

## Task: What is it Worth to Be in Class?



NAME:

DATE:

**Directions:** Calculate how much getting that high school diploma is worth.

Given the average lifetime earnings for:

Professional Degree .....	\$4,159,000
Doctoral Degree .....	\$3,525,000
Master's Degree .....	\$2,834,000
College graduate with bachelor's degree .....	\$2,422,000
Two-year college associate's degree .....	\$1,813,000
High school diploma (or GED) .....	\$1,371,000
Less than high school .....	\$ 936,000

1. Figure the **difference in potential income** between a high school graduate and someone who did not go to school beyond the ninth grade:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \$ 1,371,000 & \text{Average lifetime earnings (high school diploma)} & \\ - \$ 936,000 & \text{Average lifetime earnings (ninth-grade education or less)} & \\ \hline = \$ & \text{(A) Potential additional future earnings for a high school graduate} & \end{array}$$

2. **Divide** the potential additional future earnings for a high school graduate (A) **by the number of years** typically spent **in high school**:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \$ & \text{(A) Potential additional future earnings for a high school graduate} & \\ \hline \text{(A)} \div 4 \text{ years} & & \\ \hline = \$ & \text{(B) Potential additional future earnings associated with each year of high school} & \end{array}$$

3. **Divide** the potential additional **future earnings per school year** (B) **by the average number of school days** per school year (C):

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \$ & \text{(B) Potential additional future earnings per school year (for a high school graduate)} & \\ \hline \text{(B)} \div 180 \text{ days per school year} & & \\ \hline = \$ & \text{(C) Approximate value of a day's education for a high school graduate} & \end{array}$$

<sup>1</sup> Note: Based on the sum of median 2011 earnings of workers aged 25 to 64 who maintain full-time, year-round employment over a 40-year time period. No allowance is made for the shorter work life resulting from time spent in college or out of the labor force for other reasons. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Study.

Additional Source: Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma and Kathleen Payea; Education Pays 2010: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society, College Board Advocacy & Policy Center.