

Children in the News:
12% of schools are 'dropout factories'
Based on a newspaper article from the *Salt Lake Tribune*
and *The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, and Changelings*.

More than one in 10 high schools across America can now be called “Dropout Factories”—high schools which graduate no more than 60 percent of the students.

Today, two broad avenues through the education system in the U.S. are discernible. One avenue is favored by immigrants and natives with high aspirations. We'll call this avenue “Lombard Street”—San Francisco's famously steep, winding lane. A second avenue is taken by those who don't see learning as either pleasurable in itself or as an instrumental means to a desired end. We'll call this avenue “Easy Street.” As we have seen, for some students, school is about learning, studying, advancing through a more and more demanding curriculum, doing homework and so on. For others, school is a place to socialize with peers, to flirt, to develop one's athletic ability, and to participate in plays. These two ways of experiencing school—especially secondary school—indicate the operation of at least two separate worlds, bisected by our two avenues.

Economic analysts seem to think that too many students are traveling on Easy Street. Current trends indicate that the proportion of workers in the United States with high school diplomas and college degrees will decrease and the personal income of Americans will decline over the next 15 years. Norman Augustine, chairman of a committee organized by the National Academy of Sciences sounds the alarm regarding the low level of educational attainment in the U.S. In the most recent round of international tests of secondary students—the United States finished 27th. While 60 percent or more of college graduates in East Asia earn degrees in science and engineering, the figure for the U.S. is 30 percent.