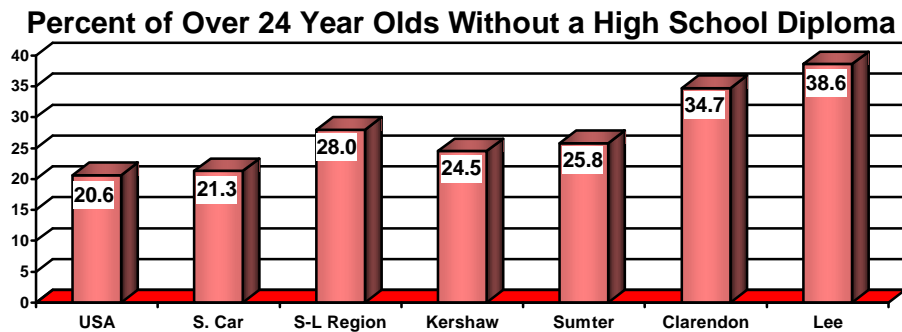


**One Quarter of Region's Adults Have Not Completed High School**

The education of America's youth is one of the paramount social, cultural, and political concerns of the nation. As the country becomes more reliant on technological advances in both the business and personal spheres, the value of education assumes an even greater role. As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, our nation with its universal education opportunities, major financial investment in education, and identified demand for improved education, has more than 13.7 million citizens over 24 years of age who have not completed high school. This is the equivalent of the entire 2000 Census population of Colorado, Oregon, Nevada, and South Carolina.

In South Carolina, there are 2,533,112 people over 24 years old and approximately 540,000 do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. In the Santee-Lynches Region 37,234 citizens over 24 years of age have not finished high school.



Source: US Census 2000

Based on the 2000 Census the ratio of adults who did not finish high school is:

- in the Nation and South Carolina approximately one out of every five adults (1:5).
- in Kershaw & Sumter Counties about one out of every four adults (1:4).
- in Clarendon and Lee Counties more than one out of every three adults (1:3).

In 1980, fifty percent (50%) of the adults in this Region had not graduated from High School, so it is evident that the counties are experiencing some success in raising their resident's education level. Over the last twenty years, both the education and business community have emphasized the importance of high school graduation as a minimum for success in this society. This emphasis and the large increase of tax dollars dedicated to K-12 education have to improve high school graduation rate in our counties. However, many of those counted back in 1980 were older adults who were young when this area was predominately agricultural and education played a much less important role. Therefore, a significant part of the improvement in the high school graduation rate is attributable to the passing on of this older, less education minded generation.

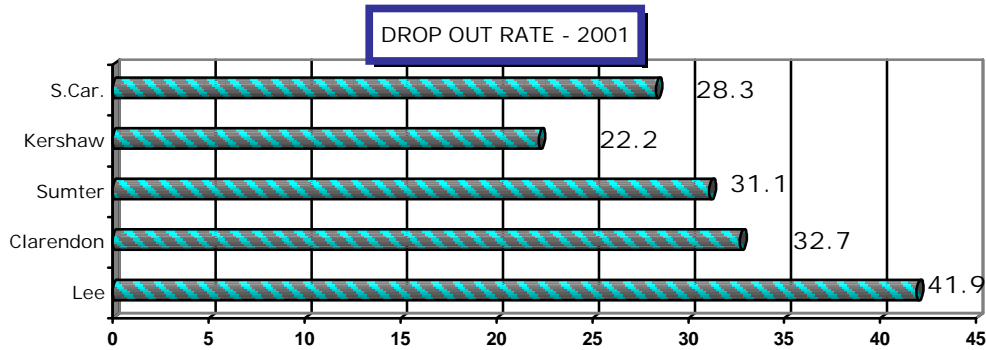
While there has been improvement, the State and our counties face a situation that, if not resolved, will perpetuate this problem. This situation is the drop out rate in our school systems. This paper's definition of drop out is eighth grade students no longer enrolled in grade 12.

Number of Students Who Drop Out Annually (Kids Count 2001)

S. Carolina	Clarendon Co.	Kershaw Co.	Lee Co.	Sumter Co.	S-L Region
14,555	172	174	111	483	940

This region's 15 to 19 year olds are only 4.8% of the statewide 15-19 year old total population, but, the 940 drop outs in Santee-Lynches account for 6.5% of all dropouts in the State.

## SC REGION EDUCATION SERIES



Source; SC Kids Count 2001

If these annual percentages continue, three of our four counties will maintain or increase their rate of adults without a high school diploma. As our business community becomes more dependent on sophisticated technology to remain competitive, a large segment of the local workforce will be incapable of meeting these business/industry requirements. This condition could either cost the region new business prospects or make it dependent on in-migration of workers from counties and states with more favorable high school graduation rates.

In addition to the potential lose of higher paying businesses; a resident population with a large number of undereducated adults faces other social and financial problems. A recent U.S. Department of Labor study that compared the status of 16 to 24 year old high school graduates and drop outs on a national level had the following conclusions

	EMPLOYED	IN SCHOOL	UNEMPLOYED	NOT IN LABOR FORCE
Graduates	52%	33%	9%	7%
Drop Outs	44%	0%	17%	39%

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Oct 2000

This study's results not only show an unemployment rate that is twice as high for drop outs, but perhaps more importantly that 4 out of 10 of these young people are not even looking for work. When 56% of a segment of this important age group is either unemployed or not looking for work, a community or state can expect to face serious social and economic problems.

Another study by the U.S. Department of Commerce estimated earnings based on highest level of educational attainment. In this study, earnings estimates were for full-time, year round workers over a forty-year work life. The study concluded that a high school graduate meeting these criteria would average a minimum of \$200,000 more that a non high school graduate over their working lives. While this is only an average, \$200,000 less in disposable income even over an extended period can seriously affect an individual or family's quality of life. When this dollar amount is multiplied by a large number of adults in a county, it will limit the local government's ability to raise taxes and therefore can reduce the services that residents and business require. In addition, the reduced buying power of this portion of the population will have a negative impact on the overall economy of a county or region.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- A High School diploma is a minimum needed to earn a living wage, especially for a family, now and even more so in the future.
- Young adult drop outs face greater risk of unemployment and idleness, that can result in larger social problems with their corresponding expenditure of additional tax dollars.
- A large undereducated segment of the workforce degrades a county's ability to attract high tech business/industry and the better paying jobs associated with these businesses
- The reduced earning potential and buying power of adults who have not completed high school influences the area's economy and limits local government ability to raise the capital required to meet the needs of its citizens.