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Graduation and Dropout Rates for 2007-2008 School Year Decline

Data released today by the Colorado Department of Education showed the statewide graduation rate for the class of 2008 decreased by 1.1 percentage points to 73.9 percent.

The graduation rate stood at 75 percent in 2007 and at 74.1 percent in 2006.

There were 62,611 students in the membership base of the 2007-2008 graduating class; these are students who entered ninth grade in the 2004-2005 school year or transferred into this class during tenth, eleventh or twelfth grade and could have graduated as part of the class of 2008.

From that membership base, 46,291 graduated. While the raw total of students graduating increased by more than 600 additional students, the membership base also was larger (62,611 compared to 60,847 the year before) so the rate dipped. For complete graduation and dropout statistics visit http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stats.htm

“While we are disappointed that the progress made last year in terms of the graduation rate has not continued, we are pleased to see a significant decrease in the dropout rate this year – with over 2,500 fewer dropouts,” said Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones. “We know districts and schools are working hard to ensure that more students are on track to receive a high school diploma, but clearly this is a continued cause for concern. We appreciate the Colorado State Legislature’s support of legislation to support more focused work on this major issue.”

House Bill 09-1243, signed by Gov. Bill Ritter last week, creates the office of dropout prevention and student re-engagement in the department to collaborate with schools, districts and education providers to reduce the student dropout rate and increase the student graduation and completion rates. The legislation directs the office to report on effective dropout prevention and student engagement and re-engagement policies and to annually analyze attendance data and assess the incidence, causes, and effects of student dropout, engagement, and re-engagement.

Commissioner Jones noted several of the department's efforts to improve underlying conditions for students across the state:

- Closing the Achievement Gap pilot project, now underway in six districts.
- Updating state model content standards, which have not changed since they were first adopted in 1994.
- Launching a new accreditation and accountability system to partner with under-performing schools, supported by Senate Bill 09-163 and using school performance data generated by the Colorado Growth Model.
- Increasing high school counseling staffs statewide through House Bill 08-1370.

More about Colorado education reform efforts can be found at the following link: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/scripts/reforms/index.asp>

About the Graduation Rate

The graduation rate formula begins with each school and district's entering ninth-grade class. This cohort of students is tracked and adjusted for verified transfers in and out of the district through the end of the 12th grade year to determine the final membership base for the graduating class. The graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who receive a diploma by the adjusted membership base.

Legislation approved in 2005 changed the way the statewide graduation rate is calculated. Changes were made in the way the state counts students who leave a Colorado school district to pursue a GED (General Educational Development) certificate and to the process of verifying transfers out of a district.

Previously, students bound for a GED program were treated as transfers and were removed from both the numerator and denominator of the graduation rate calculation. Under the formula used for the first time with 2006-2007 data, students who opt for a GED program remain in the "membership base" (or graduation rate denominator) and thereby reduce the graduation rate for their graduating class. Students who receive a GED certificate from a district-run GED program will, as before, be counted as completers but will reduce the graduation rate for their graduating class.

Racial/Ethnic Groups

Among ethnic groups, the graduation rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 57.5 percent for Native Americans (down from 58.9 percent in the previous year); 82.8 percent for Asian students (down from 83.5 percent); 64.1 percent for black students (down from 65.4 percent); 55.6 percent for Hispanic students (down from 57.1 percent); and 81.6 percent for white students (down from 82 percent).

Note: Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, data that tracks racial breakdowns will be reported following new federal race and ethnicity categories. Please see accompanying news release today <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/download/PDF/20090528raceandethnicity.pdf>

Male/Female

Statewide, the female student graduation rate for 2007-2008 school year was 77.4 percent, down from 78.6 percent, and the male graduation rate was 70.7 percent, down from 71.5 percent the previous year.

Dropout Rate

The 2007-2008 annual dropout rate improved to 3.8 percent, .6 percentage points better than the 4.4 percent dropout rate posted in 2006-2007. The dropout rate reflects the percentage of all students enrolled in grades 7-12 who leave school during a single school year. It is calculated by dividing the number of dropouts by a membership base, which includes all students who were in membership any time during the year. Between 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, the number of students counted as dropouts dipped from 18,027 to 15,524.

Completer Rate

The completer rate dropped to 78.8 percent, down 1 percentage point from 2006-2007. Completers are all graduates plus those students who are not considered graduates but who receive a certificate, a designation of high school completion or a GED certificate.

More information:

Colorado Graduation, Completion and Dropout Rates:

http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stats.htm

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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