

# SO YOU'RE THINKING OF DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL?

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Get an Education.....	3
ARISE Foundation: An Overview.....	4
What Are People Saying About ARISE?.....	5
The ARISE Big 10.....	6
Tips for Teaching ARISE Life Management Skills.....	7
Performance Evaluation.....	9
<b>SECTION 1</b>	
Introduction.....	12
Profile of a Dropout.....	13
Facts About Dropping Out.....	16
Skipping School: A Step in the Wrong Direction.....	19
Review Activity.....	23
<b>SECTION 2</b>	
Introduction.....	24
The Importance of Education.....	25
Preparing for Success in School.....	31
Personal Audit.....	36
Review Activity.....	39
<b>SECTION 3</b>	
Introduction.....	40
The Cost of Living.....	41
Finding a Job.....	46
Holding Onto Your Job.....	51
Review Activity.....	55
Worth Remembering.....	56

# SO YOU'RE THINKING OF DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL?

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONT.)

### LEARNER'S WORKSHEETS

SECTION 1.....	59
SECTION 2.....	80
SECTION 3.....	106

### QUIZZES, ASSESSMENTS, ANSWER KEYS AND BONUS MATERIAL

Worksheet and Review Answers.....	134
Quizzes and Assessments.....	137
Quiz and Assessment Answers.....	143
Vocabulary.....	144
ARISE Bonus Material Introduction.....	147
Discussion Questions and Activity Ideas for the ARISE Inspirational Biographies...	148
ARISE Inspirational Biographies.....	149
Vision Board Activity.....	152
Using ARISE True Life Tales to Create Memorable Learning Experiences.....	153
ARISE True Life Tales.....	154
Mind Map Activity.....	162
Create a Comic Activity.....	163
How to Use the ARISE Life Quotes Found in this Manual.....	164
How to Effectively Use ARISE Motivational Posters.....	165
ARISE Motivational Posters.....	166
ARISE Curricula and Training.....	172



# SECTION ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Years ago, many of our grandparents dropped out of school to support their families. Others went to work after high school, because college was too expensive. But in those days, unskilled workers in the United States could make a decent living. Huge factories and mills paid good wages then, and the cost of living was much lower. Today, many factories have moved out of this country, seeking cheap labor. Other companies relocate globally, wherever they find large numbers of educated, well-trained people. These are tough times for school dropouts. With computers, the Internet and other kinds of technology, it's very difficult today to make a good living without an education when employees in other countries are anxious to work for three to five dollars a day.

Sadly, today's dropout will feel like an alien in his own country—always watching successful people go about enjoying their lives while he, the educational failure, suffers.

**The goal for learners to achieve in this section is:  
To understand what the future holds for a dropout and what the  
future holds for a graduate.**

**REMEMBER TO INCLUDE THE WONDERFUL INTERACTIVE  
RESOURCE MATERIAL BEGINNING ON PAGE 147  
AS PART OF THIS EXCITING LEARNING EXPERIENCE.**



**INFORM LEARNERS:  
THERE WILL BE A QUIZ FOLLOWING EACH SECTION.**

# 1

## PROFILE OF A DROPOUT

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT DROPPING OUT

**Worksheet:** *Pages 59 and 60*

**Learner's Workbook:** *Pages 5 and 6*

1. Encourage volunteers to read the questions on worksheet pages 59 and 60, Learner's Workbook pages 5 and 6, one by one. After each question, ask the group if they know the answers. Accept all responses. Then have a volunteer read the answers from the worksheet.
2. Have three pairs of volunteers role-play a situation where a student tells a friend he is dropping out of school. The friend tries to get the student to change his mind by giving him some good reasons to stay in school. Afterward, the audience decides if there are any other good reasons the friend may have left out.

### PROFILE OF A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT

**Worksheet:** *Page 61*

**Learner's Workbook:** *Page 7*

1. Ask volunteers to read each of the points on worksheet page 61, Learner's Workbook page 7. Then, ask learners the following question: Do you think a person is born successful, or do you have to work hard to be successful? (*You have to work hard.*)
2. Write the words "dropout" and "successful student" on a board or large piece of paper. Ask volunteers to tell you some characteristics of each group. Possible answers for "dropout" are: *They hang out with people who do drugs; They are not willing to work; They want everything NOW.* Answers for "successful student" might include: *They participate in class; They are willing to work; They understand that reaching their goals will take time and effort.*
3. Ask learners to share which column they would place themselves in right now.

