

*Public Secondary School
Dropouts*

*in Pennsylvania
2003-04*

Report
to the
General Assembly

Public Secondary School Dropouts

*in Pennsylvania
2003-04*

*Compiled
by*

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OVERVIEW

Act 49 of 1987 requires the Secretary of Education to provide the General Assembly with an annual report on public school dropouts in Pennsylvania. The purpose of this report is to document the actual number of students who drop out each year and to provide various characteristics about these students. The type of data collected about each dropout consists of the reason for dropping out, race, gender, age, grade, academic program, post-dropout activity and whether the dropout was classified as any of the following: economically disadvantaged, migrant, English language learner or special education. The term "dropout," as used in this publication, refers to a student who, for any reason except death, leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution. This report also details information about students who are enrolled in state-funded dropout prevention programs. Specific characteristics and data about these students and an evaluation of the overall success of these programs are also provided.

The focus of this report is school year 2003-04. Specifically, it includes information on all students who dropped out during the 12-month period from October 1, 2003, to September 30, 2004. This report also provides details about the Successful Students' Partnership (SSP) and the related Education Mentoring Initiative for the 2003-04 school year.

For 2003-04, 500 school districts, 10 comprehensive area vocational-technical schools (AVTSS), 76 charter schools, and four consortium-operated alternative high schools were surveyed for dropouts. Although the dropout rates for the consortium-operated alternative high schools are relatively high, it must be noted that their students are at high risk of dropping out. Once they drop out, their enrollment slots may be refilled throughout the year. However, the dropout rate methodology uses the total number of dropouts over a 12-month period divided by enrollments on a single day, October 1. Because of the high turnover rate at the consortium-operated alternative high schools, their dropout rate may be inflated.

Questions regarding the information on 2003-04 dropouts included in Part 1 should be addressed to the Division of Data Services at (717) 783-6755. Any questions regarding the SSP/Education Mentoring in Part 2 should be addressed to the Bureau of Community and Student Services at (717) 783-3755.

HIGHLIGHTS 2003-04

- Since the passage of Act 49 of 1987, the annual dropout rate has ranged from a high of 3.4% in 1988-89 to a low of 1.9% in 2003-04.
- The dropout rate decreased by 0.2 percentage point to 1.9% while secondary enrollments continued to increase.
- The annual dropout rates and their one-year changes by racial/ethnic category were:
 - 3.1% (+0.6) for American Indian/Alaskan Natives
 - 1.6% (-0.5) for Asian/Pacific Islanders
 - 4.0% (-0.5) for blacks
 - 5.2% (-0.3) for Hispanics
 - 1.3% (-0.2) for whites.
- Of the 590 local education agencies (LEAs) surveyed, about 49% had an annual dropout rate that was less than 1.0%.
- The 2003-04 Successful Students' Partnership Initiative served 4,554 students in grades K to 12; 1,647 of those students were in grade nine. Youth in 32 school buildings within 13 school districts benefited from these services.
- Under the 2003-04 Education Mentoring Initiative, a total of 42 mentoring projects were funded serving 1,421 students in 81 school buildings within 42 school districts.

PART 1

PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Traditionally, Pennsylvanians have had a crucial interest in our educational system and the students who are central to that system. This is significant because a good education is a keystone in our modern technological society and an ingredient that contributes to a fulfilling and successful life. Today's labor market, because of technological advances, has created a demand for a highly skilled labor force. A minimum requirement for entry into this changing labor market is a high school diploma.

Many potential problems face young adults who withdraw from school prior to graduation. Historically, compared with high school graduates, more dropouts are unemployed and those dropouts who do find employment earn far less money than high school graduates. This earning gap is significant when applied over an individual's working lifetime. Jobs available to dropouts tend to be unstable and have limited opportunities for advancement.

PDE has collected the same dropout data elements since 1986-87. This data collection also supports the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) process of developing a national database of public school dropout rates. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, beginning with the 2001-02 dropout data, PDE collected four additional data elements: economically disadvantaged, migrant, English language learner (ELL) and special education.

HOW DROPOUT RATES ARE MEASURED

The dropout problem can be measured by different rates. One of the two most widely used is the "cohort" rate, which generally requires tracking a given class or cohort of students over time (for example, from grade 9 to grade 12). It measures the cumulative impact of dropouts over a number of years.

The other is the annual or "event" rate. This rate, which is used by Pennsylvania and NCES, measures the proportion of students enrolled who drop out during a single school year. An annual rate is important because it reveals how many students are leaving school each year and how each year's rate compares with previous ones.

