



RESEARCH BRIEF

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Dropout and Graduation Rates 2003-2004

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 2003-2004.

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not met the relevant attendance requirements of the school district, or the student's whereabouts are unknown; (3) has withdrawn from school but has not transferred to another public or private school; (4) has withdrawn from school because of hardship; or (5) is not eligible to attend school because of reaching the maximum age for an exceptional student program.

Cross-Sectional Analysis and Dropout Rate

The methodology used to determine cross-sectional dropout rates 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 2003-2004 across grades 9-12 was 5.7 percent. Table 1 includes a breakdown of the rates by grade and across grades for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004.

Table 1
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004

| Grade | 2002-2003 | | | 2003-2004 | | |
|--------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | 2003 All Year Membership | No. of Dropouts | Dropout Rate | 2004 All Year Membership | No. of Dropouts | Dropout Rate |
| 9 | 40,061 | 1,802 | 4.5 | 39,827 | 2,434 | 6.1 |
| 10 | 30,377 | 948 | 3.1 | 30,769 | 1,852 | 6 |
| 11 | 24,353 | 769 | 3.2 | 23,988 | 1,311 | 5.5 |
| 12 | 23,231 | 933 | 4 | 23,583 | 1,175 | 5 |
| 9 - 12 | 118,022 | 4,452 | 3.8 | 118,167 | 6,772 | 5.7 |

The cross-sectional dropout rates appear to be significantly higher this year, resulting in an increase in the number of dropouts across all grade levels by more than 50 percent. The increase in the dropout rate may be attributable to a sharp increase in students that are withdrawn to the Adult Education Program (AEP) and do not enroll in courses. These students become dropouts due to non-attendance. There were 193 students in 2002-03 withdrawn to AEP and categorized as dropouts due to non-attendance. This number increased dramatically to 3,234 in 2003-04. For the first time during the 2003-2004 school year, students withdrawn to the adult program were cross-referenced during both semesters to determine whether the students had actually enrolled in a course. Students who were not found to be actually enrolled in a course were assigned a non-attendance withdrawal code which defines the student as a dropout. It is difficult to determine how much these procedural changes have contributed to the increases in cross-sectional dropout rates. Therefore, possible explanations for the increased rates deserve further investigation. An examination is currently underway to determine the status of students withdrawn to an Adult Education Program for 2004-05 who have not yet enrolled in classes.

Cross-Sectional Rate by Gender

Table 2 includes a breakdown of the rates by gender and grade for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. Consistent with previous local and national findings, female students were categorized as dropouts/truants less frequently than were male students. Specifically, the rate for 2003-2004 for female students in grades 9-12 was 4.5 percent. The rate for 2003-2004 for male students in grades 9-12 was 6.9 percent. Again, the increase from 2002-03 to 2003-04 may be attributed to the refinement in the procedure used to follow students that are withdrawn to the Adult Education program.

Table 2
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 by Gender

| Grade | Female | | Male | |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 |
| 9 | 3.8 | 4.6 | 5.1 | 7.4 |
| 10 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 3.7 | 7.4 |
| 11 | 2.7 | 4.4 | 3.6 | 6.5 |
| 12 | 4.1 | 4.4 | 3.9 | 5.6 |
| 9 - 12 | 3.3 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 6.9 |

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 4.1 percent for grades 9-12 during 2003-2004. For Hispanic students, the rate for grades 9-12 was 5.4 percent for 2003-2004; and for Black, Non-Hispanics, the rate for students in grades 9-12 was 7.3 percent for 2003-2004. (Note: The increase from 2002-03 to 2003-04 may be attributed to the refinement in the procedure used to follow students that are withdrawn to the Adult Education program.)

Table 3
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity

| Grade | White, Non-Hispanic | | Black, Non-Hispanic | | Hispanic | |
|--------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 |
| 9 | 3.7 | 4 | 6 | 7.8 | 3.9 | 5.7 |
| 10 | 2.4 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 7.4 | 2.7 | 5.7 |
| 11 | 2.2 | 3.7 | 4.2 | 7 | 2.8 | 5.2 |
| 12 | 1.9 | 3.9 | 7.3 | 6.6 | 2.8 | 4.5 |
| 9 - 12 | 2.7 | 4.1 | 5.4 | 7.3 | 3.2 | 5.4 |

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 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 2003-2004 school year, the cross-sectional dropout rate across all exceptional student education programs (excluding gifted) for all grades was 2.3 percent. (NOTE: The increase from 2002-03 to 2003-04 may be attributed to the refinement in the procedure used to follow students that are withdrawn to the Adult Education program.)

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

| Exceptional Student Education Program | Feb. 2003 ESE Membership | Dropout Rate | Feb. 2004 ESE Membership | Dropout Rate |
|--|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH) | 2,785 | 2.7 | 2,653 | 3.0 |
| Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH) | 1,193 | 2.4 | 1,167 | 4.7 |
| Physically Impaired - (also includes traumatic brain injured and other health impaired) | 1,762 | 0.6 | 2,103 | 1.0 |
| Speech Impaired | 3,796 | 0.2 | 3,636 | 0.3 |
| Language Impaired | 658 | 0.2 | 667 | 0.2 |
| Hearing Impaired | 512 | 1.2 | 510 | 1.8 |
| Visually Impaired | 155 | 1.3 | 159 | 1.9 |
| Emotionally Handicapped | 3,818 | 3.5 | 3,680 | 4.9 |
| Specific Learning Disability (SLD) | 25,016 | 1.7 | 24,879 | 2.4 |
| Profound Mentally Handicapped (PMH) - (also includes Autistic, Dual Sensory, and Severely Emotionally Handicapped) | 3,413 | 2.0 | 3,501 | 2.2 |
| Developmentally Delayed | 1,259 | 0.1 | 1,358 | 0.0 |
| Established Conditions | 21 | 0.0 | 17 | 0.0 |
| Gifted | 24,718 | 0.3 | 25,105 | 0.1 |
| Total | 69,106 | 1.2 | 69,435 | 1.5 |
| Total Excluding Gifted | 44,388 | 1.7 | 44,330 | 2.3 |

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 8.3 percent for 2003-2004 (Table 5). (NOTE: The increase from 2002-03 to 2003-04 may be attributed to the refinement in the procedure used to follow students that are withdrawn to the Adult Education program.)