**"People of mediocre ability sometimes achieve outstanding success because they don't know when to quit. Most men succeed because they are determined to."**

*-George E. Allen*

## SETTING GOALS AND ACHIEVING THEM

**Worksheet:** Pages 62 and 63

**Learner's Workbook:** Pages 8 and 9

1. Ask learners what a “goal” is in soccer or hockey. (*It's something players get when they put the ball or puck into the netted area. It's the way a player scores points and helps his team win a game.*) Explain that a goal is also something we use to measure everyday success. We set goals for ourselves, such as getting to school on time or cleaning our room. When we complete that task, we have “achieved that goal.” A student's goals might include showing up to school every day to learn, completing class work and finishing homework. Have learners brainstorm other goals a student might have. Write their answers on a board or large piece of paper. Possible answers include *making the football or basketball team, getting good grades on report cards, passing a test, graduating.*
2. Share the following quote with learners: “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” —Larry Elder  
Ask learners what this quote means to them. Write their answers on a board or large piece of paper. (*If you don't plan the steps you must take to achieve a goal, you will never reach that goal.*)
3. Have learners open to worksheet page 62, Learner's Workbook page 8 and read each step for setting a goal and achieving it. Apply this worksheet to real life by asking learners the following questions: If I were a student in a math class, what would be a good goal for me to write down in the beginning of the school year? (*get a passing grade in math*) What steps would I have to take to complete this goal? (*come to class every day; listen in class; complete school work; turn in homework; study for tests; pass all of the tests.*) Would I be able to complete each step by just writing the steps down, or would I actually have to do each of these steps? (*You have to actually do them.*)
4. Tell learners that becoming a person who sets goals and achieves them takes practice. Have learners turn to the “A Goal I Have for Myself” worksheet on page 63, Learner's Workbook page 9. Ask them to write down a goal they want to achieve in the next month. They shouldn't write down a fantasy goal like “win the lottery” or “walk on the moon.” Rather, they should list a goal that's possible to meet in a month with patience and hard work. When they are finished, have learners share their goals.

## DANGER SIGNS

**Worksheet:** Page 64

**Learner's Workbook:** Page 10

1. Tell learners that there are many signs that someone is at risk of dropping out. Have them turn to worksheet page 64, Learner's Workbook page 10, and check off the signs that someone may drop out of school. When everyone is done, review their answers. (Answers are on page 134 of this manual.)
2. Have learners brainstorm other danger signs that might indicate someone is at risk of dropping out. Write their answers on a board or large piece of paper. Possible answers may include *having a child or expecting one; being suspended or expelled from a school; being transferred to another school for disciplinary reasons; being arrested; having a stressful or unstable home life; having parents or siblings who didn't finish high school; the death of a parent or other close relative; believing that chance and luck are everything.* Have learners add these examples to the “Danger Signs” worksheet.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT DROPPING OUT

- Q. Do dropouts quit school because their parents were dropouts?
- A. Studies show that a young person is more likely to drop out of school if he has family members or close friends who have dropped out of school. But that's not a *reason*; it's just something that makes it a little harder to succeed in school.
- Q. Do girls drop out of school because they are pregnant?
- A. Many girls say they drop out of school because of pregnancy or marriage. But some girls say they drop out because "school is hard."
- Q. Are dropouts just dumb?
- A. No. Dropouts are not dumb. Some do have difficulty in school—but there is help available for those who want it. Some dropouts say they're too smart to be going to school. If that's the case, they should take advantage of the situation and try to get a college scholarship. If they don't want to go to college, they should take the G.E.D. test so they have more job opportunities.
- Q. Do dropouts who go back to school have a hard time finding a job when they graduate?
- A. No. Dropouts who go back and get their high school diplomas have many more job opportunities than those who don't. In the end, they have a much better chance of finding a rewarding, good-paying job.
- Q. What would help a student stay in school?
- A: 1) Joining in after-school activities such as sports, band or chorus. Studies show that students who are more involved at school are less likely to drop out. 2) Give them information on where to get help if they are having difficulty with their school work. 3) The student can speak to a dropout prevention counselor at school who can offer students facts about the difficult future for a dropout.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT DROPPING OUT (CONT.)

Q: When are people considered to be “dropouts?”

A: People are officially considered dropouts when they have not received a high school diploma (or have not completed their G.E.D.) and are not enrolled in school. Students who are enrolled in school, but never attend, may also be considered dropouts.

Q: Is a G.E.D. considered a fallback or a genuinely positive alternative?

A: A G.E.D. is always a positive alternative. It opens the door to more jobs and shows an employer that the person is smart and reliable.

Q: Should young people be forced to stay in school until they’re 18, instead of 16 as the law stands now?

A: This is a good topic for discussion. On the plus side, if people went to school until they were 18, America would probably have fewer welfare recipients, a lower crime rate, and a stronger economy. On the minus side, it would cost states a lot of money to monitor 17- and 18-year-olds to make sure they’re attending school.

Q: What are the three main reasons young people give for dropping out?\*

A: 1. They dislike school and don’t think it’s important.  
2. They have poor grades.  
3. They need money and want to work.

\* It is important to note that these are things people say. The real reasons may be different.

Sources: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services, Ann Arbor, Mich.; *Teacher Magazine* on the Web.