RECENT TRENDS

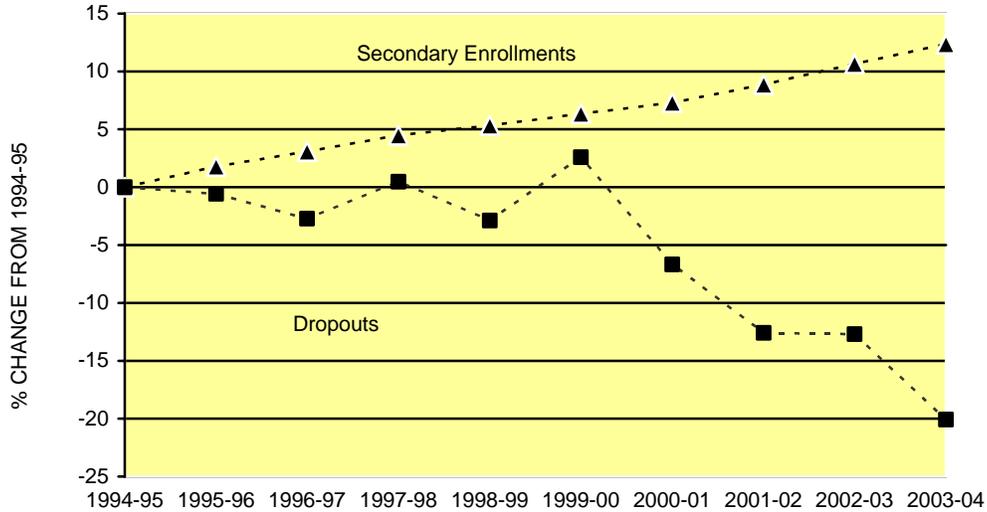
Throughout the past decade, secondary enrollments increased annually. This development is predicted to continue into the immediate future. The number of dropouts has fluctuated during this period, increasing in 1997-98 and 1999-00; and decreasing in 1996-97, 1998-99, 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04. During the last ten years, the dropout rate has ranged from a high of 2.7% in 1994-95 and 1995-96 to a low of 1.9% in 2003-04. These rates are all below the high of 3.4% in 1988-89.

TABLE 1
ANNUAL DROPOUT DATA
1994-95 THROUGH 2003-04

	DROPOUTS	SECONDARY ENROLLMENTS	DROPOUT RATE
1994-95	21,257	780,615	2.7
1995-96	21,135	794,516	2.7
1996-97	20,675	804,662	2.6
1997-98	21,356	815,697	2.6
1998-99	20,644	822,243	2.5
1999-00	21,806	830,214	2.6
2000-01	19,836	837,758	2.4
2001-02	18,584	849,994	2.2
2002-03	18,560	863,771	2.1
2003-04	16,986	877,021	1.9

FIGURE 1

PERCENT CHANGE IN DROPOUTS AND SECONDARY ENROLLMENTS
1994-95 THROUGH 2003-04



DROPOUTS FOR 2003-04

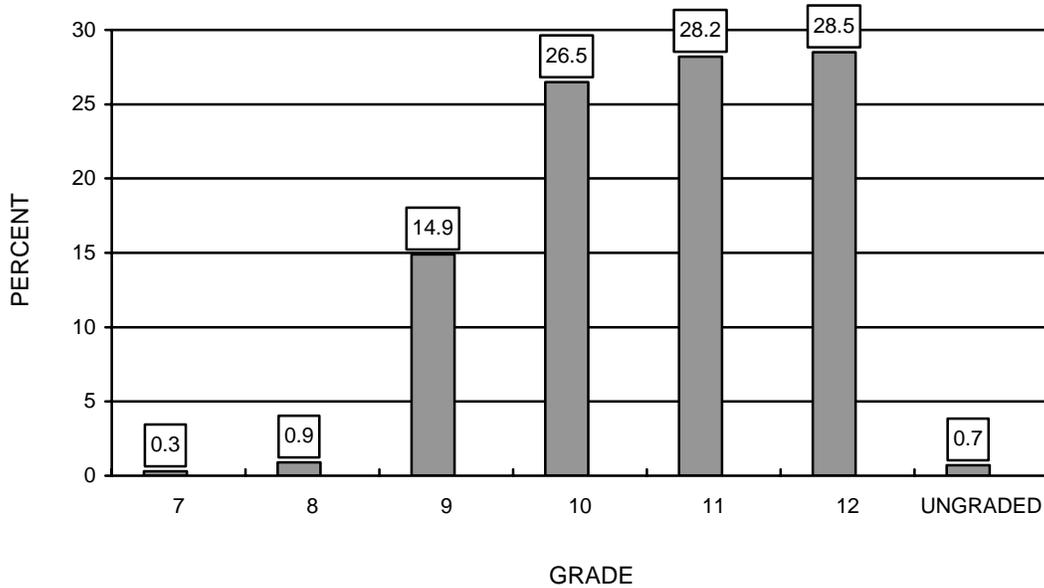
The percentage of dropouts increased from 2002-03 in grades 8, 10, 11 and 12; decreased in grades 7 and 9; and remained unchanged in ungraded. The largest increase occurred in grade 12, from 26.3% in 2002-03 to 28.5% in 2003-04, while the largest decrease occurred in grade 9 from 18.3% to 14.9% for the same period. Dropout statistics for the current year are presented in the ensuing tables and graphs.

TABLE 2

DROPOUTS BY GRADE AND GENDER
2003-04

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	%
TOTAL	9,758	7,228	16,986	100.0
Grade 7	25	26	51	0.3
Grade 8	77	78	155	0.9
Grade 9	1,490	1,046	2,536	14.9
Grade 10	2,633	1,846	4,497	26.5
Grade 11	2,690	2,095	4,785	28.2
Grade 12	2,777	2,068	4,845	28.5
Ungraded	66	51	117	0.7

FIGURE 2
DROPOUTS BY GRADE
2003-04



Over 83% of dropouts occurred in grades 10, 11 and 12. When considering age, over 76% of the dropouts were 17 or 18 years of age.

