

Methodology

Population

The dropout calculations were derived from the population of students enrolled in grades nine through twelve in Massachusetts public schools. High school enrollment was based on the October 1, 2006 SIMS submission. The dropout count was collected during all three SIMS submissions and then checked against data submitted by all other districts.

Definitions and Calculations

The Department applied a dropout measure that was developed by the U.S. Department of Education. A dropout is defined as a student in grades nine through twelve who leaves school prior to graduation for reasons other than transfer to another school, and does not re-enroll before the following October 1. Students considered to be dropouts were checked against data submitted by all other districts. If student dropped out and then re-enrolled in another district, the student was not considered a dropout.

The dropout count was based on two groups of students:

Summer Dropouts: Students who were reported in the October 1, 2006 submission as a dropout or a transfer to an in-state public school (with no record of re-enrollment) prior to the beginning of the 2006-07 school year.

School Year Dropouts: Students who were reported as either a dropout or a transfer to an in-state public school (with no record of re-enrollment) during the 2006-07 school year.

Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, in compliance with the National Center for Education Statistics reporting guidelines, summer dropouts were applied to the grade in which they failed to enroll. For example, a student who was reported as enrolled in grade ten at the end of the 2006-07 school year, but fails to enroll in the 2006-07 school year, was counted as a grade eleven dropout because the student completed grade ten. Although the revised 2002-03 dropout by grade data were used in this report, previous school years' dropout by grade figures have not been modified in accordance with the guidelines.

According to the U.S. Department of Education dropout measure, students who dropped out during a particular reporting year, but returned to school, graduated or received a GED by October 1 of the following year were not counted in the final dropout count; these students are referred to as returned dropouts. The final dropout count equals students who were considered to be dropouts at the end of the 2006-07 school year (preliminary dropouts) minus all returned dropouts.

Figure 1: Final Dropout Count Calculation

Final dropout count = Preliminary Dropouts – Returned Dropouts

Example for the 2006-07 school year:

$$\text{State final dropout count for 2006-07} = (3,931 + 11,432) - 3927 = 11,436$$

A dropout rate is the frequency that a dropout occurs within a defined population. The Department calculates the annual dropout rate as the number of students who drop out of school over a one-year period, minus the number of returned dropouts, divided by the October 1 grade nine through twelve enrollment, and multiplied by 100. For the 2006-07 school year, the one-year period was from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007.

Figure 2: Annual Dropout Rate Calculation

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Annual dropout rate = | $\frac{\text{Final dropout count}}{\text{October 2006 Grade 9-12 enrollment}} * 100$ |
| <i>Example:</i> | |
| State annual dropout rate for 2006-07 = | $\frac{11,436}{298,033} * 100 = 3.8 \%$ |