



RESEARCH BRIEF

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Dropout and Graduation Rates 2008-2009

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 2008-2009.

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not met the relevant attendance requirements of the school district, or the student's whereabouts are unknown; (3) has withdrawn from school but has not transferred to another public or private school; (4) has withdrawn from school because of hardship; or (5) is not eligible to attend school because of reaching the maximum age for an exceptional student program.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 2008-2009 across grades 9-12 was 3.7 percent. Table 1 includes a breakdown of the rates by grade and across grades for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. The observed cross-sectional dropout rates are considerably lower in 2008-2009 across all grade levels.

Table 1
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009

Grade	2007-2008			2008-2009		
	2008 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	2009 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate
9	31,995	1,581	4.9%	27,753	963	3.5%
10	30,667	1,743	5.7%	30,243	1,169	3.9%
11	25,458	1,141	4.5%	24,998	899	3.6%
12	25,211	1,094	4.3%	25,605	1,030	4.0%
9 - 12	113,331	5,559	4.9%	108,599	4,061	3.7%

Research Services

Office of Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis
1500 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 225, Miami, Florida 33132
(305) 995-7503 Fax (305) 995-7521

Cross-Sectional Rate by Gender

Table 2 includes a breakdown of the rates by gender and grade for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. Consistent with previous local and national findings, female students were categorized as dropouts/truants less frequently than were male students. Specifically, the rate for 2008-2009 for female students in grades 9-12 was 3.1 percent. The rate for 2008-2009 for male students in grades 9-12 was 4.4 percent.

Table 2
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 by Gender

Grade	Female		Male	
	2007-2008	2008-2009	2007-2008	2008-2009
9	3.6	2.9	6.1	4.0
10	4.6	3.2	6.7	4.5
11	3.7	2.8	5.3	4.4
12	3.7	3.5	5.0	4.6
9 - 12	3.9	3.1	5.9	4.4

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 2.5 percent for grades 9-12 for 2008-2009. For Hispanic students, the rate for grades 9-12 was 3.4 percent for 2008-2009; and for Black, Non-Hispanics, the rate for students in grades 9-12 was 5.1 percent for 2008-2009. As can be seen, there is a decrease in the dropout rate for all three major racial/ethnic groups. The largest decrease was seen in 10th grade Black, Non-Hispanic students. The cross-sectional dropout rate for these students decreased from 8.1 percent in 2007-08 to 5.2 percent in 2008-09.

Table 3
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Grade	White, Non-Hispanic		Black, Non-Hispanic		Hispanic	
	2007-2008	2008-2009	2007-2008	2008-2009	2007-2008	2008-2009
9	2.9	2.3	7.0	5.0	4.4	3.1
10	3.3	2.7	8.1	5.2	5.1	3.6
11	2.7	2.5	6.2	4.9	4.1	3.3
12	2.4	2.6	6.9	5.3	3.6	3.7
9 - 12	2.8	2.5	7.1	5.1	4.3	3.4

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 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 2008-2009 school year, the cross-sectional dropout rate across all exceptional student education programs (excluding gifted) for all grades was 2.8 percent.

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

Exceptional Student Education Program	2007-2008		2008-2009	
	Feb. 2007 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate	Feb. 2008 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate
Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH)	1,732	0.9	1,551	2.6
Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH)	1,064	0.8	1,044	0.8
Physically Impaired - (also includes traumatic brain injured and other health impaired)	3,089	0.1	3,115	3.9
Speech Impaired	3,154	0.0	3,034	0.3
Language Impaired	717	0.0	747	0.8
Hearing Impaired	459	0.9	437	2.1
Visually Impaired	137	0.7	129	2.3
Emotionally Handicapped	4,298	1.4	4,094	5.7
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	21,014	0.5	20,264	3.1
Profound Mentally Handicapped (PMH) - (also includes Autistic, Dual Sensory, and Severely Emotionally Handicapped)	2,494	0.4	2,613	1.2
Developmentally Delayed	1,622	0.0	1,667	0.1
Established Conditions	48	0.0	64	0.0
Gifted	33,525	0.0	34,794	0.7
Total	73,353	0.3	73,553	1.8
Total Excluding Gifted	39,828	0.5	38,759	2.8

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 5.7 percent for 2008-2009. There is a considerably lower cross-sectional dropout rate for LEP students across all grade levels 9 - 12.

Table 5
Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for LEP Students

Grade	2007-2008			2008-2009		
	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	3,035	188	6.2%	2,851	121	4.2%
10	2,721	227	8.3%	3,153	193	6.1%
11	1,910	166	8.7%	2,291	131	5.7%
12	1,327	141	10.6%	1,627	125	7.7%
9 - 12	8,993	722	8.0%	9922	570	5.7%

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 2004 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2008) and the students who started 9th grade in October 2005 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2009). The 2004 cohort was tracked an extra 5th year and the resultant 5-year dropout and graduation rates are reported separately.

