions Answered

What are the barriers to success?

- Lack of coordinated effort
- School climate and teacher behavior
- Racism and stereotyping
- Student bullying and violence
- Lack of creativity and flexibility in schools
- Lack of parenting skills
- Lack of role models
- Lack of funding for schools, programs, day care

Questions Answered

What insights do individuals working or participating in these programs have about the problem of low educational attainment and/or potential ways to solve it?

Questions Answered

Insights on the Problem:

- Complicated with social, economic, cultural, resource factors
- A systems issue (i.e. family dynamic)
- Cultural and peer norms perpetuate problem
- Community doesn't value education (referendums, media attention)

Questions Answered

Ways to solve the problem:

- Coordinate and unify efforts
- Improve academics, flexibility and school ratios
- Provide early interventions and parenting skills
- Focus services on poor and minorities
- Connect programs to job placement
- Publicize existing programs

Questions Answered

Ways to solve the problem:

- Enforce stricter sanctions
- Provide vocational alternative to high school
- Focus on prevention, skill building
- Take students' concerns seriously
- Remove problem students
- Increase involvement in extracurricular activity

Questions Answered

Question 3: *What efforts have been undertaken elsewhere in the country to address problems of low educational attainment rates of individuals?*

Questions Answered

Answer 3: *Efforts that are occurring elsewhere include:*

1. • Mentoring, tutoring, & alternative schooling
2. • Early intervention
3. • Improving instruction
4. • System strengthening

Questions Answered

What research exists?

- Research on causality
- Outcomes research
- Studies of risk factors

Questions Answered

What resources exist?

- National foundations
- Wisconsin foundations
- Government funds
- Specialized foundations identified by the
National Dropout Prevention Center

Questions Answered

What are the necessary elements to make programs successful?

- High quality schools
- Early identification of students at risk
- Students with multiple connections to school
- A caring school community

Questions Answered

How would we evaluate educational programs?

- Use high quality research methods
- Random assignment into test and control groups
- Both quantitative and qualitative
- Replication in multiple locations
- Standard outcome variables
- Use the best methods feasible

Racine Statistical Snapshot

	03-04	Prior
High School Drop Outs	.63%	(5%)
Drop in Enrollment	14%	(35%)
High School Completion	18.2%	(25%)

Racine Statistical Snapshot

Graduation Rate (CA)	81.3%	03-04
Graduation Rate (CA)	76.7%	02-03
Graduation Rate (ERC)	70.8%	02-03

CA: Comparative Analysis

ERC: Education Research Center

Racine Statistical Snapshot

2000 Census

18-24 year olds without high school diploma
(City of Racine)

Males: 42%

Females: 30%

School Counselors' Estimate for 2006 Drop
Out Rate: 40%

Racine Statistical Snapshot

What do the numbers tell us?

- Reporting definitions change over years
- Numbers vary depending on definition
- Statistics serve varying purposes
- Economic and political pressures involved