TABLE 3
DROPOUTS BY AGE AND GENDER
2003-04

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	%
TOTAL	9,758	7,228	16,986	100.0
Age:				
12-14	58	49	107	0.6
15	99	99	198	1.2
16	485	457	942	5.6
17	3,967	3,134	7,101	41.8
18	3,378	2,452	5,830	34.3
19-21	1,771	1,037	2,808	16.5

Table 4 provides a profile about the reasons students drop out of school. When analyzing this data, two caveats must be addressed. First, the Philadelphia City School District, the largest in the state, generally does not keep records on why students drop out. Second, many students do not grant school authorities an exit interview. Therefore, this table shows data for the six known reasons and excludes "other," which includes unknown reasons. Because of this exclusion, Table 4 contains data on about 53% of all dropouts.

The most prevalent dropout reasons continued to be: "disliked school," "wanted to work" and "academic problem." It should be noted that these three major reasons were consistent for each program area. The largest percentage increase occurred in the category "academic problem," with 20.0% in 2003-04 compared to 17.5% in 2002-03. Offsetting this increase is the decrease reported for "disliked school," which fell from 43.7% to 41.1% of the known reasons.

TABLE 4
DROPOUTS BY PROGRAM AND REASON
2003-04

	PERCENTAGES				
	Total	Academic or College Prep	Vocational/ Technical	Exceptional	General
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Academic Problem	20.0	21.7	18.6	13.4	20.7
Behavioral Problem	7.7	9.3	9.4	10.2	6.6
Disliked School	41.1	43.0	39.7	46.0	40.5
Child Care, Marriage or Pregnancy	7.0	6.9	7.7	7.2	6.8
Wanted to Work	21.1	15.9	21.3	21.5	22.2
Runaway or Expelled	3.1	3.2	3.3	1.7	3.2

Note: 1. Based on data for about 53% of all dropouts. Excludes dropout reason "other."
2. Exceptional program includes all exceptional students not reported in one of the other programs.

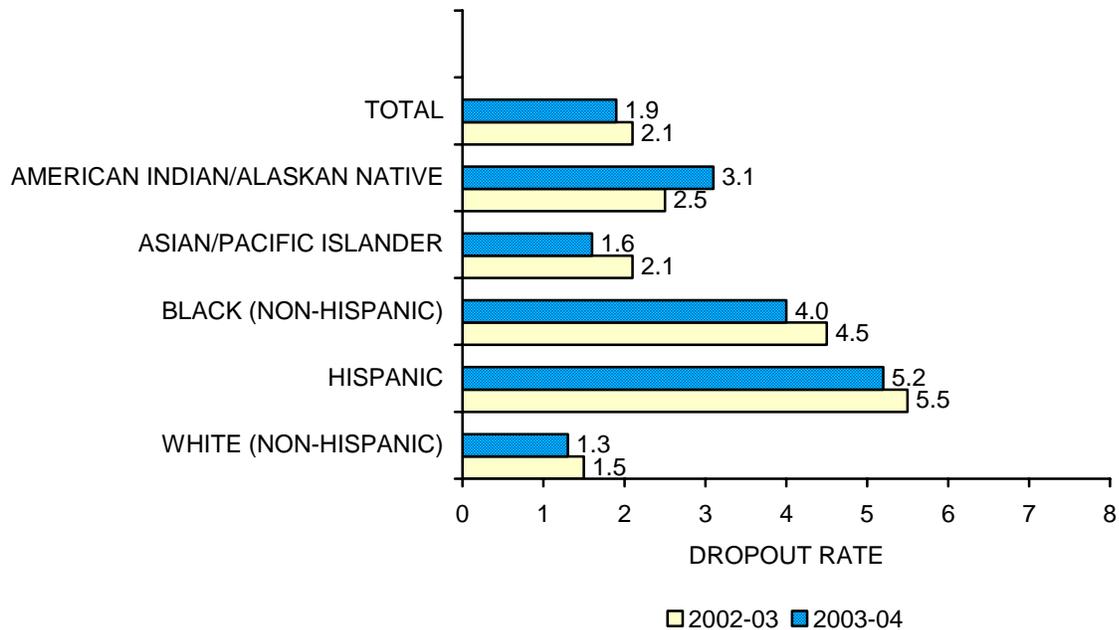
Table 5 contains 2003-04 dropouts and secondary enrollments for all racial/ethnic categories. Compared to 2002-03, Figure 3 shows that the dropout rate for Asian/Pacific Islanders, blacks, Hispanics and whites declined, while American Indian/Alaskan Natives increased. The 2003-04 Hispanic dropout rate was still the largest at 5.2%, followed by black at 4.0%. Blacks and Hispanics comprised 14.7% and 4.8% of secondary enrollments, but had a disproportionate 30.8% and 12.9% of the dropouts, respectively.

TABLE 5
DROPOUTS AND ENROLLMENTS BY RACE AND GENDER
2003-04

	SECONDARY ENROLLMENTS	DROPOUTS			DROPOUT RATE
		Male	Female	Total	
TOTAL	877,021	9,758	7,228	16,986	1.9
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1,102	21	13	34	3.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	19,076	187	117	304	1.6
Black (Non-Hispanic)	129,261	2,870	2,359	5,229	4.0
Hispanic	42,384	1,214	979	2,193	5.2
White (Non-Hispanic)	685,198	5,466	3,760	9,226	1.3

FIGURE 3

ANNUAL DROPOUT RATES BY RACE
2002-03 AND 2003-04



In trying to analyze data by post-dropout activity in Table 6, a problem similar to reasons for dropping out in Table 4 was encountered. Post-dropout activities were reported for about 46% of the 16,986 dropouts. Again, many LEAs do not compile complete data on this subject.