# PROFILE OF A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT

- ❑ Successful students think about the future, not just about today.
- ❑ Successful students choose their friends wisely and surround themselves with people who have the same goals they do. Other people's envy doesn't bother them.
- ❑ Successful students get jobs to help their families when necessary, but still keep their goals in mind and work toward them.
- ❑ Successful students postpone marriage and having children until they are well on their way to achieving their goals.
- ❑ Some people come from families that make it hard to break away from poverty. Successful students think of that as a hurdle to jump over—not a brick wall.
- ❑ Successful students who don't speak English as a first language seek help from counselors and tutors; others will take ESL (English as a second language) courses at a community college. A successful student wants to speak English well.
- ❑ Long before graduation day, the successful student plans his next step, whether it is college, technical, or vocational training. Whatever successful students take on, they won't quit; they will work hard toward achieving their goals. They may not always succeed at everything they do, but they'll always try.

**Success comes in cans; failure comes in can'ts.**



# SETTING GOALS AND ACHIEVING THEM

## **Step 1: Set realistic goals.**

You may want to have lots of money one day, but winning the state lottery is not a realistic goal. For every 18 million or so people who play the lottery in a state, there is usually only one winner. A better goal for a wealthy future would be to get a well-paying job.

## **Step 2: Write your goals down.**

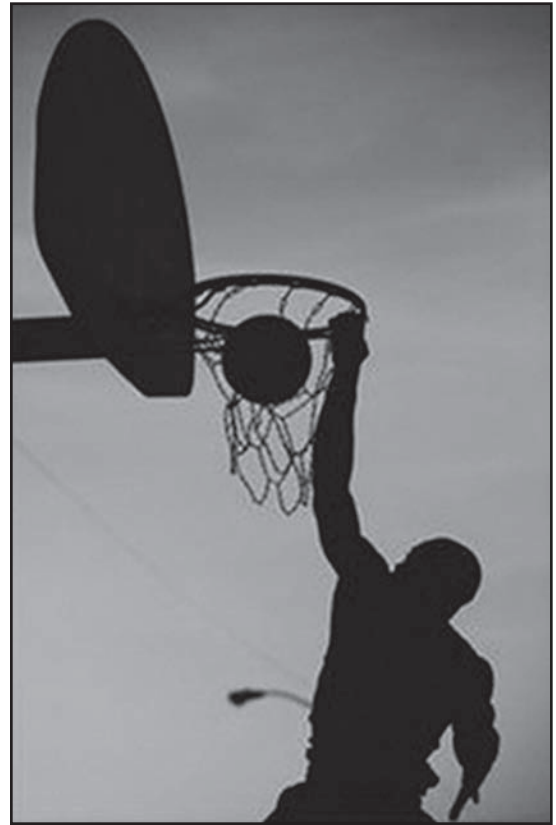
When you write your goals down, you're more likely to follow through. It will help you remember what you are working for. For example, you could write: I want a well-paying job that makes me happy.

## **Step 3: List the steps you'll need to take to achieve your goal.**

This will be your road map for getting from where you are now to your goal. If your goal is to get a well-paying job, a few of the steps you'll need to take to accomplish this goal may include graduating from high school and college and applying to a company. Writing down the steps you need to take will keep you focused on your goal.

## **Step 4: Take each step one at a time.**

The thought of having a well-paying job is exciting, but it will never be more than a happy thought unless you take the steps needed to achieve your goal. If the first step on your list is graduating from high school, you have to put in the hard work needed to complete this step. That means going to school every day, completing classwork and homework and passing tests. If you don't complete this first step, you won't get to the next step. That means your dream of having a well-paying job will stay just that—a dream.



# A GOAL I HAVE FOR MYSELF

Use the space below to write a goal you would like to achieve in the next month. Don't write down a fantasy goal like "win the lottery" or "walk on the moon next month." Write down a goal that's possible for you to meet in the next month, with patience and hard work. For these purposes don't worry about grammar and spelling. The important thing is that you participate.

The goal I would like to reach in the next month is:

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The steps I will need to take to actually achieve this goal are:

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It is important for me to set goals and achieve them because:

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# DANGER SIGNS\*

Place a check in the box beside the possible danger signs for dropping out of school. Then, use the space below to list some other possible danger signs for dropping out of school.

- Spending time in a juvenile home, shelter, or detention center
- Failing a course
- Having an encouraging, supportive family
- Missing at least 10 days of school in one marking period
- Participating in after-school activities like band and chorus
- Being held back a grade
- Being part of a team sport, like football, baseball or basketball
- Cutting class 10 times
- Showing respect to parents, teachers and other students
- Being late to class 15 times
- Negative thinking that something will always stop a person from getting ahead
- Having good study habits
- Believing life is out of control
- Staying positive and knowing that with hard work, anything is possible

Other possible danger signals:

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\*Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.