



# RESEARCH BRIEF

## Research Services

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## Dropout and Graduation Rates 2006-2007

The District conducts a *cross-sectional* analysis of student dropouts annually; it examines dropout rates among students enrolled in various grades at one point in time. A *longitudinal* analysis, also conducted annually, tracks a group of students in the same grade or cohort over a period of several years. Each method addresses a different aspect of how many students are dropping out of school. This research brief provides information on the cross-sectional and longitudinal dropout rates and longitudinal graduation rates for 2006-2007.

### Dropout Definitions

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) currently defines a dropout as a student who: (1) voluntarily removes himself or herself from the school system before graduation; (2) has not met the relevant attendance requirements of the school district, or the student's whereabouts are unknown; (3) has withdrawn from school but has not transferred to another public or private school; (4) has withdrawn from school because of hardship; or (5) is not eligible to attend school because of reaching the maximum age for an exceptional student program. Rates depicted in this brief reflect the withdrawal codes pertaining to these outcomes as recorded by school site personnel.

### Cross-Sectional Analysis and Dropout Rate

The methodology used to determine cross-sectional dropout rate divides the number of students in grades 9 through 12 who are classified as dropouts by the total number of students in grades 9 through 12 in attendance at any time during the school year. The cross-sectional dropout rate is expressed as a percentage of the membership for the entire school year. The dropout rate for 2006-2007 across grades 9-12 was 5.5 percent. Table 1 includes a breakdown of the rates by grade and across grades for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007.

**Table 1**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007**

Grade	2005-2006			2006-2007		
	2006 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	2007 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate
9	35,449	1,810	5.1%	33,388	1,998	6.0%
10	33,115	1,763	5.3%	32,623	1,902	5.8%
11	26,006	1,131	4.3%	25,797	1,315	5.1%
12	24,313	1,128	4.6%	24,814	1,153	4.6%
9 - 12	118,883	5,832	4.9%	116,622	6,368	5.5%

The observed cross-sectional dropout rates are slightly higher this year across all grade levels except grade 12.

## Cross-Sectional Rate by Gender

Table 2 includes a breakdown of the rates by gender and grade for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. Consistent with previous local and national findings, female students were categorized as dropouts/truants less frequently than were male students. Specifically, the rate for 2006-2007 for female students in grades 9-12 was 4.4 percent. The rate for 2006-2007 for male students in grades 9-12 was 6.5 percent. The ninth grade male dropout rate increased by 1.3 percent from 2005-06 to 2006-07.

**Table 2**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 by Gender**

Grade	Female		Male	
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006	2006-2007
9	4.1	4.5	6.0	7.3
10	3.8	4.5	6.8	7.1
11	3.3	4.3	5.4	6.0
12	3.9	4.2	5.4	5.1
9 - 12	3.8	4.4	6.0	6.5

## Cross-Sectional Rate by Ethnic/Racial Background

White, Non-Hispanic students were categorized as dropouts less frequently than were either Hispanic or Black, Non-Hispanic students (Table 3). In examining the rate for White, Non-Hispanic students, it can be seen that the dropout rate for this group was 3.7 percent for grades 9-12 for 2006-2007. For Hispanic students, the rate for grades 9-12 was 4.9 percent for 2006-2007; and for Black, Non-Hispanics, the rate for students in grades 9-12 was 7.6 percent for 2006-2007. As can be seen, there is an increase in the dropout rate for all three major racial/ethnic groups. The largest increase was seen in 9th grade Black, Non-Hispanic students where the rate for these students increased from 6.9 percent in 2005-06 to 8.8 percent in 2006-07.

**Table 3**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity**

Grade	White, Non-Hispanic		Black, Non-Hispanic		Hispanic	
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006	2006-2007
9	3.8	3.9	6.9	8.8	4.5	5.1
10	3.9	4.8	7.2	7.8	4.7	5.2
11	3.3	3.1	6.1	6.9	3.8	4.7
12	3.0	3.0	6.9	6.4	4.0	4.2
9 - 12	3.5	3.7	6.8	7.6	4.3	4.9

## Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for Exceptional Student Education Programs

Given that grade level designations for exceptional students do not necessarily correspond to those used for other students, rates for exceptional students by program and across programs have been provided without regard to grade levels (Table 4). Please note that categories are differentiated by primary exceptionality and include students with a specific exceptionality, whether enrolled in an appropriate program or not. For the 2006-2007 school year, the cross-sectional dropout rate across all exceptional student education programs (excluding gifted) for all grades was 1.0 percent.

**Table 4**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for**  
**Exceptional Student Education Programs, All Grades**

Exceptional Student Education Program	2005-2006		2006-2007	
	Feb. 2005 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate	Feb. 2006 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate
Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH)	2,274	1.7	1,973	1.9
Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH)	1,149	0.9	1,147	1.8
Physically Impaired - (also includes traumatic brain injured and other health impaired)	2,613	0.3	2,847	0.3
Speech Impaired	3,407	0.1	3,365	0.1
Language Impaired	656	0.0	670	0.1
Hearing Impaired	485	0.4	470	0.9
Visually Impaired	148	1.4	136	0.0
Emotionally Handicapped	3,401	3.0	3,134	2.0
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	23,336	1.3	21,985	1.0
Profound Mentally Handicapped (PMH) - (also includes Autistic, Dual Sensory, and Severely Emotionally Handicapped)	3,624	1.2	3,664	1.4
Developmentally Delayed	1,553	0.0	1,568	0.0
Established Conditions	35	0.0	40	0.0
Gifted	25,444	0.1	31,370	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,125</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>72,369</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Total Excluding Gifted</b>	<b>42,681</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>40,999</b>	<b>1.0</b>

**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students**

The dropout rate for grades 9-12 students classified as ESOL Levels 1-4 was 9.5 percent for 2006-2007 which represents a three percentage point increase compared to 2005-06. A considerably higher cross-sectional dropout rate resulted for 11th grade LEP students, from 6.7 percent to 12.0 percent.

