

RESEARCH BRIEF

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Differences in Graduation and Dropout Rates Among Subgroups of Students

A few years ago we initiated a new, more accurate method of calculating graduation and dropout rates over time. This new method tracked a ninth-grade cohort group through their high school careers and beyond. Allowances were made for increasing the cohort group through students transferring into the system, and decreasing the group for students transferring out to attend school elsewhere.

The new methodology results in the ultimate classification of the cohort group into three mutually exclusive and exhaustive subgroups: **graduates** (standard diplomas, special diplomas, or GED's anytime over a five-year span), **dropouts** (anytime over a five-year span), or **continuing students** (beyond the fifth-year to graduate or dropout later, or slated for home or adult education programs).

Beyond the overall results, this methodology of detailed tracking of the cohort group over many years allows for the calculation of graduation and dropout rates for special subgroups of the population. With extra care, we are now able to compute graduation and dropout rates separately for the different racial/ethnic groups, as well as the special student participating in the programs of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP). In this paper we present the graduation and dropout rates for selected subgroups of the cohort group starting ninth-grade in 1997 and finishing the "normal" four-year program in June 2001 and concluding the extended five-year tracking in June 2002.

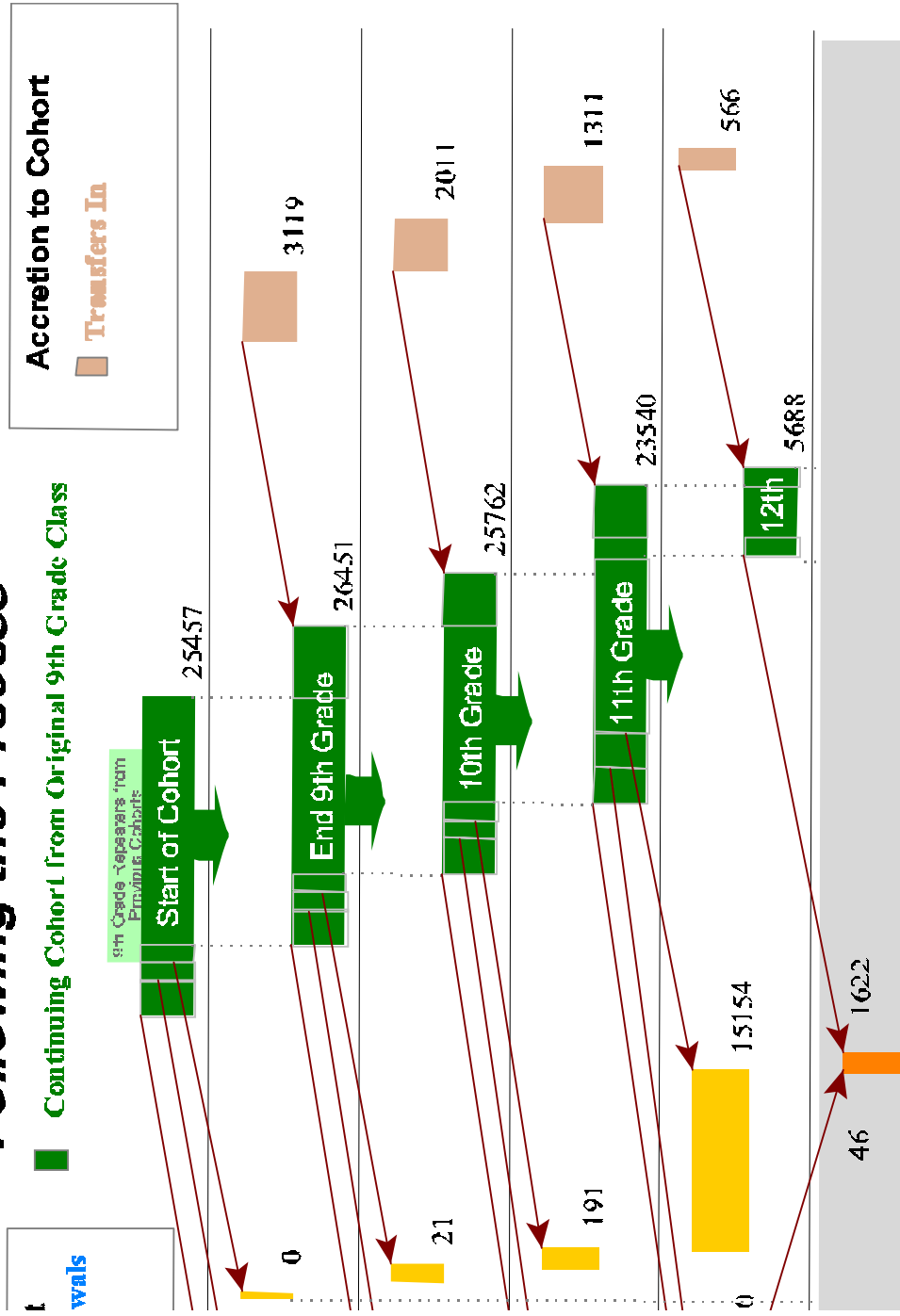
The overall rates can be seen in the attached chart illustrating the flow of the entire cohort group through the tracking period, accounting for transfers-out and withdrawals, dropouts, graduates, and transfers-in. The final results are an overall dropout rate of 20.1% and a five-year graduation rate of 64.4%. Over the same 5-year period, the dropout and graduation rates for the major racial/ethnic groups are as follows:

