



# RESEARCH BRIEF

## Research Services

Vol. 0804  
February 2009

Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis  
Department of Research Services

## Dropout and Graduation Rates 2007-2008

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 2007-2008.

### 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not met the relevant attendance requirements of the school district, or the student's whereabouts are unknown; (3) has withdrawn from school but has not transferred to another public or private school; (4) has withdrawn from school because of hardship; or (5) is not eligible to attend school because of reaching the maximum age for an exceptional student program.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 2007-2008 across grades 9-12 was 4.9 percent. Table 1 includes a breakdown of the rates by grade and across grades for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. The observed cross-sectional dropout rates are lower in 2007-08 across all grade levels.

**Table 1**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008**

Grade	2006-2007			2007-2008		
	2007 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	2008 All Year Membership	No. of Dropouts	Dropout Rate
9	33,388	1,998	6.0%	31,995	1,581	4.9%
10	32,623	1,902	5.8%	30,667	1,743	5.7%
11	25,797	1,315	5.1%	25,458	1,141	4.5%
12	24,814	1,153	4.6%	25,211	1,094	4.3%
9 - 12	116,622	6,368	5.5%	113,331	5,559	4.9%

## Cross-Sectional Rate by Gender

Table 2 includes a breakdown of the rates by gender and grade for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. Consistent with previous local and national findings, female students were categorized as dropouts/truants less frequently than were male students. Specifically, the rate for 2007-2008 for female students in grades 9-12 was 3.9 percent. The rate for 2007-2008 for male students in grades 9-12 was 5.9 percent.

**Table 2**  
**Cross-Sectional Dropout Rates for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 by Gender**

Grade	Female		Male	
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2006-2007	2007-2008
9	4.5	3.6	7.3	6.1
10	4.5	4.6	7.1	6.7
11	4.3	3.7	6.0	5.3
12	4.2	3.7	5.1	5.0
9 - 12	4.4	3.9	6.5	5.9

## 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 2.8 percent for grades 9-12 for 2007-2008. For Hispanic students, the rate for grades 9-12 was 4.3 percent for 2007-2008; and for Black, Non-Hispanics, the rate for students in grades 9-12 was 7.1 percent for 2007-2008. As can be seen, there was a decrease in the dropout rate for all three major racial/ethnic groups. The largest decrease was seen in 9th grade Black, Non-Hispanic students. The cross-sectional dropout rate for these students decreased from 8.8 percent in 2006-07 to 7.0 percent in 2007-08.

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

Grade	White, Non-Hispanic		Black, Non-Hispanic		Hispanic	
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2006-2007	2007-2008	2006-2007	2007-2008
9	3.9	2.9	8.8	7.0	5.1	4.4
10	4.8	3.3	7.8	8.1	5.2	5.1
11	3.1	2.7	6.9	6.2	4.7	4.1
12	3.0	2.4	6.4	6.9	4.2	3.6
9 - 12	3.7	2.8	7.6	7.1	4.9	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 2007-2008 school year, the cross-sectional dropout rate across all exceptional student education programs (excluding gifted) for all grades was 0.5 percent.

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

Exceptional Student Education Program	2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Feb. 2006 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate	Feb. 2007 ESE Membership	Dropout Rate
Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH)	1,973	1.9	1,732	0.9
Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH)	1,147	1.8	1,064	0.8
Physically Impaired - (also includes traumatic brain injured and other health impaired)	2,847	0.3	3,089	0.1
Speech Impaired	3,365	0.1	3,154	0.0
Language Impaired	670	0.1	717	0.0
Hearing Impaired	470	0.9	459	0.9
Visually Impaired	136	0.0	137	0.7
Emotionally Handicapped	3,134	2.0	4,298	1.4
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	21,985	1.0	21,014	0.5
Profound Mentally Handicapped (PMH) - (also includes Autistic, Dual Sensory, and Severely Emotionally Handicapped)	3,664	1.4	2,494	0.4
Developmentally Delayed	1,568	0.0	1,622	0.0
Established Conditions	40	0.0	48	0.0
Gifted	31,370	0.1	33,525	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,369</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>73,353</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Total Excluding Gifted</b>	<b>40,999</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>39,828</b>	<b>0.5</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 8.0 percent for 2007-2008 compared to 9.5 percent in 2006-07. This 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	2006-2007			2007-2008		
	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	3,200	207	6.5%	3,035	188	6.2%
10	2,831	283	10.0%	2,721	227	8.3%
11	2,080	249	12.0%	1,910	166	8.7%
12	1,347	159	11.8%	1,327	141	10.6%
9 - 12	9,458	898	9.5%	8993	722	8.0%

## 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 2003 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2007) and the students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in October 2004 (normally scheduled to graduate in June 2008). The 2003 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 increased slightly from 11.6 percent to 11.8 percent between the 2003 and 2004 cohort groups (Table 6). The 4-year graduation rate increased from 63.1 percent to 65.8 percent between the 2003 and 2004 cohort groups. The 5-year rates for the 2003 cohort group showed a slight decrease in dropouts and a 3.8 percent increase in graduates over their 4-year rate.

**Table 6**  
**Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates**  
**for the 2003 Cohort and the 2004 Cohort Groups**

Cohort	Final Cohort Membership	No. of Dropouts	Rate	No. of Graduates	Rate
2003-2007 (4-year)	26,216	3,039	11.6	16,544	63.1
2003-2007 (5-year)	26,216	3,020	11.5	17,527	66.9
2004-2008 (4-year)	26,654	3,149	11.8	17,528	65.8
Change in 4-year Rate			0.2		2.7

## 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 mixed this year with improvements in graduation rates for the Black and Hispanic ethnic/racial groups. Dropout rates increased for the White and Black ethnic/racial groups.

**Table 7**  
**Longitudinal Dropout and Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity**  
**for the 2003 Cohort and the 2004 Cohort Groups**

Cohort	White,	Black,	Hispanic
	Non-Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	
2003-2007 (4-year) Dropout Rate	9.0	11.9	12.1
2003-2007 (4-year) Graduation Rate	76.6	52.6	65.2
2004-2008 (4-year) Dropout Rate	10.3	13.0	11.7
2004-2008 (4-year) Graduation Rate	76.0	56.0	68.1
Change in 4-year Dropout Rate	1.3	1.1	-0.4
Change in 4-year Graduation Rate	-0.6	3.4	2.9

## Summary

### Cross-Sectional Dropout Analysis

- The cross-sectional dropout rate for 2007-2008 for grades 9-12 was 4.9%. This was slightly lower than the cross-sectional dropout rate for 2006-2007.
- 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 2007-2008 was 5.9 percent (grades 9-12). The rate for female students was 3.9 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 2007-2008 rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 2.8 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 7.1 percent (grades 9-12).

### Longitudinal Graduation Analysis and Dropout Rate

- The longitudinal 4-year dropout rate for the 2004-2008 cohort group increased slightly from 11.6 percent (2003-2007) to 11.8 percent (2004-2008). The longitudinal 4-year graduation rate for the 2004-2008 cohort group increased from 63.1 percent (2003-2007) to 65.8 percent (2004-2008).
- The longitudinal 4-year 2004-2008 dropout rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 10.3 percent; for Hispanic students the rate was 11.7 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 13.0 percent. The longitudinal 4-year 2004-2008 graduation rate for White, Non-Hispanic students was 76.0 percent; for Hispanic students the rate was 68.1 percent; and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was 56.0 percent.

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 an 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.