The 4-year dropout rate increased slightly from 11.8 percent to 12.8 percent between the 2004 and 2005 cohort groups (Table 6). The 4-year graduation rate increased from 65.8 percent to 68.6 percent between the 2004 and 2005 cohort groups. The 5-year rates for the 2004 cohort group showed a slight decrease in dropouts and a 2.8 percent increase in graduates over their 4-year rate.

Table 6
Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates
for the 2004 Cohort and the 2005 Cohort Groups

Cohort	Final Cohort Membership	No. of Dropouts	Rate	No. of Graduates	Rate
2004-2008 (4-year)	26,654	3,149	11.8	17,528	65.8
2005-2008 (5-year)	26,654	3,131	11.7	18,255	68.5
2005-2009 (4-year)	26,567	3,412	12.8	18,231	68.6
Change in 4-year Rate			1.0		2.8

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 consistent across groups this year with slight increases in dropout rates and improvements in graduation rates, especially for the Black and Hispanic ethnic/racial groups.

Table 7
Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity
for the 2004 Cohort and the 2005 Cohort Groups

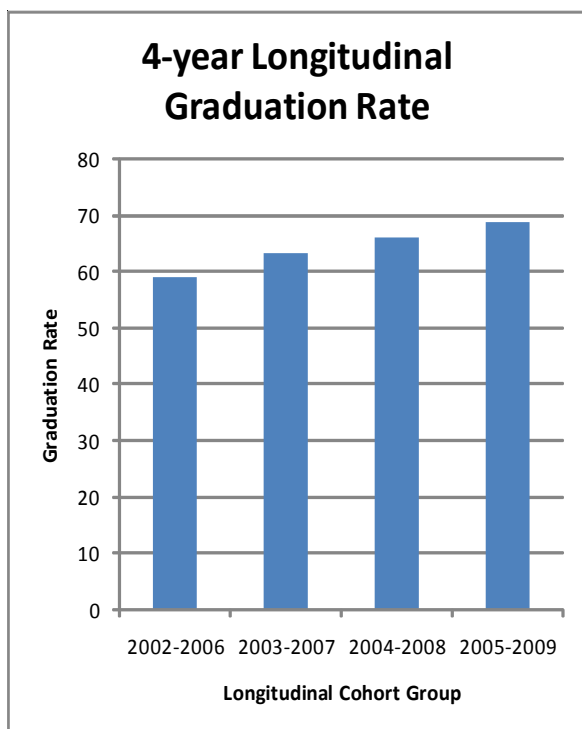
Cohort	White, Non-Hispanic	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
2004-2008 (4-year) Dropout Rate	10.3	13.0	11.7
2004-2008 (4-year) Graduation Rate	76.0	56.0	68.1
2005-2009 (4-year) Dropout Rate	11.4	13.8	12.8
2005-2009 (4-year) Graduation Rate	77.0	59.0	71.3
Change in 4-year Dropout Rate	1.1	0.8	1.1
Change in 4-year Graduation Rate	1.0	3.0	3.2

Summary

Cross-Sectional Dropout Analysis

- The cross-sectional dropout rate for 2008-2009 for grades 9-12 was 3.7%. This was lower than the cross-sectional dropout rate for 2007-2008.
- 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 2008-2009 was 4.4 percent (grades 9-12). The rate for female students was 3.1 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 2008-2009 rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 2.5 percent (grades 9-12); for Hispanic students the rate was 3.4 percent (grades 9-12); and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 5.1 percent (grades 9-12).

Longitudinal Graduation Analysis and Dropout Rate



- The longitudinal 4-year dropout rate for the 2005-2009 cohort group increased slightly from 11.8 percent (2004-2008) to 12.8 percent (2005-2009). The longitudinal 4-year graduation rate for the 2005-2009 cohort group increased from 65.8 percent (2004-2008) to 68.6 percent (2005-2009).
- The longitudinal 4-year 2005-2009 dropout rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 11.4 percent; for Hispanics students the rate was 12.8 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 13.8 percent. The longitudinal 4-year 2005-2009 graduation rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 77.0 percent; for Hispanic students the rate was 71.3 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 59.0 percent.

This year the method for calculating graduation rates changed to exclude students who passed the General Educational Development (GED) test. This resulted in a graduation rate approximately one percentage point lower than would have been

calculated under the previous methodology. Despite this change, the longitudinal graduation rate shows a steady improvement over the last four years.

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 a decrease in dropout rate and the longitudinal analysis yielding a slight increase 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.

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