

## Editorial: Ideas focusing on keeping kids in school move to the head of the class

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The state needs to follow the example of Aurora Public Schools and a local state lawmaker in doing more to help students make it to graduation day and onto better jobs.

A joint program between APS and the Community College of Aurora engages hard-to-engage kids, showing them what the rewards of a complete education can be and enticing them to stay the course.

A bill by state Rep. Karen Middleton, D-Aurora, would create a Colorado Department of Education program that could help local schools create plans to get dropouts back in class. The bill would immediately change one poor decision the state has made in the past: expelling kids who don't go to school.

As a community, we all suffer when children drop out of school. Drop-outs almost certainly contribute less in taxes during their lifetime and just as certainly will need and use more government-funded benefits.

While the reasons for dropping out of school are often complex and varied, the solutions implemented by APS have been relatively simple. Officials from Aurora Public Schools have gone knocking on doors of truant students and telling them they're wanted back. That alone has gotten many kids to return to the classroom. The district has also created a host of programs that engage students who aren't motivated by traditional school programs.

Many consider such programs coddling and would rather see students pay the consequences for their adolescent short-sightedness, rather than have taxpayers pick up the tab for extra efforts and programs.

But we all pay when students drop out. Instead, the state and school districts should do more to offer non-traditional types of education to students who otherwise will just fall through the cracks. It could mean different types of diplomas for different types of students, similar to what's offered in other countries. APS was actually a leader in these discussions about 10 years ago.

But Middleton and APS are right in pointing out that allowing kids to let truancy take over their lives is a colossal waste on many levels and rightfully should be a priority of the Legislature and every school district in the state.