



May 2013

Fact Sheet

California High School Graduation and Dropout Rates

Dropouts: A Civil Rights and economic problem

High school graduation rates are an essential metric of student achievement and an educational system's success in preparing students for college and career. Statewide, district and school graduation and dropout rates are also critical for understanding and closing achievement gaps. In California, only 75 percent of all students who began high school in 2007—and only 70 percent of Hispanic students and 62 percent of African American students—graduated with their class in the 2010-11 school year.¹ Education is a fundamental right under the state constitution. Thus, poor graduation rates highlight a fundamental inequality in the educational attainment of California's diverse student population.

A Civil Rights problem—Of California students who started high school in 2007 and graduated in 2010-11 school year, 85.5 percent of white students and 89.7 percent of Asian students graduated, while only 70.4 percent of Hispanic students, 62.9 percent of African American students, 60.3 percent of English learners and 70 percent of socioeconomically disadvantaged students graduated.

An economic problem—Dropouts in California pose a serious economic threat. In 2007, UC Santa Barbara's California Dropout Research Project estimated the average economic loss for California to be \$46.4 billion for every cohort of 20 year olds who do not complete high school.² The average high school graduate earns \$290,000 more over the course of a lifetime than someone who never completes high school; pays \$100,000 more in taxes; is 20 percent less likely to commit a violent crime; and is 68 percent less likely to be on any welfare program.³

Defining the problem

Until recently, it was not possible to know the exact scope of California's graduation and dropout rate problem. California was able to calculate the graduation and dropout rates for a four-year cohort based on individual student identifiers for the first time in 2011.⁴ In 2009, districts began submitting enrollment, graduation, and dropout information to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), a system which maintains student-level data and provides a vehicle for tracking individual student enrollment history and achievement data to provide longitudinal information.⁵

The graduation rate and dropout rates are currently calculated as a cohort rates⁶, where:

Graduation Rate =

The number of students who earned a high school diploma or passed the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE)

The number of first-time ninth-graders in the fall four years prior, plus students who transfer in, minus students who transfer out, emigrate, or die during the four school years prior to graduation

Dropout Rate =

Number of cohort members who drop out within a four-year period

Number of first-time ninth-graders in fall four years prior to graduation, plus students who transfer in, minus students who transfer out during the four school years prior to graduation

California's current rates

This year's data show vast disparities in graduation rates of California's students of color, English learners, and students living in poverty, compared with white and Asian students. The chart below shows graduation and dropout rates for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years.

The graduation and dropout rates do not include students who are still enrolled in school, are non-diploma special education students, or those who elected to pass a high school equivalency exam (the 2009-10 rates were adjusted to include only those students who were first-time ninth-graders in the 2006-07 school year)⁷.

Cohort graduation and dropout rates

Students	2009-10		2010-11	
	Graduates	Dropouts	Graduates	Dropouts
All students	74.80%	16.60%	76.30%	14.40%
Hispanic	68.20%	20.80%	70.40%	17.70%
American Indian	67.20%	22.00%	68.00%	20.70%
Asian	89.00%	7.20%	89.70%	6.20%
Pacific Islander	72.10%	19.60%	74.30%	17.50%
Filipino	87.40%	7.90%	89.00%	6.70%
African American	60.60%	26.80%	62.90%	24.70%
White	83.50%	10.70%	85.50%	8.90%
Two or more	83.20%	10.20%	81.50%	11.20%
Not reported	53.80%	41.60%	48.60%	30.00%
English learners	56.50%	29.00%	60.30%	24.90%
Migrant	71.20%	18.80%	71.90%	17.30%
Special education	56.80%	22.00%	59.10%	18.40%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	68.10%	20.10%	70.00%	17.70%

Resources

The California Department of Education

www.cde.ca.gov.

The CDE website is a useful resource for information about California's education system, including statewide and local graduation and dropout rates and California's education data systems.

California Dropout Research Project

www.cdrp.ucsb.edu.

The CDRP is a research arm of UC Santa Barbara whose missions is to synthesize existing research and undertake new research to inform policymakers, educators and the general public about the nature of the dropout crisis in California and to help the state develop a meaningful policy agenda to address the problem.

Data Quest: California Department of Education

<http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>

Data Quest is CDE's education data engine that provides reports on accountability (e.g. API, AYP), test data, enrollment, graduates, dropouts, course enrollments, staffing, and data regarding English learners.

Ed-Data: Education Data Partnership: CDE, EdSource and FCMAT

www.ed-data.k12.ca.us

Ed-Data is operated through a partnership of the California Department of Education (CDE), EdSource, and the Fiscal Crisis & Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). It is designed to offer educators, policy makers, the Legislature, parents, and the public quick access to timely and comprehensive data about K-12 education in California.

Kidsdata.org

www.kidsdata.org

Kidsdata.org offers comprehensive data about the health and well-being of children for every city, county and school district in California.

End notes

1. California Department of Education. (2012, June 27). State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Reports Climb in Graduation Rates for California Students. News Release. Sacramento, California. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr12/yr12rel65.asp>
2. Belfield, C. R., & Levin, H. M. (2007). The Economic Losses from High School Dropouts in California. Policy Brief, UC Santa Barbara, California Dropout Research Project, Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.cdrp.ucsb.edu/>
3. Belfield and Levin, 2007.
4. California Department of Education. (2011). 2009-10 First Annual Report on Dropouts in California Using the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) and Other Available Data. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/documents/sbdrop-outrpt911.doc>
5. California Department of Education. (n.d.). CALPADS Background/History. Retrieved from California Department of Education: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sp/cl/background.asp>
6. California Department of Education, 2011
7. California Department of Education, 2012