



NEWS RELEASE

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HIGH SCHOOLS HAVE SHOWN STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN DROPOUT RATES

In 2001-2002 the 4-year cumulative dropout rate stood at 15.1%. Reducing that rate has been a high priority for Governor Lynch, Commissioner Tracy, superintendents, and school boards around the state. The 2007-2008 numbers are evidence that their commitment to student success is paying off. Six years later, that rate now stands at 11.3%. The falling rate means that six hundred more students stayed in school and graduated. Furthermore, when students who have earned a GED or enrolled in college since last June are subtracted from the dropout count, the cumulative rate is 9.7%.

Due to advancements in data collection, the Department of Education can follow the progress of individual students. Using this information, the Department redesigned its dropout report to show a more detailed picture of what students do when they leave high school early. This year's report introduces new terminology. Previously, all students who left school without a diploma or certificate were labeled "dropouts." The new name for this group is "early exit non-graduates." Some will continue their education, earning a GED or enrolling in college. "Dropouts" now refers to those students not immediately continuing with their education. When evaluating the progress of individual schools, past years rates should be compared to the new "early exit non-graduate."

The "2007- 2008 Early Exit and Dropout Rate" report shows that the 1,986 early exit non-graduates, were 3.0% of the high school population. If this 3.0% annual rate continues for four years, then 11.3% of students will not finish high school. This year's new details reveal that 253 of the 1,986 early exiters soon earned a GED, and 51 enrolled in college. Using "dropout" to describe only those that did not go directly to a GED or college, the report shows there were 1,682, for a 4-year cumulative rate of 9.7%.

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State of New Hampshire Department of Education

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Commissioner Lyonel Tracy explained that “by separating out the GED and college students we can see the true dropouts. These are students not continuing with their education, at least not immediately. We hope they will come back into the educational system when they’re ready.” The report shows dropouts at 9.7%, but Commissioner Tracy expects the rate to be lower next year. Collecting detailed dropout information is a work in progress. The Department knows that more than 253 earned a GED, and is working on procedures to identify those students, particularly those who took the test in bordering states.

GED and college information will be particularly important beginning next September when the Governor’s initiative to increase the minimum dropout age from 16 to 18 takes effect. Students that don’t fit the traditional path to graduation can have a personalized plan that could include GED and other options.

According to Commissioner Tracy, “Through hard work, schools have made great progress. The goal is to have zero dropouts, so we are going to keep working at it.” Overall, high schools have shown steady improvement. Some schools have made exceptional progress, cutting their rates by half. Through grant programs and technical assistance the Department is working closely with schools, particularly those where the rates remain high.

The early exit rate is 13% for boys and 10% for girls. It is 11% for Whites and 19% for Blacks and Hispanics. For Asians it is 5%. Grafton county, at 8%, has the lowest rate while Sullivan’s 17% rate is the highest.

Early exit and dropout counts include students who do not return to any school after the summer break or dropout during the school year. If the student returns to school the following September, he is removed from the early exit and dropout counts. Rate for individual schools, as well as definitions and calculation methods, can be found at

www.ed.state.nh.us/education/data/DropoutsAndGraduates.htm. When evaluating progress, past years’ rates should be compared to the new “early exit non-graduate.”

For more information about dropout prevention programs contact Paul Leather at 271-3801 or pleather@ed.state.nh.us. For information about the rate calculation contact Sallie Fellows at 271-0073 or sfellows@ed.state.nh.us.

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