Blue collar worker was the most frequent post-dropout activity. When comparing post-dropout activities by race, different distributions were apparent.

TABLE 6
POST-DROPOUT ACTIVITY BY RACE
2003-04

	PERCENTAGES					
	Total	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black (Non-Hispanic)	Hispanic	White (Non-Hispanic)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Homemaker	6.4	0.0	2.0	13.0	6.9	5.3
Military	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.5
White Collar Worker	1.6	0.0	4.0	0.8	0.6	1.8
Blue Collar Worker	30.6	26.3	29.4	22.0	47.6	30.3
GED or Other Education	27.3	36.9	27.4	25.1	19.9	28.4
Service Worker	17.2	26.3	27.4	19.1	13.3	17.2
Unemployed	16.5	10.5	9.8	19.4	11.5	16.5

Note: Based on about 46% of all dropouts. Excludes "other" activity.

Dropout rates increased for the four consortium-operated alternative high schools by 5.0 percentage points to 45.6%. The number of charter schools increased from 59 to 76 while their dropout rate decreased by 0.5 percentage point to 4.4%. Dropout rates for comprehensive AVTSs and school districts decreased by 0.6 percentage point to 3.2% and 0.2 percentage point to 1.9%, respectively.

Although the dropout rate for the consortium-operated alternative high schools appears to be quite high, it must be noted that these schools possess some unique traits. Their students are at high risk of dropping out and many are attending school while working full time. The methodology of calculating dropouts must be examined to truly understand these high dropout rates. The total number of dropouts was counted for the 12-month period from October 1, 2003, to September 30, 2004, but the total secondary enrollment was obtained from secondary enrollments on October 1, 2003 (a snapshot view). After a student drops out from a consortium-operated alternative high school, another candidate may refill their enrollment slot during the school year. Because of this turnover, the dropout rate for these schools may be inflated.

TABLE 7
DROPOUTS BY CATEGORY OF INSTITUTION
2003-04

	NUMBER SURVEYED	SECONDARY ENROLLMENTS	DROPOUTS			DROPOUT RATE
			Male	Female	Total	
TOTAL	590	877,021	9,758	7,228	16,986	1.9
Charter Schools	76	16,672	352	379	731	4.4
Comprehensive AVTSs	10	6,865	137	82	219	3.2
Consortium-Operated Alternative High Schools	4	259	69	49	118	45.6
School Districts	500	853,225	9,200	6,718	15,918	1.9

Note: 1. Data for the four comprehensive AVTSs in the Philadelphia City School District are listed with the data for school districts.
2. Dropout rates for the consortium-operated alternative high schools may be inflated because their students are at high risk of dropping out, and once they drop out, their enrollment slot may be refilled by another candidate during the school year.

FIGURE 4

PUBLIC SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES BY COUNTY
2003-04