Survey Explored

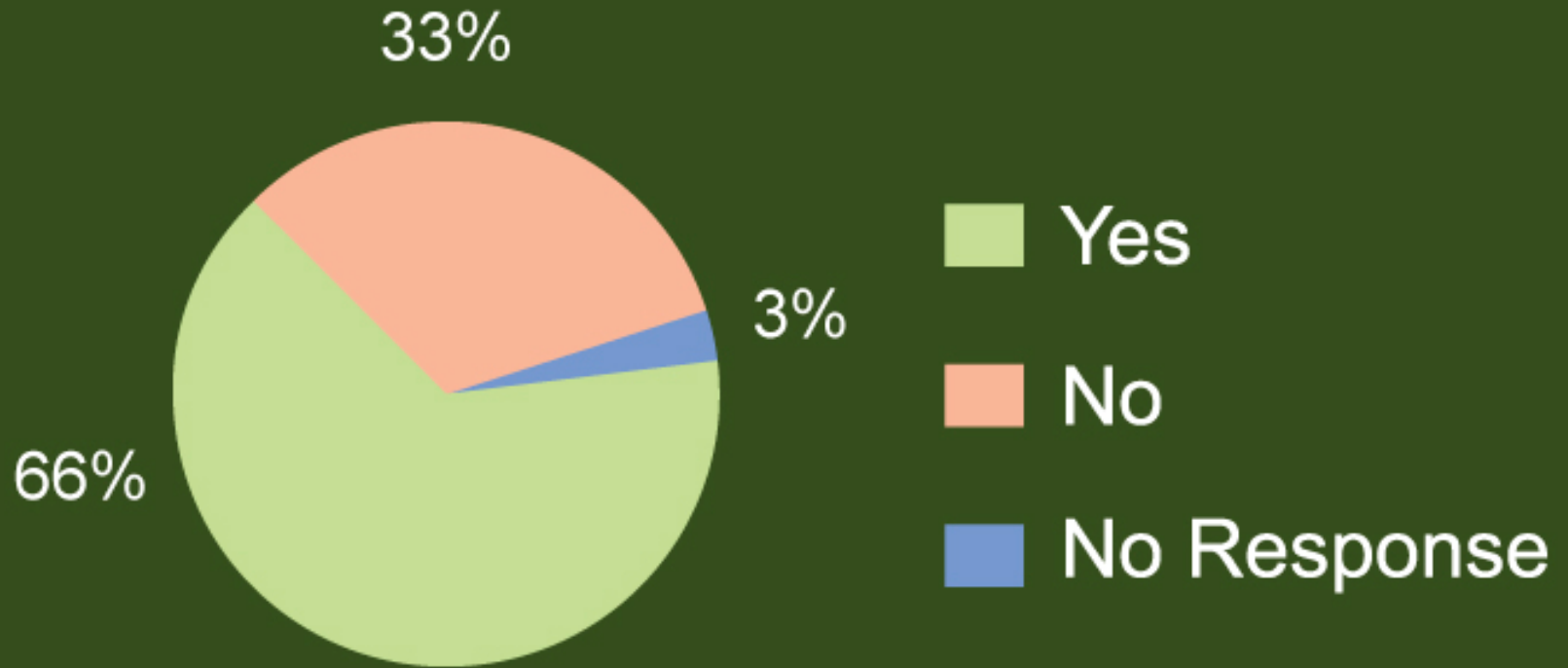
- A joint effort with the Racine Truancy Committee
- Sent to nonprofits, schools, county, and religious institutions
- Focus on identifying service providers, program characteristics, evaluation, insights

Survey Explored

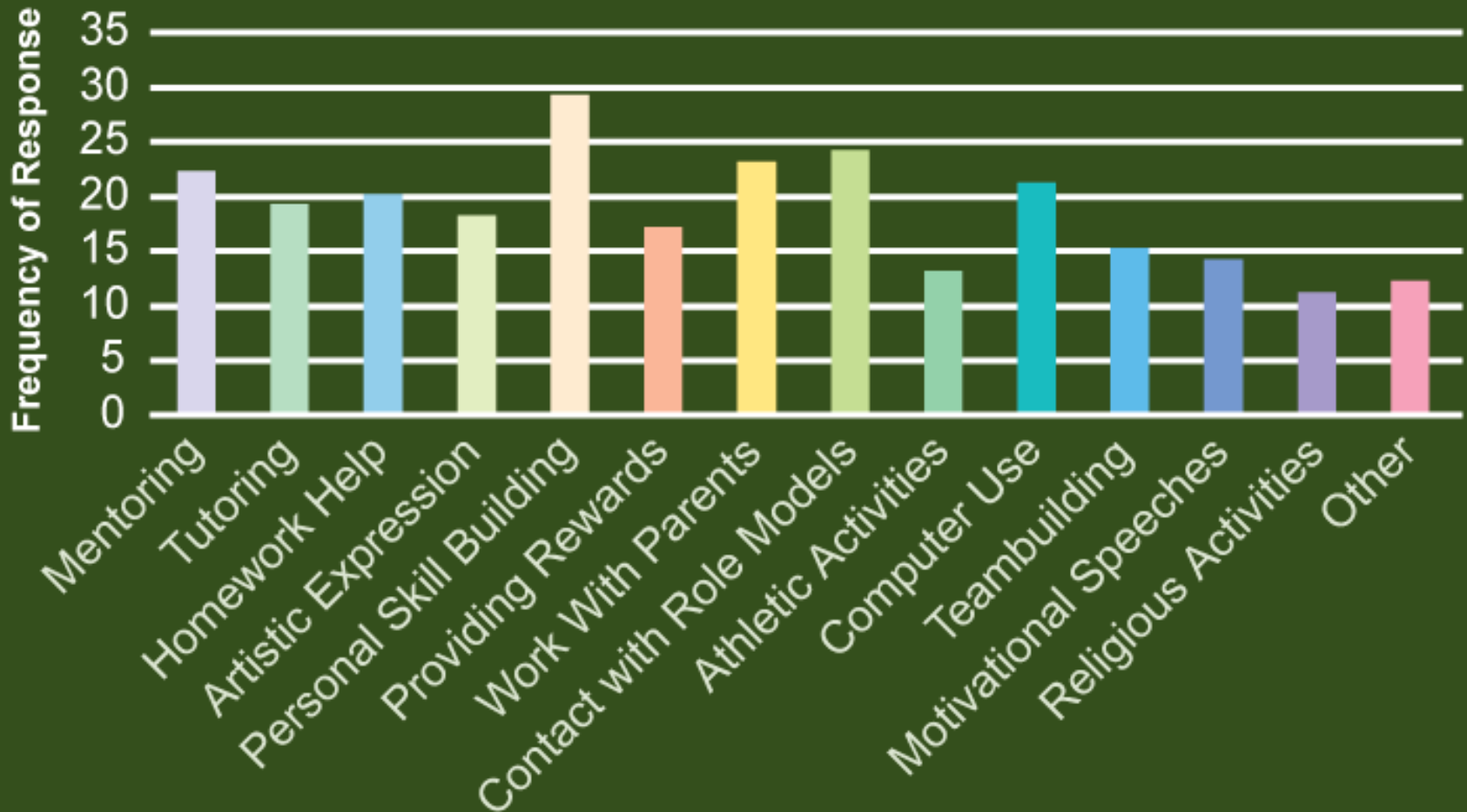
- 400 surveys sent (1/3 by e-mail)
- 70 surveys completed
- 36 survey respondents had goal of increasing high school completion

