



March 27, 2013

Racial Disparities in High School Graduation

Updated March, 2013

We know a lot about youth who drop out of high school in Michigan. Even though more Michigan young people are staying in school, nearly 14,000 Michigan young people who would have graduated in 2012 (11%) left high school without a diploma, down from 15% of the class of 2007. Improvements in high school dropout have been experienced by nearly all racial and ethnic groups, and gains have been made by low-income students as well. Despite improvements, the percentage of youth of color who dropped out in 2012 remains unacceptable, with one out of five Black and Hispanic students dropping out. Fortunately, another large percentage of youth – including higher shares of youth of color – are still connected to school but need more time to finish. This group increased by more than 40 percent since 2007, and illustrates the benefit of more time and the need for a variety of pathways to high school completion.

	On-Track Graduated			Dropout			Off-Track Continuing		
			2007-12			2007-12			2007-12
	2007	2012	% Change	2007	2012	% Change	2007	2012	% Change
All Students	75%	76%	1%	15%	11%	-29%	9%	12%	37%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	66%	66%	0%	19%	15%	-19%	13%	15%	13%
Asian	85%	87%	3%	10%	5%	-45%	4%	6%	49%
Black or African American	56%	60%	6%	28%	19%	-31%	15%	20%	34%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	78%	73%	-6%	13%	15%	21%	6%	n/a	n/a
White	82%	82%	0%	11%	8%	-28%	7%	9%	38%
Hispanic or Latino	58%	64%	11%	29%	18%	-37%	12%	16%	32%
Multiracial	69%	74%	6%	17%	11%	-38%	10%	14%	37%
Economically Disadvantaged	57%	64%	12%	25%	16%	-36%	17%	18%	5%
Limited English Proficient	70%	63%	-9%	20%	17%	-16%	10%	19%	98%
Migrant Education	57%	68%	20%	31%	12%	-62%	11%	18%	65%
Students with Disabilities	61%	54%	-12%	19%	15%	-21%	19%	26%	41%
Homeless*	n/a	54%	n/a	n/a	18%	n/a	n/a	26%	n/a
<i>Information was not available for off-track continuing Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders in 2012.</i>									
<i>Information was not collected for homeless students until 2011.</i>									

Source: Four-year Cohort Graduation and Dropout Reports, 2013 CEPI www.michigan.gov/cepi

Definitions:

On-Track Graduated: Students who completed high school with a regular diploma in four years or less.

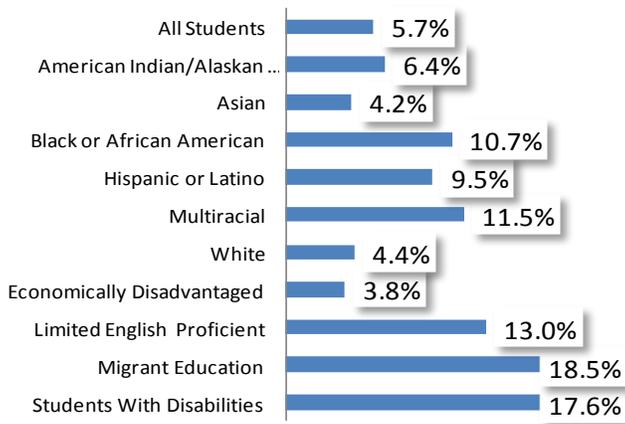
Dropout: Students who left high school permanently at any time during the four-year cohort period, or whose whereabouts are unknown (Reported and Missing Expected Records).

Off-Track Continuing: Students who completed high school with a regular diploma in more than four years, or did not complete high school in four years and are still continuing in school.

Percentages do not add to 100 due to Other Completers (GED, etc.) who are not included in this analysis.

There is strong research that allows us to predict which students are at-risk of dropping out. Young people who fall behind in credits are much more likely to not complete school, yet there are very limited options for credit recovery for these students. Once young people fall behind in school, or when they face significant personal and educational obstacles, a traditional high school setting is not always successful in reengaging them, yet

**Percent Increase in Michigan Graduation Rates When the 5th and 6th year of High School are Included
Class of 2010**



few alternatives exist. In addition, school discipline policies often contribute to disengagement and lost credits. These barriers to success have always had significant implications for young people, their families and communities.

Additional time in high school improves equity. Michigan law allows state payment for educating young people toward a high school diploma until they are 20 years old (under certain circumstances, until age 22), allowing students to continue for additional time beyond a traditional 4-years of high school. Graduation rates increased for all groups after those additional years, but the fifth and sixth years of high school are significantly more important for students of color, with percentage increases of near 10% for many racial and ethnic groups, as compared to a 4% increase for white students.

Strategies to promote equal opportunities for high school graduation. Michigan leaders continue their focus on building a path for struggling students, schools and communities to success, most recently through the work of the Oxford Foundation to redraft the way public K-12 education is financed and the proposed expansion of the Educational Achievement Authority. Without integrating the strategies here, the chances for current reform efforts to raise graduation rates for all of our young people are small.

Support multiple pathways to graduation that provide more time and flexibility for students. State and federal policy must better support the paths we have, such as alternative and community education options, community college and workforce development partnerships; and create other pathways to consistently serve young people throughout the state that utilize a broad range of community resources.

Invest in equity promoting options from cradle-to-career. High school dropout is a symptom of success and failures in systems serving kids and families throughout their lives. Gaps in achievement and high school completion can be traced to the earliest years of a child’s life and continue to grow through their educational careers. By the time children of color and children from low-income families reach kindergarten they already are behind in reading and math readiness, are less likely to score well on state and federal standardized tests and more likely to repeat a grade. Investments are necessary not only in the quality of K-12 systems, but also in parent support, high quality early education, expanded learning programs in K-12, physical and mental health services, and meaningful education reform through career or post-secondary.

Address suspension and expulsion rates. Michigan needs to bring its harsh zero tolerance policy in line with other states and federal standards and give schools greater ability to handle challenging student behavior. To this end, Michigan needs to review its current suspension and expulsion policy and its disproportionate affect on youths of color, and provide schools with incentives to create discipline alternatives.

Stop diminishing services. Current actions that have diminished services for at-risk young people through cuts in the state and federal budgets are counter-productive. Disinvestment in the very communities most in need does not promote innovation, partnership or reform. Evidence-based support programs will need to be expanded in order to see real, sustainable improvement in school success for those most challenged schools, communities and young people.

For more information on dropout prevention and recovery, visit Michigan’s Children’s website at www.michiganschildren.org.