



**High School Graduation Matters to Policymaking in Michigan**  
*2012-13 School Year Update*

**We know a lot about who is dropping out of school in Michigan and how we can support young people who face challenges in their education.** Even though more Michigan young people are staying in school than were several years ago, nearly 13,500 Michigan young people who would have graduated in 2013 (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. The improvement has been even larger for many groups of youth of color, with particularly large gains for Hispanic and Asian students. Despite improvements, the percentage of youth of color who dropped out in 2013 remains unacceptable, with nearly one out of five Black students and more than one in six Hispanic and American Indian students dropping out. Fortunately, a similar percentage (11%) of youth – including higher shares of youth of color and those facing specific challenges like poverty and homelessness – are still connected to school but need more time to finish. This group increased by 24 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	2013	% Change	2007	2013	% Change	2007	2013	% Change
All Students	75%	77%	<b>3%</b>	15%	11%	<b>-30%</b>	9%	11%	<b>24%</b>
American Indian/Alaskan Native	66%	64%	<b>-3%</b>	19%	17%	<b>-10%</b>	13%	16%	<b>21%</b>
Asian	85%	88%	<b>3%</b>	10%	6%	<b>-43%</b>	4%	6%	<b>41%</b>
Black or African American	56%	60%	<b>8%</b>	28%	19%	<b>-30%</b>	15%	19%	<b>26%</b>
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	78%	69%	<b>-11%</b>	13%	13%	<b>4%</b>	6%	13%	<b>124%</b>
White	82%	82%	<b>0%</b>	11%	8%	<b>-30%</b>	7%	9%	<b>27%</b>
Hispanic or Latino	58%	67%	<b>16%</b>	29%	17%	<b>-40%</b>	12%	14%	<b>15%</b>
Multiracial	69%	74%	<b>7%</b>	17%	11%	<b>-35%</b>	10%	13%	<b>29%</b>
Economically Disadvantaged	57%	64%	<b>12%</b>	25%	17%	<b>-34%</b>	17%	18%	<b>4%</b>
Limited English Proficient	70%	65%	<b>-7%</b>	20%	17%	<b>-14%</b>	10%	16%	<b>65%</b>
Migrant Education	57%	71%	<b>24%</b>	31%	15%	<b>-50%</b>	11%	13%	<b>17%</b>
Students with Disabilities	61%	54%	<b>-12%</b>	19%	15%	<b>-20%</b>	19%	26%	<b>37%</b>
Homeless*	n/a	54%	<b>n/a</b>	n/a	18%	<b>n/a</b>	n/a	25%	<b>n/a</b>

*Information was not collected for homeless students until 2011.*

Source: Four-year Cohort Graduation and Dropout Reports, 2014 CEPI [www.michigan.gov/cepi](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi)

Definitions:

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

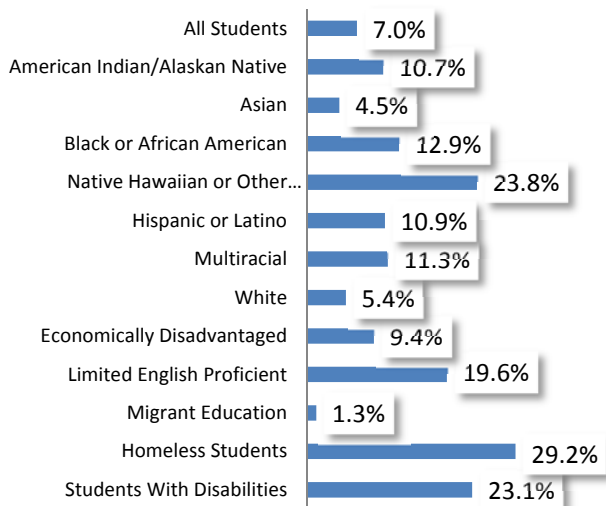
*Dropout:* Students who left high school permanently at any time during the four-year cohort period, or whose whereabouts are unknown (Reported and Missing Expected Records).

*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

**Percent Increase in Michigan Graduation Rates When the 5th and 6th year of High School are Included  
Class of 2011**



credit recovery for 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 few alternatives exist. In addition, school discipline policies often contribute to disengagement and lost credits.

**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 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 and those with other challenges, with percentage increases of nearly 10% for many racial and ethnic groups, increases of nearly 30% for homeless students and nearly 10% for all economically disadvantaged youth, as compared to a 5% increase for white students.

**High school graduation must be part of this year’s election conversation and successful candidates must be held accountable for change.** With the 2014 campaign season under way, candidates need to know that it is important for them to focus on building paths for struggling students, schools and communities to success once elected. Decision makers at all levels should:

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, adult 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. Young people face barriers to graduation that education alone cannot remove. 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 effect 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.