	Dropout Rate	Graduation Rate	Continuing
White	17.4%	73.4%	9.2%
Hispanic	22.8%	61.5%	15.7%
Black	21.4%	57.8%	20.8%

These data are shown graphically along with the FCAT performance for the Cohort group during their 10th-grade year. While everyone would agree that, generally speaking, the dropout rates are too high and the graduation rates are too low, particular attention is directed to the contrast between the dropout rates for Hispanics and their relative standing in FCAT performance.

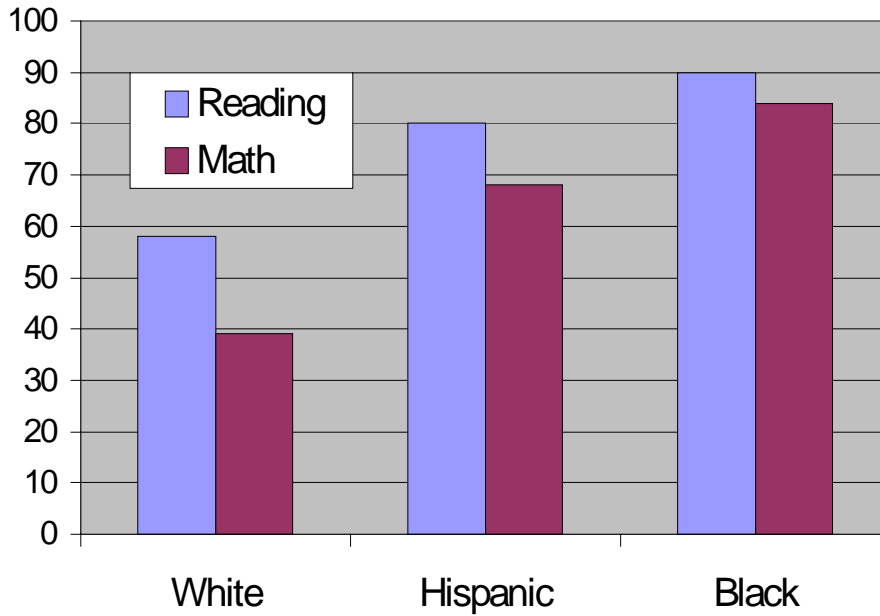
The final status of the ESE and LEP students can be seen in the attached pie charts. These students have lower overall graduation rates and contribute disproportionately to both "dropout" and "continuing" percentages.