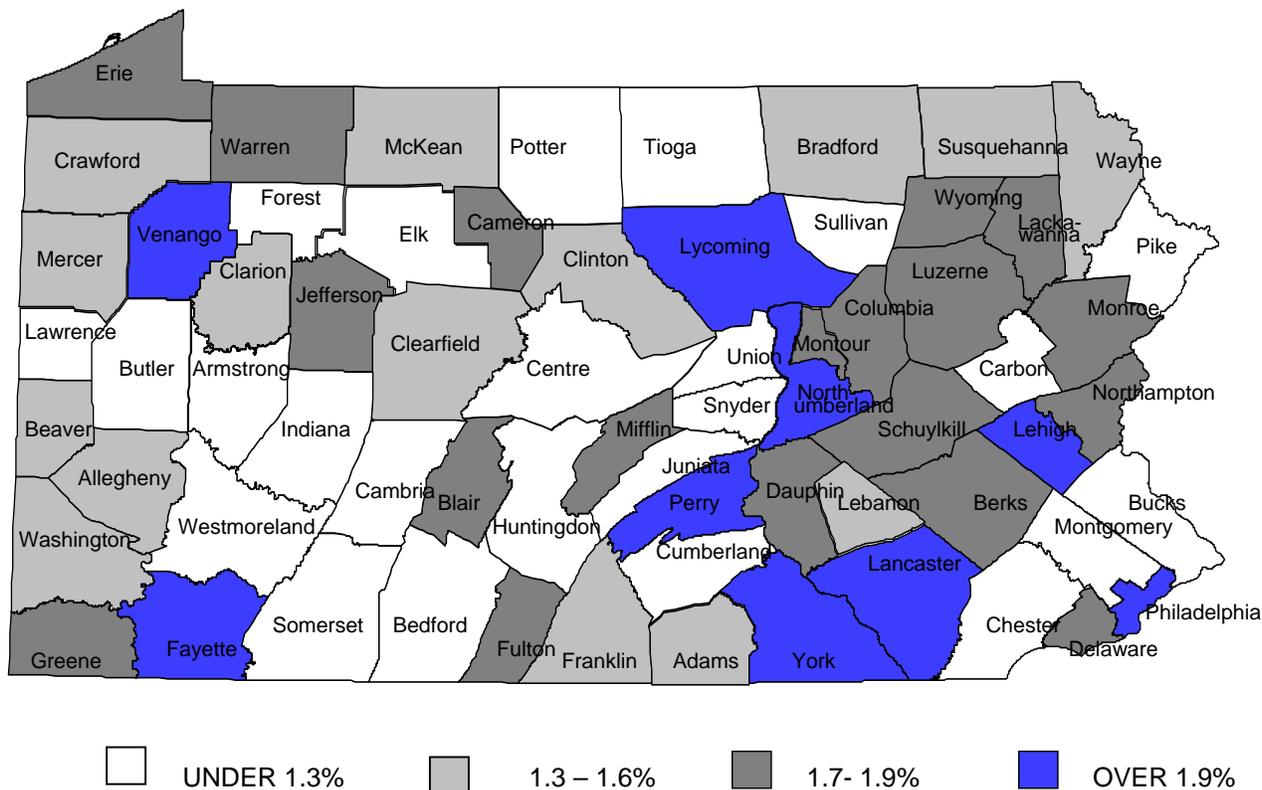


Figure 4 and Table 8 show that nine counties had a dropout rate higher than the state average of 1.9% (Fayette, Lancaster, Lehigh, Lycoming, Northumberland, Perry, Philadelphia, Venango and York). On the other hand, 24 counties (Armstrong, Bedford, Bucks, Butler, Cambria, Carbon, Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Elk, Forest, Huntingdon, Indiana, Juniata, Lawrence, Montgomery, Pike, Potter, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Tioga, Union, and Westmoreland) had dropout rates of less than 1.3%. Both urban and rural counties appear on the lists of counties with low and high rates. However, the largest number of dropouts are located in the larger, more urban areas.

TABLE 8
PUBLIC SCHOOL DROPOUTS BY COUNTY
2003-04

	SECONDARY ENROLLMENTS	DROPOUTS			DROPOUT RATE
		Male	Female	Total	
TOTAL	877,021	9,758	7,228	16,986	1.9
Adams	7,279	74	27	101	1.4
Allegheny	83,755	682	566	1,248	1.5
Armstrong	5,595	35	25	60	1.1
Beaver	14,625	128	81	209	1.4
Bedford	3,995	29	11	40	1.0
Berks	31,413	319	225	544	1.7
Blair	9,500	89	68	157	1.7
Bradford	5,439	50	27	77	1.4
Bucks	45,354	192	150	342	0.8
Butler	13,258	95	63	158	1.2
Cambria	9,617	63	49	112	1.2
Cameron	499	2	7	9	1.8
Carbon	4,408	21	24	45	1.0
Centre	7,299	25	26	51	0.7
Chester	32,185	126	88	214	0.7
Clarion	3,462	31	22	53	1.5
Clearfield	7,239	77	41	118	1.6
Clinton	2,409	19	13	32	1.3
Columbia	5,615	61	32	93	1.7
Crawford	5,457	47	33	80	1.5
Cumberland	14,107	94	70	164	1.2
Dauphin	18,621	172	151	323	1.7
Delaware	35,597	355	238	593	1.7
Elk	2,306	13	12	25	1.1
Erie	20,134	187	175	362	1.8
Fayette	9,742	128	97	225	2.3
Forest	371	2	0	2	0.5
Franklin	8,616	77	36	113	1.3
Fulton	1,124	13	8	21	1.9
Greene	2,886	19	27	46	1.6
Huntingdon	2,986	26	8	34	1.1
Indiana	5,837	45	24	69	1.2
Jefferson	3,298	28	29	57	1.7
Juniata	1,579	8	6	14	0.9
Lackawanna	13,413	116	116	232	1.7
Lancaster	33,628	391	312	703	2.1
Lawrence	7,328	43	27	70	1.0
Lebanon	8,642	81	48	129	1.5
Lehigh	23,606	390	292	682	2.9
Luzerne	20,593	186	139	325	1.6
Lycoming	9,074	131	99	230	2.5
McKean	3,733	27	27	54	1.4
Mercer	9,661	80	72	152	1.6
Mifflin	3,067	42	13	55	1.8
Monroe	15,864	165	83	248	1.6
Montgomery	49,990	258	154	412	0.8
Montour	1,329	16	6	22	1.7
Northampton	21,722	250	161	411	1.9
Northumberland	6,814	112	114	226	3.3
Perry	3,588	57	37	94	2.6
Philadelphia	97,418	2,928	2,345	5,273	5.4
Pike	2,616	13	2	15	0.6
Potter	1,497	9	3	12	0.8
Schuylkill	9,602	103	81	184	1.9
Snyder	2,748	23	9	32	1.2
Somerset	5,811	26	21	47	0.8
Sullivan	408	1	1	2	0.5
Susquehanna	4,040	39	18	57	1.4
Tioga	3,219	29	11	40	1.2
Union	2,139	11	7	18	0.8
Venango	4,855	58	48	106	2.2
Warren	3,167	39	22	61	1.9
Washington	14,688	113	75	188	1.3
Wayne	4,715	40	20	60	1.3
Westmoreland	27,467	210	114	324	1.2
Wyoming	2,235	17	23	40	1.8
York	32,737	422	269	691	2.1