Survey Explored

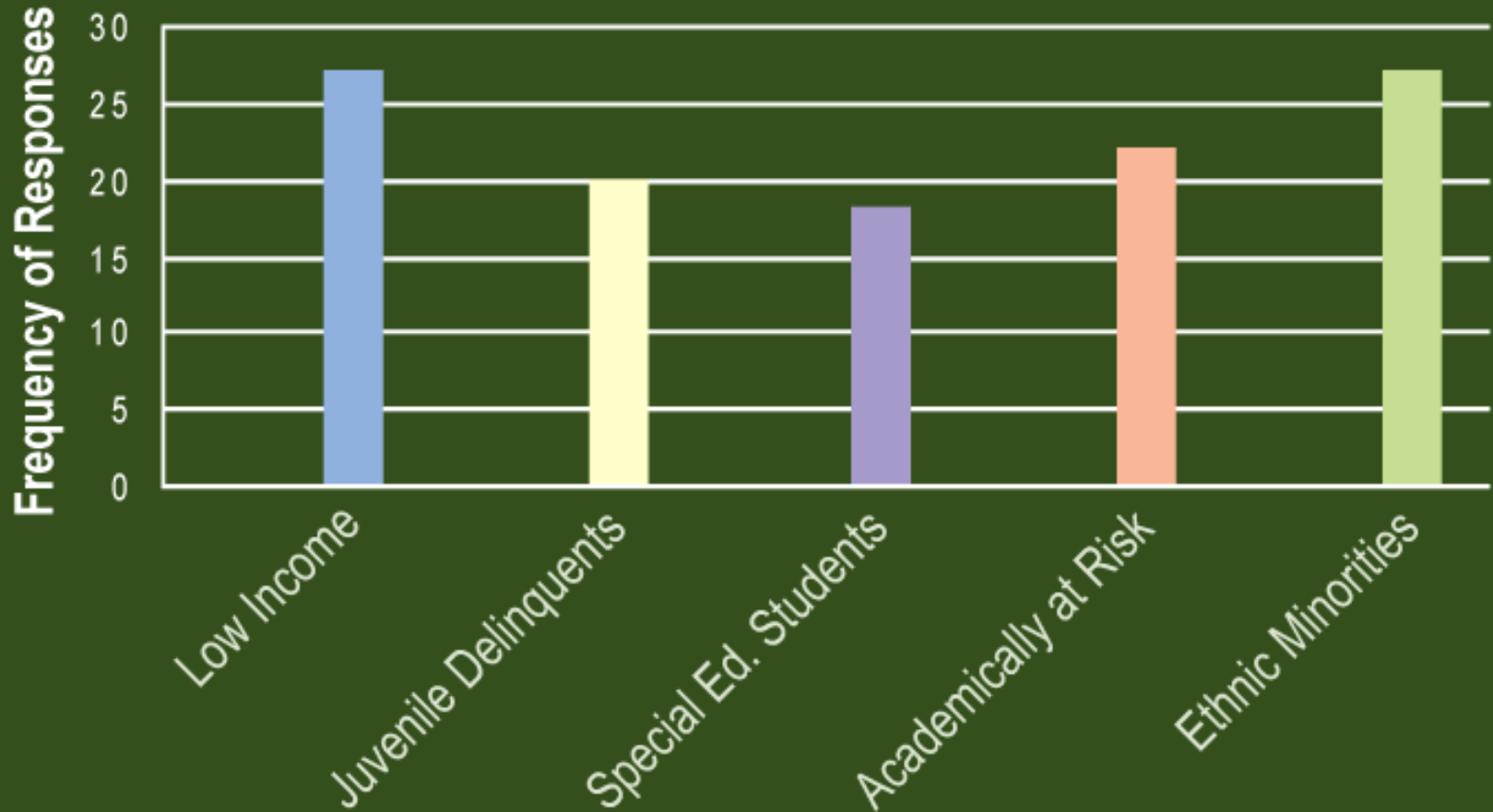
Respondents with Stated Goal
of High School Completion



