



# RESEARCH BRIEF

## Research Services

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## DROPOUT AND GRADUATION RATES 2005-2006

### Introduction

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 2005-2006.

### 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not met the relevant attendance requirements of the school district, or the student's whereabouts are unknown; (3) has withdrawn from school but has not transferred to another public or private school; (4) has withdrawn from school because of hardship; or (5) is not eligible to attend school because of reaching the maximum age for an exceptional student program.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 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 2005-2006 across grades 9-12 was 4.9 percent. Table 1 includes a breakdown of the rates by grade and across grades for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006.

**Table 1**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006**

Grade	2004-2005			2005-2006		
	2005 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	2006 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate
9	36,726	1,927	5.2%	35,449	1,810	5.1%
10	33,176	1,676	5.1%	33,115	1,763	5.3%
11	25,204	1,146	4.5%	26,006	1,131	4.3%
12	24,034	1,122	4.7%	24,313	1,128	4.6%
9 - 12	119,140	5,871	4.9%	118,883	5,832	4.9%

The observed cross-sectional dropout rates are virtually identical this year across all grade levels.

### Cross-Sectional Rate by Gender

Table 2 includes a breakdown of the rates by gender and grade for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. Consistent with previous local and national findings, female students were categorized as dropouts/truants less frequently than were male students. Specifically, the rate for 2005-2006 for female students in grades 9-12 was 3.8 percent. The rate for 2005-2006 for male students in grades 9-12 was 6.0 percent.

**Table 2**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 by Gender**

Grade	Female		Male	
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2004-2005	2005-2006
9	4.0	4.1	6.3	6.0
10	4.2	3.8	5.9	6.8
11	3.6	3.3	5.5	5.4
12	4.2	3.9	5.2	5.4
9 - 12	4.0	3.8	5.8	6.0

### 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 3.5 percent for grades 9-12 for 2005-2006. For Hispanic students, the rate for grades 9-12 was 4.3 percent for 2005-2006; and for Black, Non-Hispanics, the rate for students in grades 9-12 was 6.8 percent for 2005-2006. As can be seen, there is a slight decrease in dropout rate for White, Non-Hispanic and Hispanic students while there is a slight increase in the dropout rate for Black, Non-Hispanic students.

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

Grade	White, Non-Hispanic		Black, Non-Hispanic		Hispanic	
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2004-2005	2005-2006	2004-2005	2005-2006
9	4.9	3.8	6.3	6.9	4.9	4.5
10	3.4	3.9	6.1	7.2	4.9	4.7
11	3.3	3.3	5.4	6.1	4.5	3.8
12	3.2	3.0	6.5	6.9	4.2	4.0
9 - 12	3.8	3.5	6.1	6.8	4.7	4.3

## 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 2005-2006 school year, the cross-sectional dropout rate across all exceptional student education programs (excluding gifted) for all grades was 1.2 percent.

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

Exceptional Student Education Program	2004-2005		2005-2006	
	Feb. 2004 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate	Feb. 2005 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate
Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH)	2,548	2.0	2,274	1.7
Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH)	1,149	1.8	1,149	0.9
Physically Impaired - (also includes traumatic brain injured and other health impaired)	2,353	0.6	2,613	0.3
Speech Impaired	3,496	0.1	3,407	0.1
Language Impaired	664	0.2	656	0.0
Hearing Impaired	501	1.0	485	0.4
Visually Impaired	150	0.7	148	1.4
Emotionally Handicapped	3,564	3.9	3,401	3.0
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	24,287	1.8	23,336	1.3
Profound Mentally Handicapped (PMH) - (also includes Autistic, Dual Sensory, and Severely Emotionally Handicapped)	3,547	1.7	3,624	1.2
Developmentally Delayed	1,409	0.0	1,553	0.0
Established Conditions	16	0.0	35	0.0
Gifted	25,380	0.1	25,444	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,064</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>68,125</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<b>Total Excluding Gifted</b>	<b>43,684</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>42,681</b>	<b>1.2</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 6.5 percent for 2005-2006 (Table 5). This rate is lower than the rate reported in 2004-05 (7.4%).

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

Grade	2004-2005			2005-2006		
	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	3,362	201	6.0%	3,143	164	5.2%
10	2,961	227	7.7%	2,961	192	6.5%
11	2,027	172	8.5%	1,994	134	6.7%
12	1,427	120	8.4%	1,340	120	9.0%
<b>9 - 12</b>	<b>9,777</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>9,438</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>6.5%</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 2001 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2005) and the students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in October 2002 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2006). The 2001 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 13.9 percent to 13.7 percent between the 2001 and 2002 cohort groups (Table 6). The 4-year graduation rate increased from 57.8 percent to 58.7 percent between the 2001 and 2002 cohort groups. The 5-year rates for the 2001 cohort group showed a slight decrease in dropouts and a 3.7 percent increase in graduates over the 4-year rates. Therefore, approximately 1,000 or six percent of the 2001-2005 cohort took five years as opposed to four years to graduate.