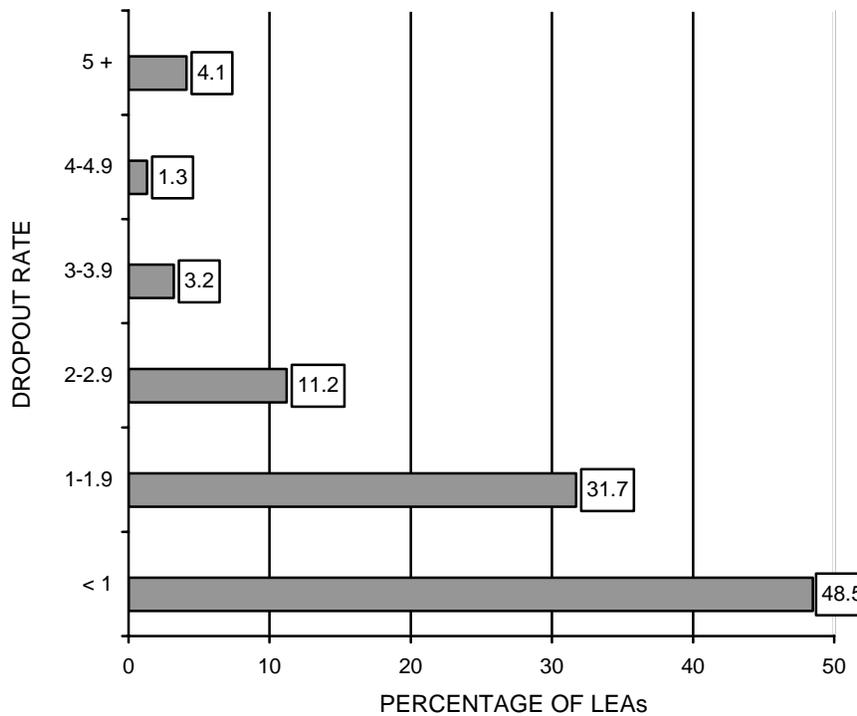
TABLE 9
SPECIAL POPULATION DROPOUTS BY RACE
2003-04

	ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	MIGRANT	ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER	SPECIAL EDUCATION
TOTAL	5,494	65	481	3,106
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	12	0	0	12
Asian/Pacific Islander	56	1	70	16
Black (Non-Hispanic)	1,921	2	24	729
Hispanic	1,027	49	344	358
White (Non-Hispanic)	2,478	13	43	1,991

This is the third year data was collected on economically disadvantaged, migrant, English language learner, and special education students for No Child Left Behind purposes. The dropout rate for migrant and special education students increased; while economically disadvantaged and English language learner students decreased. Of the total 16,986 dropouts for 2003-04, there were 5,494 economically disadvantaged, 3,106 special education, 481 English language learner, and 65 migrant students. The largest special population dropout category was economically disadvantaged, which consisted of 54.9% minorities.

Figure 5 points out that, statewide, many LEAs have a very low dropout rate. Only 126 of the 590 LEAs had a dropout rate equal to, or higher than, the state average of 1.9%.

FIGURE 5
LEA DROPOUT RATES
2003-04



CONCLUSION

The dropout rate declined 0.2 percentage point to 1.9%; which is the lowest since the passage of Act 49 in 1987. Compared to the prior year, a review of the 2003-04 data indicates that the total number of dropouts declined by 1,574 while secondary enrollments increased by 13,250 which produced a lower dropout rate. On a county basis, dropout rates ranged from a low of 0.5% in Forest and Sullivan Counties to a high of 5.4% in Philadelphia County. Secondary enrollments are projected to continue to grow through 2006-07. Pennsylvania is making progress in reducing the dropout rate, but still had 16,986 dropouts.

PART 2

SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS' PARTNERSHIP: A STATEWIDE DROPOUT PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The Successful Students' Partnership (SSP) is a statewide dropout prevention initiative authorized by Pennsylvania Act 49 of 1987. The program, administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, grew out of a concern over the significant amount of Pennsylvania youth who leave school every year without a high school diploma. The intent of the initiative is to provide funds to school districts with high numbers of dropouts (those with a dropout rate which is greater than the state average) to develop and design local resources and strategies to meet their unique needs. The initiative is a statewide opportunity for planning effective strategies to address dropout prevention. It offers each grantee an opportunity to use resources, research, assessment and tools to develop further the goals, purpose and activities for dropout prevention and to improve outcomes targeting truancy prevention and academic success.

During the 2003-04 school year, 13 Pennsylvania school districts received grants under the Successful Students' Partnership Initiative. Grantees' activities were planned under the premise that successful solutions to the dropout problem require the involvement of the community in both the planning and implementation of dropout prevention strategies. School districts and their community partners developed and implemented creative strategies to address the identified needs, using available resources to maximize school success for children and youth. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to provide the financial means and technical assistance to locally driven efforts to improve the education of all students in those schools.

Throughout the history of this initiative, SSP grantees observed success through program implementation strategies that promote school-community partnerships and support that enhance student services. Respective programs continue to fall into the domains of programs that offer **student services**, result in **systemic change**, and/or rely on **community collaboration**. The overlap of these three categories is evident in the most successful SSP initiatives, combining features of community collaboration and/or systemic change while delivering services to students. Previous successes from schools, communities and families involved in SSP strategies have become the impetus for the most current and even more progressive grant-related activities.

