



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

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State Schools Chief Jack O'Connell Releases Annual Report on Dropouts and Graduates Using Individual Student Level Data *Use of Statewide Student Identifiers Improves Data Accuracy*

FRESNO – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell today released the annual report on dropout and graduation rates for the 2007-08 school year.

In 2007-08, 68.3 percent of public school students in California graduated, up from 67.7 percent last year. The adjusted four-year derived dropout rate for the same school year is 20.1 percent, down from 21.1 percent last year.

"I am heartened that the graduation rate is up slightly, but California's dropout rate is still unacceptably high," said O'Connell. "If we look deeper into the data, we see alarmingly high dropout rates among African American and Hispanic students. There are long-term economic repercussions from not graduating for the student, for their communities, and for our statewide economy. These data provide even more evidence of the challenge and the moral imperative of closing the achievement gap as well as increasing graduation rates among all students."

The California Dropout Research Project recently reaffirmed long-held knowledge that when students drop out of school, they face more challenges than their more well-educated peers. Compared to high school graduates, research shows that over a lifetime dropouts have increased dependence on public assistance, lower earnings, poorer health, and higher rates of unemployment, mortality, criminal behavior, and incarceration. According to the report, all these factors generate substantial economic losses to the nation, state, and local communities.

This is the second year of calculating student graduation and dropout rates by collecting student-level enrollment and exit data. When two more years of student exit data are collected, the California Department of Education (CDE) will have the four years of data necessary to produce more accurate student graduation and dropout rates at the school level. This year's graduation and four-year derived dropout rates may be compared to last year's rates because the method of collecting data is the same as the prior year. That was not possible last year because the data collection method was different the previous years.

The use of Statewide Student Identifiers (SSID) increases accountability for districts to find students who stop coming to school. It also helps districts identify students who were considered a dropout at a school they left but in fact were enrolled in a different district. The data also allow CDE to identify students reported by a school district as transferring to another California school district but cannot be found subsequently enrolled. These students are now properly counted as dropouts rather than transfers. In total, there are 28 different withdrawal codes used to categorize a student's status, including whether they graduated, dropped out, completed their education in other ways, moved to a different state, transferred to another school, or are continuing as a fifth-year senior.

SSIDs eventually will be tracked through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, or CALPADS, which will maintain longitudinal, individual student-level data including student demographics, program participation, grade level, enrollment, course enrollment and completion, discipline, state assessment, teacher assignment, and other data required to meet state and federal reporting requirements. CALPADS is scheduled to be implemented at all districts in the 2009-10 school year.

To view or download state, county, district, and school-level dropout data, please visit CDE's [DataQuest Web page](#) . For more information on the California Dropout Research Project, please visit the [California Dropout Research Project Web site](#) (Outside Source).

Important Background Information on Graduation and Dropout Data:

This is the initial release of graduation and dropout data. Districts have until July 3, 2009 to thoroughly review the data, verify student exit codes, and correct all data.

Traditional high school dropout rates will tend to be lower than the state rate and graduation rates will be higher because many at-risk students are placed in county-run dropout recovery or educational option programs, and if they drop out, the drop out will be attributed to the county-run or educational option program rather than the traditional high school.

There are significant numbers of students who drop out of school during the middle school years. While CDE collects and reports dropout counts for students in grades seven and eight, we do not currently produce dropout rates for these students. We are in the process of developing these rates, which will be available for the 2008-09 dropout data report.

The rates released today are still calculated using aggregate rate formulas since four years of student-level data are needed to transition to a four-year cohort rate. In two years CDE will have the four years of student-level data necessary to produce longitudinal graduation and dropout rates which will be much more accurate. This will occur starting with the graduating class of 2010.

The dropout and graduation rates that CDE currently posts using an aggregate formula provide a reasonable estimate in most cases. However, there are school-level configurations where these estimates do not work well. County-run schools, alternative schools, and dropout recovery high schools will often have inflated aggregate dropout rates because the dropout calculation is based on a single day of enrollment. It is important to note that these schools have very high mobility and may enroll many more students and almost always at-risk students. Therefore, dropout-rate calculations are not posted for schools that are operated by County Offices of Education because of constraints in interpreting these calculations with high-mobility schools. Caution must also be used when calculating or analyzing dropout rates for other schools with high mobility, including alternative schools, dropout recovery high schools, or schools eligible for participating in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model (ASAM).

It may also be inappropriate to compare dropout rates for alternative schools and dropout recovery high schools to local comprehensive high schools. In many cases, alternative schools serve only those students who are already at the greatest risk of dropping out of school because of their prior academic challenges.

[Comparing Dropout Rates Chart](#) [PDF; 170KB; 1p.]

[Tracking California Students Chart](#)[PDF: