State Policy Report:
Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement
2022-23

Submitted to:
Office of the Governor
Colorado State Board of Education
Colorado House Education Committee
Colorado Senate Education Committee

This report was prepared pursuant to C.R.S. 22-14-111 and covers the 2022-2023 school year.
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Executive Summary

One of the Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) five strategic plan goals is that "Students graduate high school with knowledge, skills and experience needed for college and career success." Students who attain this goal have the potential for better life outcomes and have choices as they graduate high school. This report provides an overview of key metrics showing progress towards this goal and information about initiatives facilitated and supported by CDE's Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement office that supports district efforts.

Outcome Overview

Outcome data from the 2022-2023 school year show improvement across metrics for engagement, graduation, and completion including the highest graduation and completion rates in Colorado history.

- The four-year graduation rate is 83.1 percent, a 0.8 percentage point increase from the previous year and a 10.7 percentage point increase from 2009-2010.
- There was an increase of the most recent five- and seven-year graduation rates over the year prior.
- As of spring 2023, the seven-year rate for students anticipated to graduate in 2020 is 87.6 percent, up from their four-year rate of 81.9 percent.
- Although gaps persist between white students and students of color, there are some metrics in which those gaps narrow over time. Extended year graduation rates show that female students of color anticipated to graduate in 2020 had the highest gains from four-year to seven-year graduation rates with a 6.2 percentage point increase (to 87.9 percent). In addition, these students now have both six-(87.3 percent) and seven-year rates that are higher than the statewide six- and seven-year rates of 87.1 and 87.6 percent, respectively.

In addition, after many statewide measures of engagement declined in 2021-2022, there was improvement in each of the major metrics. Specifically, in the 2022-2023 school year, Colorado schools saw lower dropout rates, higher attendance, lower chronic absenteeism and truancy, and a higher average district stability rate than in 2021-22. However, as indicated below, many of these rates remain high.

- The dropout rate was 2.1 percent in the 2022-2023 school year, which is 0.1 percentage point lower than it was in 2021-22. This represents 859 fewer students dropping out than in the previous year. It is still higher than the rate has been since 2017-2018 but is one full percentage point lower than it was in 2009-2010.
- There was a 0.8 percentage point increase in the attendance rate from 2021-2022 school year, with students attending 90.8 percent of possible days.
- Chronic absenteeism decreased to 31.1 percent in 2022-2023, with nearly 50,000 fewer students chronically absent than the year prior. However, this still indicates that almost 1 in every 3 Colorado students is missing more than 10 percent of the school year and is the 2nd highest rate since this collection began in 2016-17.
- The average stability rate, which measures the percentage of students who stayed within their district in the school year, increased in 2022-2023 to 90.1 percent, a 0.2 percentage point increase over the 2021-2022 school year.

However, even with these improvements in graduation and engagement, there were measures that did not show improvement or for which improvement was slow. This included an increase in reported behavior or discipline incidents and gaps between student groups that improved but remain quite large.

- Behavior incidents rose in 2022-2023, reaching the highest-level Colorado schools have reported in the past five years. The differences in behavior incidents among racial and ethnic groups increased with all groups seeing rises in behavior incidents except white students, who saw a decrease. The largest increases were reported in tobacco and marijuana consumption.
- Male students of color, students of color in general, youth experiencing homelessness, and those in foster care have lower rates of graduation and attendance and higher dropout rates. Students of color had more reported school disciplinary actions than white students.
- While there were reductions of gaps between some student groups and overall state averages in graduation and completion rates, persistent and large gaps remain.

Support Efforts

CDE administers grant programs, trainings, and other activities directly focused on improving engagement and graduation outcomes. The Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement office manages projects directly and works across CDE to support efforts to improve student engagement and academic outcomes in school. This includes directly managing competitive grant programs, supporting the collection and use of data on student engagement, and facilitating projects that help districts identify and use effective strategies. While there are projects across the department that also impact improved engagement, graduation, and completion outcomes, and districts use a variety of resources and practices to support students, this report will focus on efforts within the Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement office.

During the 2022-2023 school year, CDE's Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement office distributed $12,961,318 in grant funding to districts, BOCES, and facility schools who served nearly 14,000 students directly through grant funded programs. The goal of each of these grants is to support programs that lead to improved student and school outcomes and to learn more about effective strategies that can be replicated in other schools, districts, or regions.

In addition, the Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement office supported implementation of other legislation and projects to better support district engagement strategies including:

- CDE's release of an updated [Dropout Prevention Framework,](#) an evidence-based framework that outlines foundational practices for engagement in learning and connections to school and prioritized strategies to support students as they face barriers or begin to disengage from school.
- Launching of a learning cohort for school and district leaders to present on and learn about effective practices to improve attendance.
- Continuation of a Diagnostic Review process and a learning cohort to support leaders of Alternative Education Campuses (AECs).

Reporting Requirements

State law requires the Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement to complete an annual report on reducing the student dropout rate, increasing the high school graduation and completion rates, and improving student engagement. This report was prepared in accordance with state statute, section 22-14-111, C.R.S, for the 2022-2023 school year. Data included in this report were pulled from the 2022-2023 Student End-of-Year Snapshot, Student October Snapshot, and the School Discipline and Attendance collection.