The Successful Students' Partnership program model recommends seven essential elements to form a program of comprehensive, accessible, prevention-oriented and collaborative services:

1. Early identification of students at risk of leaving school before graduation
2. Academic support and effective instruction
3. Community service and service learning
4. Family involvement
5. Staff development
6. Business-education partnerships
7. Collaboration with other programs

Measures of success, which are assessed by the participating grantees, include increases in grade point average; increases in the number of students promoted to the next grade level; increases in the number of students who graduate; reduction in average number of days absent; reduction in dropout rates; reduction in discipline referrals; improvement in academic/attitudinal behaviors; improvement in reading, writing and math skills/proficiency; reduction of retention rates; and increases in parental involvement and community partnerships.

School districts with Successful Students' Partnership programs during the 2003-04 school year received the following grant amounts:

<u>SCHOOL DISTRICT</u>	<u>GRANT AMOUNT</u>
TOTAL	\$498,048
Allentown City	40,000
Bethlehem Area	40,000
Big Beaver Falls Area	40,000
Chestnut Ridge	34,000
Coatesville Area	39,068
Daniel Boone Area	40,000
Everett Area	40,000
Mifflin County	40,000
Norristown Area	25,880
Oil City Area	40,000
Reading	39,100
Tamaqua Area	40,000
Titusville Area	40,000

During the 2003-04 school year, 4,554 students from kindergarten to 12th grade benefited from specific programs and activities targeted toward increasing the academic success of children and youth at risk. The greatest number of students served (1,647) was in the ninth grade.

Examples of SSP program successes across all grantees include:

1. The number of participating students who increased their grade point average was 520, or about 44% of students for whom GPA data were submitted.
2. The number of participating students who were promoted at the end of the 2003-04 school year was 4,258.
3. The number of students that graduated was 67, or 76% of the 88 seniors for which grantees reported graduation information.
4. The average number of days absent for the 2003-04 participating students was 13.2, a reduction from 15.4 days in the 2002-03 program year.

Examples of SSP successes at the individual school district level include:

1. In the Allentown City School District, retention and dropout issues came to the forefront, and the City of Allentown Weed and Seed program created a subcommittee to address these issues. Additional community resources were then targeted to these specific dropout prevention efforts.
2. Bethlehem Area School District's students have experienced academic improvement, fewer discipline referrals, reduced absenteeism and reduced failure and dropout rates.
3. In the Big Beaver Falls Area School District, a student with no family support became involved in the dropout prevention program. He attended group sessions, sought help with college applications, graduated with his classmates, and enrolled in a technical college in Atlanta.
4. Through this grant, Chestnut Ridge School District was able to create or expand existing programs, create new partnerships and build relationships within the community, empower students to take ownership in their school district and community, and help students identify and use appropriate tools to set, and achieve their personal and academic goals. One participating student said, "This is the first year in a long time that I didn't have to attend alternative education." The district also established a successful collaboration with the local district justices, which facilitated a mandate for parents of truant students to attend a parenting workshop.
5. In the Coatesville Area School District, a STEPS (Stopping Truancy by Empowering Parents) program participant improved by one letter grade in the four major subject areas, earning honor roll status for the first time. His parents attributed his success to his increased school attendance.

6. In the Daniel Boone Area School District, grant funds were used to support pre-K through 11th grade students with a range of before, during and after-school remedial opportunities. At the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, only three of the “at-risk” group of 40 fourth grade students were scoring at the fourth grade level. At the end of the year, 25 of those 40 students scored at the national average for 4th graders on the ITBS achievement test.
7. In the Everett Area School District, the Compass Learning and Princeton Review programs were used to evaluate and remediate students in math and reading. The group of students served experienced increased school attendance and a drop in the number of disciplinary referrals. Most of the targeted students also experienced academic gains in their classes.
8. In Mifflin County School District, three targeted students experienced significant academic gains: one male 7th grader, who had a .89 GPA in 2002-03 ended the 2003-04 school year with a GPA of 3.05; another male 7th grader increased his GPA from 1.59 to 3.08; a female 9th grade student raised her GPA from 1.34 to 2.10 and showed remarkable improvements in behavior.
9. In the Norristown Area School District, the dropout rate decreased from 25% in the 2002-03 school year to 12% in the 2003-04 school year. Ninety of the participating students increased their overall grade point averages.
10. In the Oil City Area School District, 139 first, second and third grade students attended the after-school program; 96% of these students showed improvements using their pre- and post-test scores.
11. Reading School District initiated a Credit Acceleration Program through which students could earn credits as an alternative to summer or night school. In an after-school tutoring program/homework center, one student who was doing poorly in math and reading improved by one letter grade; another student increased both her math and biology grades by one letter grade.
12. Targeted 6th grade students in Tamaqua Area School District participated in an after-school remediation program; several of the participating students showed a 10% increase in school attendance.
13. Targeted students’ absences in Titusville Area School District were reduced by over 60% and 93% of participating students passed both Social Studies and English. The targeted students’ grade point average rose from 1.95 in 2002-03 to 2.14 in 2003-04. Also the number of detentions/suspensions in the target group dropped from 168 during the 2002-03 school year to 103 in 2003-04.

During the 2003-04 school year, a portion of the funding for the Successful Students Initiative was once again the Education Mentoring Initiative. A total of 42 mentoring projects were funded and served students in 81 school buildings within 42 school districts. During that year, 1,011 mentors assisted 1,421 children and youth in grades K through 12. Since the initiative began in 1998 through the 2003-04 grant year, more than 9,296 children and youth have been served through specific activities focused on school success.

A total of 351 students receiving mentoring services (mentees) increased their grade point average (GPA) from the 2002-03 year to the 2003-04 year. The average GPA increased from 2.19 to 2.29 from 2002-03 to 2003-04. At the end of the 2003-04 school year, just over 81% of the 1,384 mentees in grades K-11 were promoted. A total of almost 91% of the participating seniors graduated at the end of the 2003-04 school year. The total number of mentees that improved their school attendance rate from the 2002-03 to the 2003-04 school year was 334. The average number of days absent declined slightly from 11.69 in 2002-03 to 11.12 in 2003-04.

While the aggregate data demonstrates the overall positive effects that mentoring can have for youth at risk, the impact is felt in a very personal way by the participating mentees. Some unique examples of individual success stories in the 2003-04 Education Mentoring Program include:

- In Scranton, a mentee was able to increase her GPA from 80 to 95, broadened her circle of friends, and joined in the school’s extracurricular activities.
- In Juniata County, a third grade student was struggling with spelling; by his mentor incorporating spelling activities into his storytelling, he was able to raise his spelling grade from 68 to 92%; a fifth grader whose mentor took the time to provide opportunities for reading aloud began reading at a much higher grade level than at the beginning of the year.
- In Penn’s Grove school in Oxford Area School District, one student failed every course in the first report period. After being matched with a mentor, he turned around and ended up passing into the next grade

- level; his mother also reported that he had a more positive attitude at home.
- In Philadelphia, one child was referred by a truancy judge to receive mentoring services due to his excessive school absences (60 in one year), peer problems and low self-esteem; after being matched with a mentor, his case was dismissed from court because of his diligent attendance at school (only three absences per quarter) and his commitment to his mentoring relationship; he also improved his peer relationships.

The Education Mentoring Initiative data indicate successes that provide a solid framework for an effective program. Continued assistance to grantees to strengthen their programs in areas such as volunteer recruitment, school-community partnerships and improved data collection methods will be provided to ensure future success in the implementation of the Education Mentoring Initiative.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

CHARTER SCHOOL - An independent public school established and operated under a charter from the local board of school directors and in which students are enrolled or attend. A charter school must be organized as a public nonprofit corporation. Charter schools are exempt from most state mandates except those insuring the health, safety and civil rights of students.

COHORT RATE - A rate that measures the proportion of a single group of students who drop out over a period of time.

COMPREHENSIVE AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL (AVTS)- A school that enrolls secondary students and provides a total educational program and services for both specialized career and technical education and academic education.

COMMONWEALTH SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA - A diploma issued by the Department of Education to Pennsylvania residents who successfully passed the GED test, or who completed one year or 30 semester hours of college work.

CONSORTIUM-OPERATED ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL - A school formed as a result of a special program jointure which enrolls high-risk students or students who previously dropped out. A special program jointure is an entity established by the boards of school directors in two or more school districts, with approval of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, under Sections 1701-1709 of the Public School Code of 1949, as amended.

DROPOUT - A student who, for any reason other than death, leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution.

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED – A student who utilizes the free/reduced lunch program at their school.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL) – A student whose first language is not English and who is in the process of learning English.

EVENT RATE - An annual rate that measures the proportion of students enrolled who drop out during a single school year.

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS – Those who are eligible for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or who are gifted as set forth in Chapter 342 of the Special Education Standards.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED) CERTIFICATION - A high school equivalency certification obtained through achievement of satisfactory scores on comprehensive tests that measure the educational development of students who have not completed their formal high school education.

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA)- A board of education or other legally constituted local school authority having administrative control and direction of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district or political subdivision in a state, or any other public educational institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a career and technical education program.

MIGRANT - A child who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migrating dairy worker, or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain or accompany such parent or spouse, in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work (a) has moved from one school district to another; (b) in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district.

RACIAL/ETHNIC CATEGORIES - Categories used to describe groups to which individuals belong, identify with, or belong in the eyes of the community. These categories do not denote scientific definitions of anthropological origins. However, no person may be counted in more than one racial/ethnic category.

AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent or the Pacific Islands. This includes people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, Samoa, India and Vietnam.

BLACK (NON-HISPANIC) - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa (except those of Hispanic origin).

HISPANIC - A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

WHITE (NON-HISPANIC) - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa or the Middle East (except those of Hispanic origin).

SPECIAL EDUCATION – Students who are eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and who have Individualized Education Program (IEPs)(excluding “gifted”); an IEP means a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a team meeting in accordance with the regulations governing special education programs in PA. The IEP specifies the individual educational needs of the child and what education and related services are necessary to the needs.

APPENDIX B

SOURCES

1. Electronic Dropout/Graduate Report (EDGR)
2. Public School Enrollment Report (PDE-4035)
3. *Enrollment Projections by Grade to 2009-10*, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Data Services