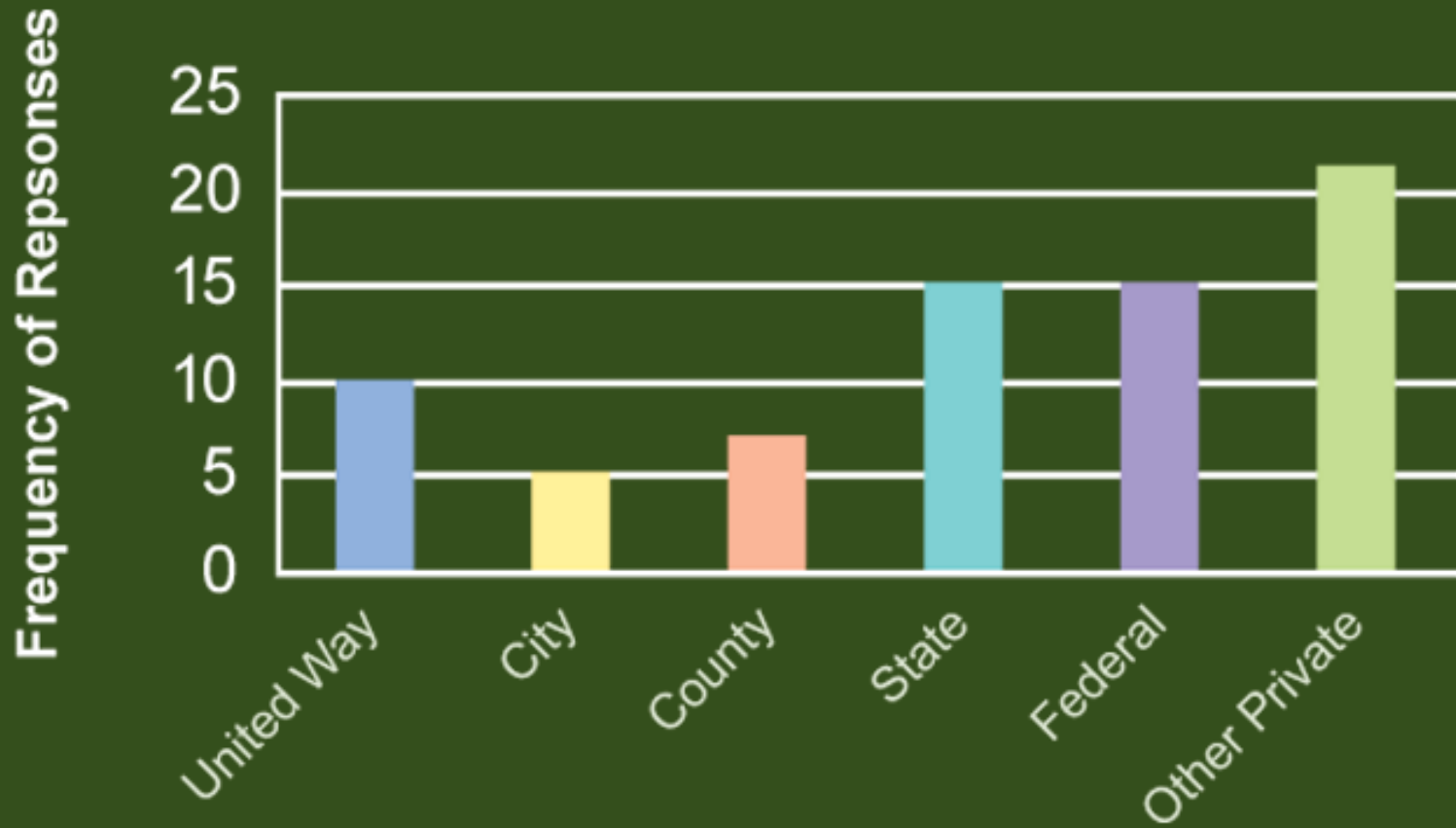
Program Components Affecting Academic Success



Target Populations Served



Respondents with Programs: Funding Sources



Survey Explored

How do you measure the impact on participants' educational attainment?