**Table 6**  
**Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates**  
**for the 2000 Cohort and the 2001 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>
2001-2005 (4-year)	27,334	3,808	13.9	15,802	57.8
2001-2006 (5-year)	27,334	3,773	13.8	16,811	61.5
2002-2006 (4-year)	27,068	3,697	13.7	15,898	58.7
Change in 4-year Rate			-0.2		0.9

## 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 slight this year with minor improvements in graduation rates for all ethnic/racial groups. Dropout rates improved for White, Non-Hispanic and Hispanic students and slightly increased for Black, Non-Hispanic students.

**Table 7**  
**Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity**  
**for the 2000 Cohort and the 2001 Cohort Groups**

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>White, Non-Hispanic</b>	<b>Black, Non-Hispanic</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>
2001-2005 (4-year) Dropout Rate	12.1	13.8	14.6
2001-2005 (4-year) Graduation Rate	70.8	48.0	59.6
2002-2006 (4-year) Dropout Rate	10.8	14.4	14.1
2002-2006 (4-year) Graduation Rate	72.7	48.6	60.4
Change in 4-year Dropout Rate	-1.3	0.6	-0.5
Change in 4-year Graduation Rate	1.9	0.6	0.8

## Trends in Dropout and Graduation Rates

Dropout rates have been fairly consistent for the past four M-DCPS cohorts (Table 8). A generalization previously mentioned in this brief has been true for three of the past four cohort groups. White, Non-Hispanic students tend to dropout the least, Black, Non-Hispanic students the most, and Hispanic students fall somewhere between the other two groups. Additionally, the longitudinal dropout rates for White, Non-Hispanic students have decreased for the past three cohorts.

**Table 8**  
**Longitudinal Dropout Rates for Four Cohorts**

<b>Group</b>	<b>1999-03</b>	<b>2000-04</b>	<b>2001-05</b>	<b>2002-06</b>
White Non-Hispanic	12.5	12.2	12.1	10.8
Black, Non-Hispanic	15.4	14.2	13.8	14.4
Hispanic	13.8	13.6	14.6	14.1
District	14.1	13.5	13.9	13.7

Nationally, approximately two-thirds of all students who enter ninth grade graduate with regular diplomas four years later (Orfield 2004). This figure declines to only about 50 percent for Black and Hispanic students. Examining M-DCPS graduation rates for the past four cohorts indicates that Black students, although graduating at an unacceptably low rate, appear to be on par with similar students nationwide (Table 9). In contrast, local Hispanic students appear to be exceeding the national graduation rate for students with a similar ethnic/racial background.

**Table 9**  
**Longitudinal Graduation Rates for Four Cohorts**

<b>Group</b>	<b>1999-03</b>	<b>2000-04</b>	<b>2001-05</b>	<b>2002-06</b>
White Non-Hispanic	73.3	73.1	70.8	72.7
Black, Non-Hispanic	50.7	49.5	48.0	48.6
Hispanic	59.5	61.1	59.6	60.4
District	58.7	59.2	57.8	58.7

## Summary

### Cross-Sectional Dropout Analysis

- The cross-sectional dropout rate for 2005-2006 for grades 9-12 was 4.9%. This was the same as the cross-sectional dropout rate for 2004-2005.
- 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 2005-2006 was 6.0 percent (grades 9-12). The rate for female students was 3.8 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 2005-2006 rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 3.5 percent (grades 9-12); for Hispanic students the rate was 4.3 percent (grades 9-12); and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 6.8 percent (grades 9-12).

### Longitudinal Graduation Analysis and Dropout Rate

- The longitudinal 4-year dropout rate for the 2002-2006 cohort group decreased slightly from 13.9 percent (2001-2005) to 13.7 percent (2002-2006). The longitudinal 4-year graduation rate for the 2002-2006 cohort group increased slightly from 57.8 percent (2001-2005) to 58.7 percent (2002-2006).
- The longitudinal 4-year 2002-2006 dropout rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 10.8 percent; for Hispanics students the rate was 14.1 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 14.4 percent. The longitudinal 4-year 2002-2006 graduation rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 72.7 percent; for Hispanic students the rate was 60.4 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 48.6 percent.

## References

Orfield, G. (2004) *Dropouts in America: Confronting the Graduation Rate Crisis*, Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pgs. 306.

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