**Table 5**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for LEP Students**

Grade	2005-2006			2006-2007		
	All Year ESOL 1-4 Membership	No. of LEP Dropouts	LEP Dropout Rates	All Year ESOL 1-4 Membership	No. of LEP Dropouts	LEP Dropout Rates
9	3,143	164	5.2%	3,200	207	6.5%
10	2,961	192	6.5%	2,831	283	10.0%
11	1,994	134	6.7%	2,080	249	12.0%
12	1,340	120	9.0%	1,347	159	11.8%
<b>9 - 12</b>	<b>9,438</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>9,458</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>9.5%</b>

## Longitudinal Graduation Analysis and Dropout Rate

The longitudinal analysis tracks a single class over its high school career and retrospectively determines the proportion that dropped out and the proportion that graduated. The rates are reported as a percentage of the cohort group. As the cohort group advances through high school, withdrawals are dropped from the cohort group and transfers-in are added in. This report focuses on two cohort groups: the students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in October 2002 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2006) and the students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in October 2003 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2007). The 2002 cohort was tracked an extra 5<sup>th</sup> year and the resultant 5-year dropout and graduation rates are reported separately.

The 4-year dropout rate decreased from 13.7 percent to 11.6 percent between the 2002 and 2003 cohort groups (Table 6). The 4-year graduation rate increased from 58.7 percent to 63.1 percent between the 2002 and 2003 cohort groups. The 5-year rates for the 2002 cohort group showed a slight decrease in dropouts and a 3.8 percent increase in graduates over their 4-year rate.

**Table 6**  
**Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates**  
**for the 2002 Cohort and the 2003 Cohort Groups**

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Final Cohort Membership</b>	<b>No. of Dropouts</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>No. of Graduates</b>	<b>Rate</b>
2002-2006 (4-year)	27,068	3,697	13.7	15,898	58.7
2002-2007 (5-year)	27,068	3,683	13.6	16,913	62.5
2003-2007 (4-year)	26,216	3,039	11.6	16,544	63.1
Change in 4-year Rate			-2.1		4.4

## Longitudinal Rates by Ethnic/Racial Background

White, Non-Hispanic students had higher graduation rates than Hispanic students, who, in turn, had higher graduation rates than Black, Non-Hispanic students (Table 7). Changes in rates were considerable this year with improvements in graduation rates for all ethnic/racial groups. Dropout rates decreased substantially for all three major racial/ethnic groups.

**Table 7**  
**Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity**  
**for the 2002 Cohort and the 2003 Cohort Groups**

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>White, Non-Hispanic</b>	<b>Black, Non-Hispanic</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>
2002-2006 (4-year) Dropout Rate	10.8	14.4	14.1
2002-2006 (4-year) Graduation Rate	72.7	48.6	60.4
2003-2007 (4-year) Dropout Rate	9.0	11.9	12.1
2003-2007 (4-year) Graduation Rate	76.6	52.6	65.2
Change in 4-year Dropout Rate	-1.8	-2.5	-2
Change in 4-year Graduation Rate	3.9	4	4.8

## Summary

### Cross-Sectional Dropout Analysis

- The cross-sectional dropout rate for 2006-2007 for grades 9-12 was 5.5%. This was slightly higher than the cross-sectional dropout rate for 2005-2006.
- Consistent with previous local and national findings, female students were categorized as dropouts less frequently than were male students. Specifically, the rate for male students for 2006-2007 was 6.5 percent (grades 9-12). The rate for female students was 4.4 percent (grades 9-12).
- White, Non-Hispanic students were categorized as dropouts less frequently than were either Hispanic or Black, Non-Hispanic students. Specifically, the 2006-2007 rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 3.7 percent (grades 9-12); for Hispanic students the rate was 4.9 percent (grades 9-12); and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 7.6 percent (grades 9-12).

### Longitudinal Graduation Analysis and Dropout Rate

- The longitudinal 4-year dropout rate for the 2003-2007 cohort group decreased considerably from 13.7 percent (2002-2006) to 11.6 percent (2003-2007). The longitudinal 4-year graduation rate for the 2003-2007 cohort group increased from 58.7 percent (2002-2006) to 63.1 percent (2003-2007).
- The longitudinal 4-year 2003-2007 dropout rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 9.0 percent; for Hispanics students the rate was 12.1 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 11.9 percent. The longitudinal 4-year 2003-2007 graduation rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 76.6 percent; for Hispanic students the rate was 65.2 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 52.6 percent.

The cross-sectional or single-year method and the longitudinal or multi-year method examine data at different points in time and may yield different conclusions depending on the method used. Therefore, the finding from the cross-sectional analysis indicating an increase in dropout rate and the longitudinal analysis yielding a rate decrease should not be cause for concern. A longitudinal methodology is generally preferred over cross-sectional analysis since the former is less susceptible to temporary fluctuations over time.