Graduation and Dropout Rates 2000/2001 Cohort: Following the Process

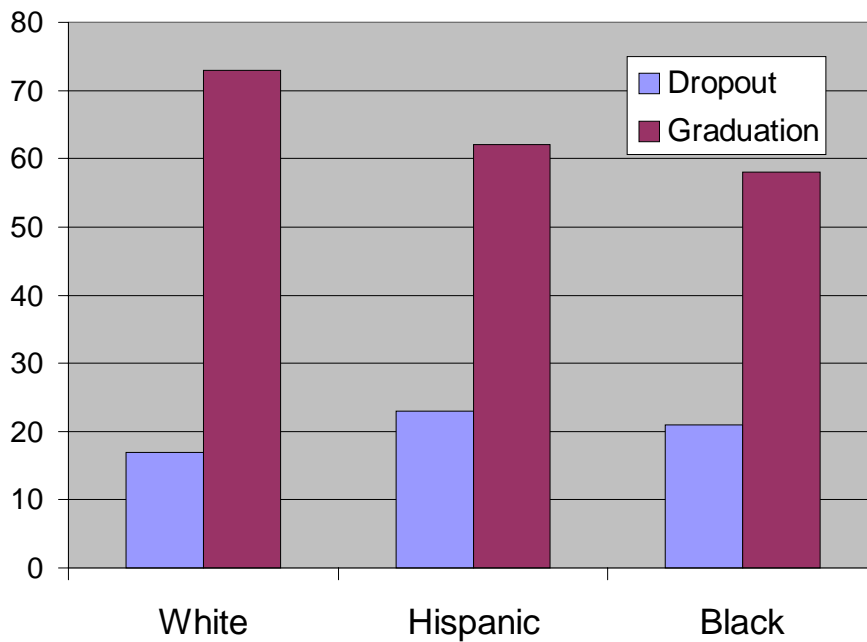


FCAT Performance and Dropout/Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

FCAT 10-Grade: Percent Levels 1 & 2



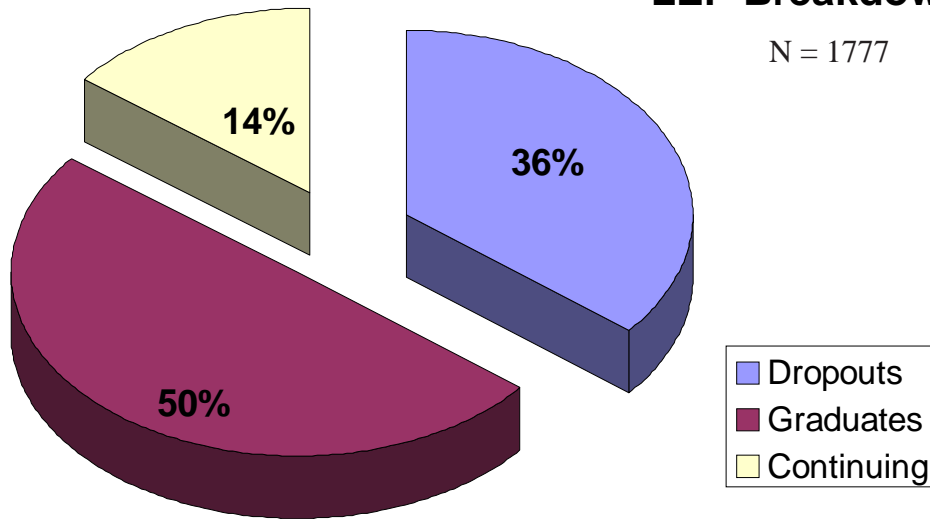
Dropout and Graduation Rates



Final Status of 2000-2001 Cohort Group for ESE and LEP Students

LEP Breakdown

N = 1777



ESE Breakdown

N = 2730