- School records, grades, attendance
- Standardized tests
- Reports from teachers, counselors, students
- Observations/feedback
- Outcomes (completion rates, job placements, college entrance)

Survey Explored

What programs are currently absent from Racine County that could be created to improve the rate of high school completion?

Survey Explored

Programs Absent:

- Child care in high schools
- Early childhood learning programs
- Parenting classes/support groups
- Pregnancy prevention courses
- Truancy court or truancy panels
- Reading enhancement

Survey Explored

Programs Absent:

- Support for parents of transient kids
- Mentoring programs
- Tech schools
- After school homework assistance
- Teen drop in center (recreational)
- Career orientated programs

Focus Groups Explored

Focus Group Participants:

- High School Counselors (2)
- At Risk Teens (3)
- Parents of At Risk Teens
- Business leaders
- Community Program Leaders (2)
- Law Enforcement
- Adult GED students
- Gateway faculty
- Adult High School Dropouts/Prisoners

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What's the extent of the problem?

- A big problem: “Too many kids dropping out”
- As many as half not graduating
- Too many kids “in the streets”
- Lots of truancy leading to drop outs
- Not enough students prepared for the work force

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What's the context of the problem?

- Lack of funding/community support for public schools and support programs
- Community has a poor opinion of school performance
- Students/parents' not valuing school
- Peer pressure that says "dropping out is okay"

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What are the causes of the problem?

- Youth are bored with school; not motivated
- Parents are not skilled at parenting causing a cycle/culture of drop outs
- Impediments to parental control (e.g., peer pressure, culture of violence in schools)
- Schools/teachers are ineffective and overwhelmed; teachers mistreat students
- Poverty breeds unequal access to support
- Lack of role models
- Lack of consequences for bad behavior

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What motivates people to stay in school or go back to school?

- Securing a job; earning more income
- Becoming a role model
- Ability to leave Racine
- Making a parent proud

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What programs seem to work?

- When students feel connected to each other, teachers, leaders, or mentors
- Interconnected and coordinated services
- Connection to securing a job
- Clear and strict consequences for poor behavior

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What programs don't work?

- Ones that isolate students (i.e. don't connect them to caring adult)
- Traditional truancy programs that take effect too late
- Remedial programs (students lack motivation)
- Ones that don't address transient population

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What are the barriers to helping students?

- Students have varied learning styles, but traditional system of education is rigid
- Counselors don't have systematic access to students
- Lack of role models
- A culture that doesn't value education

Focus Groups Explored: Key Findings

What programs do we need?

- Programs that collaborate and coordinate with each other and the schools
- Prevention programs for students early on
- Programs that address the whole system - both students and parents
- Programs that clearly connect to employment

Literature Review

Who's at risk?

- Inner city and rural communities
- Large schools and schools with inadequate staffing and resources
- Low income students
- African American and Hispanic youth
- Men and boys

Literature Review

What is causing the problem?

- Poverty
- Inadequate resources
- Economic segregation
- Multiple stressors
- Sexism and an anti-intellectual male image
- Once a student falls behind, it is difficult to catch up

Literature Review

Recommendations:

- Counteract poverty
- Identify and counteract stressors
- Promote a positive academic image
- Identify and target students at risk

Literature Review

Solutions: Strengthen and restructure

- Strengthen the basics
- Reduce School Size
- Implement full integration
- Structure smooth transitions
- Provide alternative schools

Literature Review

Characteristics of Effective Programs:

- Intensive and continuous.
- Start early and continue to graduation.
- Staffed by competent professionals.
- Utilize evaluation research

Program Search

Model Programs:

- Good evidence of effectiveness exists for:
 - Check & Connect
 - Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)
- An approach to support change:
 - The National League of Cities KIT for Reengaging Disconnected Youth

Observations

Research Limitations:

- Can be a nebulous concept . . . what is educational attainment?
- Not a random sample of community (but representative)
- Difficult to capture drop outs' perspective

Observations

Observations:

- Issue has keen interest of the community
- Multiple programs not working collaboratively
- Statistics vary depending on definitions
- Complex issue with many variables
- Not just local, “national epidemic”
- Programs must focus on racial and economic inequalities

Next Steps

Address question 4: Are current efforts in Racine County effectively addressing this problem?

- *Are there ways to improve effectiveness of current efforts?*
- *Are there new efforts that should be undertaken?*
- *What will improve our results for the 2010 census?*