



March 11, 2015

The Facts about High School Graduation Rates and Why It Matters to Policy Makers 2013-14 School Year Update

We know a lot about who is dropping out of school in Michigan.

- ✓ The good news: Fewer young people, particularly youth of color, are dropping out of school than in recent years.
- ✓ Despite improvements, more than one in every ten students who should have graduated in 2014 left high school without a diploma. Dropout rates rise to one in every five Black students and one in six Hispanic and American Indian students.
- ✓ Increasing numbers of students need more than four years to complete high school and graduate. Fortunately, 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.

	On-Track Graduated			Dropout			Off-Track Continuing		
	2007	2014	2007-14 % Change	2007	2014	2007-14 % Change	2007	2014	2007-14 % Change
All Students	75%	79%	4%	15%	10%	-36%	9%	11%	24%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	66%	65%	-2%	19%	14%	-25%	13%	18%	37%
Asian	85%	89%	5%	10%	5%	-48%	4%	5%	16%
Black or African American	56%	64%	14%	28%	17%	-39%	15%	17%	18%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	78%	79%	1%	13%	11%	-11%	6%	8%	43%
White	82%	83%	2%	11%	7%	-32%	7%	9%	28%
Hispanic or Latino	58%	69%	19%	29%	15%	-47%	12%	14%	20%
Multiracial	69%	74%	7%	17%	11%	-35%	10%	13%	30%
Economically Disadvantaged	57%	66%	15%	25%	16%	-37%	17%	17%	-3%
Limited English Proficient	70%	68%	-2%	20%	14%	-29%	10%	16%	70%
Migrant Education	57%	63%	11%	31%	25%	-20%	11%	n/a	n/a
Students with Disabilities	51%	54%	5%	17%	20%	14%	30%	24%	-19%
Homeless*	61%	55%	-10%	19%	15%	-24%	19%	25%	32%

*Trend for homeless students, 2011-2014

Source: Four-year Cohort Graduation and Dropout Reports, 2015 CEPI www.michigan.gov/cepi

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

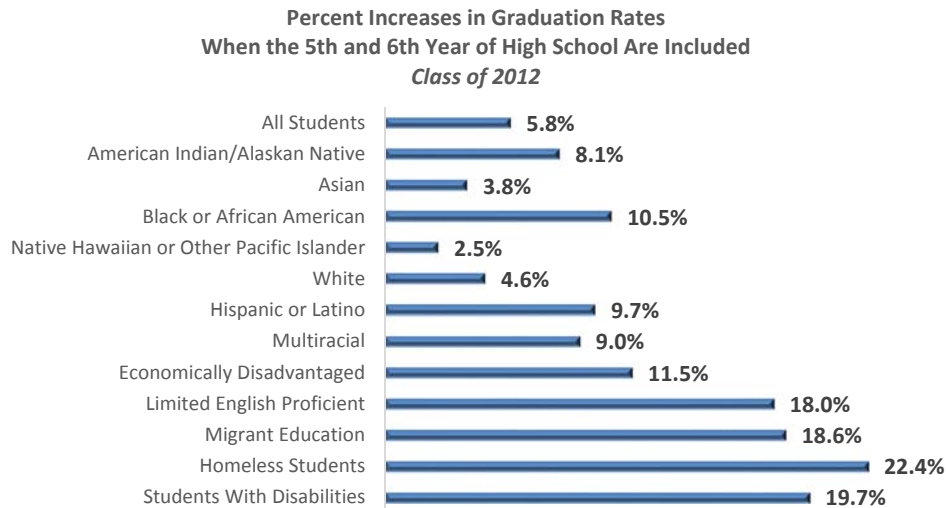
Dropout: Students who left high school permanently at any time during the four-year cohort period, or whose whereabouts are unknown (Reported and Missing Expected Records); *Off-Track Continuing:* Students who did not complete high school in four years and are still continuing in school. Percentages 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.

- ✓ Students facing personal and educational obstacles are much more likely to not complete school. When young people fall behind in credits, there are limited options for credit recovery and a traditional high school setting is not always successful in reengaging them, yet few alternatives exist.
- ✓ School discipline policies often contribute to student disengagement and lost credits.

Additional time in high school improves graduation rates for everybody.

- ✓ Graduation rates increased for all groups after a fifth or sixth year of high school. Those additional years are significantly more important for students of color and those with other challenges.



High school graduation must be part of this year’s state budget conversation. A high school diploma is essential to future educational attainment, employment opportunities and lifelong success. With FY2016 budget discussions under way, it is important for elected officials to focus on building paths to success for struggling students, schools and communities. Decision makers at all levels should:

Support multiple pathways to graduation that provide more time and flexibility for students. 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. Improve support for the paths we currently employ, including alternative, adult and community education options, community college and workforce partnerships. In addition, other pathways that utilize a broad range of community resources – including child care support for parents who are students – must be created to consistently serve young people throughout the state.

Invest in proven strategies from cradle to career. High school dropout is a symptom of successes and failures in systems serving kids and families throughout their lives. 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. Students of color experience far greater rates of suspension and expulsion than their peers. 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. Current suspension and expulsion policy and its disproportionate effect on youth of color must be reviewed, and schools must be provided 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.