

Confronting the
**SCHOOL
DROPOUT
CRISIS**

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I dedicate this book to my three daughters, April, Melissa, and Autumn. You were my inspiration to continue my education. You were my cheerleaders and helpers even in the midst of surviving a life full of uncertainty and poverty.

I also dedicate this book to anyone who is attempting to reach and encourage young people who are at risk of dropping out of school. Don't ever stop believing in them and their potential.

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Confronting the
**SCHOOL
DROPOUT
CRISIS**

Insights and Interventions
From a Former Dropout

SUSAN BOWMAN

Foreword by Jim Rex

 **CORWIN**

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Visit the companion website at www.schoolsweeednow.com for downloadable resources.

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I want to especially acknowledge my husband, Dr. Bob Bowman, for all his help with this book. We make a great team and have always been each other's editor and sounding board of ideas. Thanks for all your advice and how each time I had you review it, you would tell me it needed more! Your support and guidance have been extremely helpful in writing something that I hope can be impactful and useful to anyone who works with young people. Thanks for all your understanding and encouragement!

I also thank God for making this book possible by always providing and guiding me throughout the years. Without Him I would not be where I am today.

With man this is impossible, but with God all things
are possible.

Matthew 19:26

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About the Author



Susan Bowman has an Education Specialist (EdS) degree in Counselor Education from the University of South Carolina. She worked as a secondary school counselor, a licensed professional counselor, and social worker specializing in helping troubled teens and their families. She also worked as a Title I counselor for the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and started a nonprofit organization to help incarcerated

youth. She has conducted seminars throughout the United States and abroad for educators on creative strategies for working with troubled adolescents. In 2005, the GED Testing Service awarded Susan with its highest honor, the Cornelius P. Turner Award, named for the founder of the GED Testing Program. This award is presented annually to a GED graduate who has made outstanding contributions to society in education, justice, health, public service, and social welfare. Susan was cofounder of Developmental Resources, an educational consulting company that provided national and international seminars and conferences. She was also cofounder of YouthLight, Inc., an educational publishing company.

Susan is currently coowner of YouthHope Consulting, LLC and consults and publishes books on how to work with troubled children and adolescents. She has been interviewed by the *Arizona Tribune* and the *Wall Street Journal* and numerous radio stations across the country. Her book on self-injury was recognized in *USA Today*.

She has authored and coauthored more than twenty books and programs. Her memoir, *Breaking Free: A Teenage Runaway's Story of Survival and Triumph*, is about her personal journey, which started

when she dropped out of eighth grade and ran away from home. By age nineteen, after having her third child, she finally broke free of the toxic relationship with her daughters' father and had to depend on welfare as her only means of financial support. She struggled as a teen mom to complete her education and make a better life for her and her daughters. With the help of a mentor, she received her GED and then went on to pursue several college degrees.

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Foreword

During my service as South Carolina’s 16th State Superintendent of Education (2007–11), there was no problem more vexing or heart-breaking than the state’s dropout rate. The human and societal toll was significant. Today, across much of America, human potential and achievement continue to be limited when our youth miss out on the benefits of remaining in school and completing their secondary education.

During my career, I have listened to and read the advice and research offered by many experts as to what should be done to reduce our nation’s dropout rates. Many experts had worthwhile strategies, statistics, and in some cases programs. However, many lacked the ability to fully empathize with and therefore effectively describe the emotional, social, and educational realities that our dropouts experience during their critical and often traumatic school years. This lack of empathy and personal insight on the part of many experts was not as a result of their lack of concern or compassion for the plight of kids who drop out. No, the real reason was the majority of experts on the causes that end school success were never themselves so unsuccessful in school that they, themselves, dropped out of school. Most were successful academic achievers in school—not school “failures.” School dropouts, let alone runaways, don’t write books on the causes of, and remedies for, our dropout crisis—until now!

Susan Bowman, the author of this compelling book, is not only a former dropout and runaway herself, but her struggles from her preteen years to her eventual triumphs as a young adult are inspirational. Her expertise as an educator and counselor who has worked with thousands of at-risk youth is augmented by her lived experiences as a distraught and alienated preteen, teenager, and single teenage mother of three.

Throughout this book, the author masterfully intertwines her personal story, creative and illustrative vignettes, and an array of strategies and resources to provide a comprehensive set of insights and interventions that are powerful, introspective, and researched based. Susan has managed to exhibit an empathy in this book with the young dropout—through her personal story—that is lacking in so many other attempts to address this issue. Certainly, her training, expertise, and clinical experience are important to the successful impact of this book, but her recognizable and earned empathy with dropouts and their struggles—through her own survival stories—distinguishes this book from others on this subject.

If you want a comprehensive and enjoyable reading experience on the prevention of, and, when necessary, remediation of the consequences of school dropouts, I highly recommend *Confronting the School Dropout Crisis* by Susan Bowman—an empathetic survivor.

Jim Rex, PhD

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