

FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 20

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 20. COACHING DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/EQUIVALENCY	83
A. RE-ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE	84
B. RE-ENROLLING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING	86

SECTION 20. COACHING DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/EQUIVALENCY

We don't use the term "drop out" - we say a young person left high school. They had their reasons for leaving!

If you are coaching a young person who left high school and is currently not enrolled in an academic setting, the Coach's role is to meet them where they are. They should not be another adult in their life telling them they have to go back to high school!

However, the Coach should do their best to find creative ways to help them re-engage, including connecting them to career or extracurricular opportunities in line with their interests that can help them build their self-esteem and envision a pathway. And - if/when they are ready to go back to school - help them re-enroll them in a best-fit academic setting. This academic Goal is called "[Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program.](#)"

For best practices and tips from young people and Coaches on how to re-engage a young person who left high school, see [Appendix F24](#).

For those youth who are already motivated to re-enroll/re-engage in a high school section, skip to [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20B](#) and follow the Required Steps to help them re-enroll them in a best-fit academic setting.

A. RE-ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

Deep down, all young people want to succeed. If a young person is disengaged/disconnected from school, it is often because of the trauma and instability they have experiences in their lives, and/or because they did not have the academic and/or adult support they needed along the way.

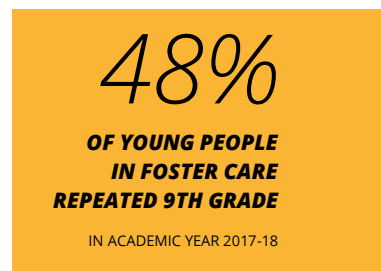
As human beings, we all need to be able to envision success and see a pathway that others have followed who were in our situation. It is not uncommon for these young people to not have many – or any – adults in their lives who went to college; some may also be the first in their families to graduate high school.

Many students with experience in foster care and/or juvenile justice also enter high school academically behind. If a student enters the 9th grade academically below grade level and they are not in a quality school (and/or if there is not an effective intervention in place), they can quickly become discouraged and disengage.

Repeating a grade can take a big toll on one's self-esteem. It also doesn't feel good to get left behind your peers ... or, to be in school while your friends are not. This can understandably lead a young person to want to disengage from school and instead engage in activities that help them "feel good." Interacting with peers, finding ways to make money, engaging in behaviors to release endorphins or mask pain, and/or isolating oneself are all common coping mechanisms.

Re-engaging young people who have disengaged from school usually entails helping them to:

- Believe in themselves and their potential
- Increase their self-esteem, sense of self, and sense of belonging
- Envision success in school and/or a potential career pathway
- Understand the critical importance of a high school degree for future stability, and how it has helped others in their situation.



There are a variety of effective approaches a Coach can take to help young people believe in themselves, increase their self-esteem and sense of belonging, and envision a pathway.

To complete the [Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program](#), some common, effective **Potential Steps** that a Coach can take if the young person does NOT want to go back to school include:

- ❑ Connecting the young person to a peer group or credible messenger.
Peers who have been in the same situation and have succeeded can help inspire and motivate the young person.
- ❑ Connecting the young person to an extracurricular activity in line with their interests (e.g., art, martial arts, a music recording studio, a youth leadership program).
This can help youth build the self-esteem, sense of purpose, and broader network of adult/peer supports they need to re-engage in school.
NYC has hundreds of free youth development, extracurricular, and community service programs. Engaging in one of these activities can also help young people build their resumes and the critical soft skills needed for the world of work.
See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#) for more information and check out opportunities on One Degree.
- ❑ Taking a trip or having a new experience.
Bringing a young person on a group trip or engaging them in a new recreational experience (e.g., a museum, hiking, a boat ride) can be transformative. Simply being in a new/different environment that is positive and peaceful can help them to broaden their horizons and reflect on their goals and potential. Trips and experiences can facilitate “breakthrough” moments.

Career exploration is also important in helping young people envision success and understand the importance of a high school (and advanced) degree.

Many young people are unaware of different career pathways. They are only aware of what they have been exposed to. Understanding what opportunities are available to them and what the academic requirements are can help them understand why they need to re-engage and persist in school. The Coach can engage the young person in Career Exploration activities.

As the Coach is re-engaging the young person, the Coach should also start thinking about what type of high school environment may be a best fit.

B. RE-ENROLLING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

To complete the [Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/HSE program](#), the following are the **Required Steps** a Coach should take if/once a young person is motivated to re-enroll in a high school setting:

- ☐ Obtain recent transcript and records (including attendance records and IEP/504 Plan, if applicable) from the previously attended high school, and review them. *This will help the Coach understand the number of credits earned, any Regents completed, attendance patterns, and any special education needs.*
- ☐ Evaluate what type of high school setting may be a best fit based on youth's age, credits earned, student needs, etc. (e.g., GED program, transfer school, YABC, specialized high school, etc.). Also consider whether the most recently attended school/program could be a good fit. Refer to [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#) and [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for an overview of the various types of schools/programs and key factors to consider.
- ☐ Once the type of high school setting is determined, create a vetted list of specific high schools/programs with the young person based on location, quality (graduation rate, school safety, etc.), student needs, and student interests and select some to visit. (Review [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#))
You can find all alternative high schools on [One Degree](#)
- ☐ Discuss plans with parent and Case Planner or other relevant CTH or MAAP staff
- ☐ Reach out to potential schools/programs to ask about open houses, process, eligibility criteria, services offered, etc.
- ☐ Visit potential schools/programs with young person (and/or have parent visit with young person)
- ☐ Follow-up with school/program and young person after visit(s) to debrief and hear their thoughts
- ☐ Apply to a best-fit school or GED program; support young person through any interviews
- ☐ Enroll in best-fit school or GED program; complete any paperwork
- ☐ Celebrate acceptance into the new school/program
- ☐ Follow up with young person before the first day of school to provide support/encouragement
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first day to debrief/reflect on experience
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first week to debrief/reflect on experience

If young person is still enrolled at this point, close the Goal and mark as “completed” in the Online Platform.

If the young person is not accepted to a particular school or program, keep repeating the above steps until the student is accepted. Also refer to the [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for additional guidance.

Once a student is re-engaged and re-enrolled in a best-fit high school setting, the Coach should use the [Roadmap of High School Goals](#) to see what the next Goal is. The Coach will then assist the student with persistence/graduation.