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## Local

High school dropouts often wash out in Marines

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### BALTIMORE -

If [Aaron Dixon](#) graduates boot camp, he will be one of the few, the proud and the brave with his recent enlistment into the [U.S. Marine Corps](#). Dixon, 17, of Jessup, has already achieved one thing.

He is one of the few recruits who didn't graduate from high school. But he's hoping to graduate from boot camp at [Parris Island](#) in September with a GED. Dixon's mother, Seana, said the recruiter told them Aaron would receive his GED through the Marines at graduation, before he goes into specialized training.

"They only take grads so he has to have it before he starts training," Dixon's mother said.

Between 1992 and 2003, almost half of Marine Corps recruits who did not have traditional high school diplomas did not complete the first term of enlistment, according to [Anita Hattiangadi](#), a research analyst at the [Center for Naval Analysis](#).

"Standards and age limits have gone down [since military operations in [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#) began]," said [Nathaniel Frank](#), senior research fellow at the [Michael D. Palm Center](#), a research unit of the [University of California-Santa Barbara](#).

"Lack of a GED or high school diploma is not necessarily a 'no go,'" said [Sgt. Pauline Franklin](#), chief spokeswoman for the [Marine Corps Recruiting Command](#). "I'm not going to tell you we've never done it, but the numbers are insignificant," Franklin said.

But between 2000 and 2004, the dropout rates for men without high school diplomas were 18.2 percent (almost 7.5 percent above the average), and 30.2 percent for women (almost 11 percent above the average), according to the Center for Naval Analysis.

Without traditional high school diplomas, recruits quit nearly twice as much as those with high school diplomas, Hattiangadi said.

"Our recruits must be mentally, morally and physically qualified — and mentally qualified does include a high school diploma," said Franklin. "But it would be a disservice to young people who may have gotten off track to discount them."

*Examiner*