Table 5
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for LEP Students

| Grade | 2002-2003 | | | 2003-2004 | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | 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 | 4,308 | 202 | 4.7 | 3,903 | 280 | 7.2 |
| 10 | 3,235 | 106 | 3.3 | 3,132 | 256 | 8.2 |
| 11 | 2,142 | 84 | 3.9 | 1,963 | 184 | 9.4 |
| 12 | 1,604 | 150 | 9.4 | 1,481 | 146 | 9.9 |
| 9 - 12 | 11,289 | 542 | 4.8 | 10,479 | 866 | 8.3 |

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 9th grade in October 1999 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2003) and the students who started 9th grade in October 2000 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2004). The 1999 cohort was tracked an extra 5th year and the resultant 5-year dropout and graduation rates are reported separately.

The 4-year dropout rate decreased from 14.1 percent to 13.5 percent between the 1999 and 2000 cohort groups (Table 6). The 4-year graduation rate increased from 58.7 percent to 59.2 percent between the 1999 and 2000 cohort groups. The 5-year rates for the 1999 cohort group showed a slight decrease in dropouts and a 5 percent increase in graduates over the 4-year rates.

Table 6
Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates
for the 1999 Cohort and the 2000 Cohort Groups

| Cohort | Final Cohort Membership | No. of Dropouts | | No. of Graduates | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------|------------------|------|
| | | Dropouts | Rate | Graduates | Rate |
| 1999-2003 (4-year)* | 26,647 | 3,746 | 14.1 | 15,632 | 58.7 |
| 1999-2004 (5-year) | 26,647 | 3,725 | 14 | 16,980 | 63.7 |
| 2000-2004 (4-year) | 26,724 | 3,616 | 13.5 | 15,814 | 59.2 |
| Change in 4-year Rate | | | -0.6 | | 0.5 |

*The 1999-2003 longitudinal dropout and graduation rates were recomputed when it was determined that the previously reported rates had inadvertently incorporated summer graduates. The recalculation actually yields a slightly lower graduation rate than previously reported.

Longitudinal Rates by Ethnic/Racial Background

White, Non-Hispanic students had lower dropout and higher graduation rates than Hispanic students, who, in turn, had lower dropout and higher graduation rates than Black, Non-Hispanic students (Table 7). There were inappreciable changes in the 4-year rates from the 1999 cohort to the 2000 cohort group for both dropout and graduation. However, the longitudinal graduation rate for Black, non-Hispanic students has declined from 50.7% (1999-03 cohort) to 49.5% (2000-04 cohort). More fully understanding the systemic variables contributing to this alarmingly low graduation rate is a priority for the District. Research Services, in collaboration with the offices of Student Services and Civil Rights and Diversity, will focus future reports on this topic.

Table 7
Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity
for the 1999 Cohort and the 2000 Cohort Groups

| Cohort | White, Non-Hispanic | Black, Non-Hispanic | Hispanic |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| | 1999-2003 (4-year) Dropout Rate | 12.5 | 15.4 |
| 1999-2003 (4-year) Graduation Rate | 73.3 | 50.7 | 59.5 |
| 1999-2004 (5-year) Dropout Rate | 12.4 | 15.4 | 13.7 |
| 1999-2004 (5-year) Graduation Rate | 77.5 | 55.2 | 65.1 |
| 2000-2004 (4-year) Dropout Rate | 12.2 | 14.2 | 13.6 |
| 2000-2004 (4-year) Graduation Rate | 73.1 | 49.5 | 61.1 |
| Change in 4-year Dropout Rate | -0.3 | -0.8 | -0.2 |
| Change in 4-year Graduation Rate | -0.2 | -1.2 | 1.6 |

Summary

Cross-Sectional Dropout Analysis

- The cross-sectional dropout rate for 2003-2004 for grades 9-12 was 5.7. This was an increase from the 2002-2003 dropout rate of 3.8. The increase in the dropout rate may be attributable to a refinement in the procedure used to follow students that are withdrawn to the Adult Education Program; however, other possible explanations should be investigated.
- 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 2003-2004 was 6.9 percent (grades 9-12). The rate for female students was 4.5 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 2003-2004 rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 4.1 percent (grades 9-12); for Hispanic students the rate was 5.4 percent (grades 9-12); and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 7.3 percent (grades 9-12).

Longitudinal Graduation Analysis and Dropout Rate

- The longitudinal 4-year dropout rate for the 2000-2004 cohort group decreased slightly from 14.1 percent (1999-2003) to 13.5 percent (2000-2004). The longitudinal 4-year graduation rate for the 2000-2004 cohort group increased slightly from 58.7 percent (1999-2003) to 59.2 percent (2000-2004).
- The longitudinal 4-year 2000-2004 dropout rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 12.2 percent; for Hispanics students the rate was 13.6 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 14.2 percent. The longitudinal 4-year 2000-2004 graduation rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 73.1 percent; for Hispanic students the rate was 61.1 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 49.5 percent. The longitudinal graduation rate for Black, non-Hispanic students decreased over the past two cohorts (i.e., 50.7% to 49.5%).