

REPORT BRIEF

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Albuquerque Public Schools Four-Year Cohort Study

2001, 2002, 2003, AND 2004

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) voluntarily produces this report of graduating classes even though there are no federal or state regulations requiring the production of a cohort study. This is a report brief of a four-year study of cohort status conducted in 2004.

Unlike traditional cohort studies, this study expands the initial cohort of first-time ninth graders to include students who are ninth grade repeaters with the graduating class. The graduation and dropout rates presented here do not include students who transfer into APS after the ninth grade. The methodology used for this cohort study is not comparable to those used to calculate annual dropout rates or graduation rates for the state accountability report. These methods do provide different perspectives but are not comparable.

Students who held 9th grade standing on the 40th day of a school year make up the cohort of students to be followed for that particular year. Four cohorts of students are presented in this study: 1997-1998 first-time 9th graders (graduating class of 2001), 1998-1999 first-time 9th graders (graduating class of 2002), 1999-2000 first-time 9th graders (graduating class of 2003), and 2000-2001 first-time 9th graders (graduating class of 2004).

The cohort captures and presents six different statuses for students: graduation, transferred, still enrolled, expulsions, death, and dropout. It is inaccurate to assume that the graduation rate subtracted from 100% yields a dropout rate. Students who have not graduated may be transfers or may still be enrolled in APS.

The four cohort studies presented in this report show a slight increase in graduation across the three groups. Graduation rates range from 51.4% to 52.9% for the four cohorts. Cohort graduation for the last six years shows mild fluctuations in the rates, averaging about half of all entering ninth graders graduating from an APS school four years later.

From the first studies in 1985 to present, the cohort graduation rate has been between 47.9% to a high of 55.3%. These graduation rates do not mean that more than half of all entering ninth grade students drop out. These four studies show that the greatest increase occurs in the status of transfer, with transfers accounting for 18.3% of the 2004 cohort.

Conversely, the dropout figures for these studies show a decrease over the four cohorts, ranging from 30.6% in 2001 to 18.4% in 2004. The decrease in the dropout rate is greater than the increase in the graduation rate. Again, this demonstrates that the graduation rate and dropout rate are not the inverse of each other in a cohort study. Figure 1 shows the cohort statuses for each of the classes of students presented in this study. Tables 1 shows the graduation and dropout rates by school by anticipated graduation year.

It is important to remember that the graduation rate is depressed by transfer rates. Over the four-year study, the transfer rates increased notably. Over the seven years of data presented, the transfer rate is at its highest at 26.1% for Highland High School, with Cibola, Rio Grande, and West Mesa experiencing a transfer rate between 19% and 20%. Detailed data on each school can be found in the full cohort report.

Graduation and dropout rates differ across the different ethnic groups, (Figures 2 and 3). Across the three years, Hispanic students show the highest dropout rates and one of the lowest graduation rates. Hispanic graduation rates range between 43-45% for the three years while the dropout rate shows a 16% decrease between 2001-2004. Asian students consistently have the highest graduation rates ranging from 60.8% – 69.5% and the lowest dropout rate ranging from 9.5% to 21.5%. Anglo students have the next lowest

dropout rates among the ethnic groups at 11.9% and the next highest graduation rate at 64.9%. Dropout rates among African American students show the most fluctuation across the four years. However, the strongest trend of decreasing dropout across the study is seen among Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students.

Figure 1. Cohort Status for First Time Ninth Graders in Comprehensive High Schools for 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004

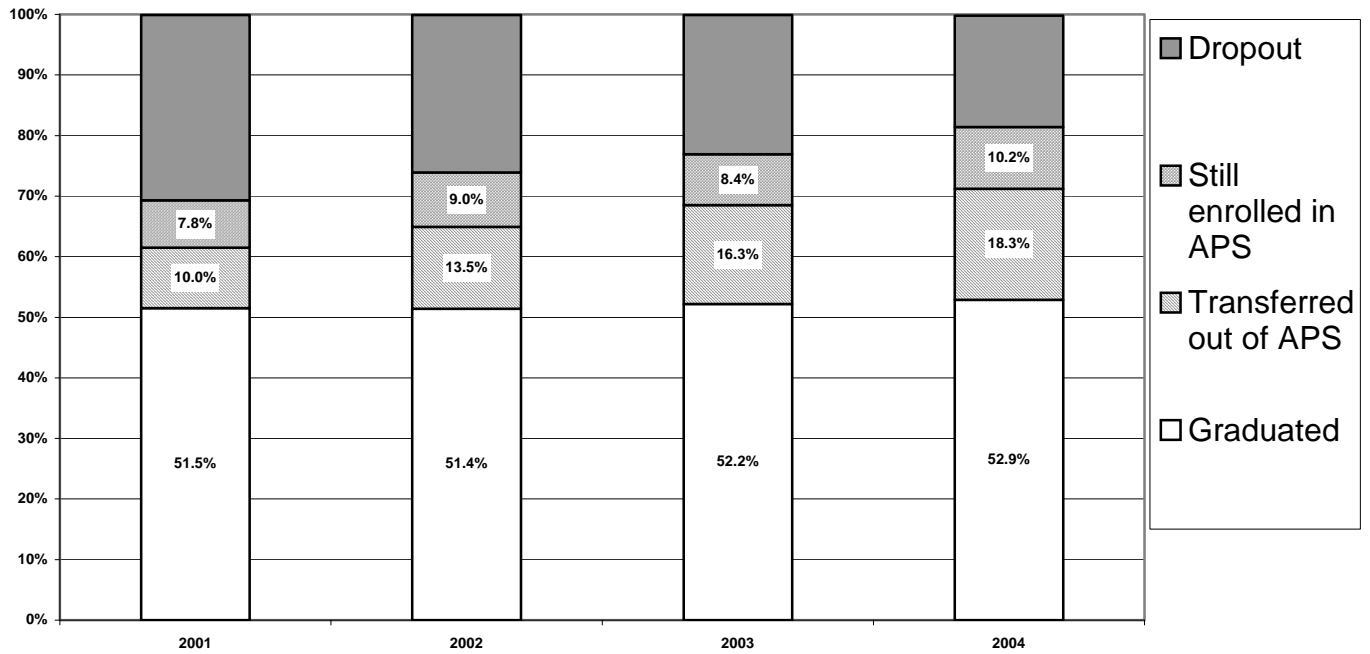


Table 1- Cohort Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates for First Time Ninth Graders

School	Graduation Rate by Anticipated Graduation Year				Dropout Rate by Anticipated Graduation Year			
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2001	2002	2003	2004
Albuquerque	41.1	40.9	42.8	42.8	42.2	33.4	31.6	23.1
Cibola	60.0	59.1	62.0	62.3	16.9	15.8	13.3	10.5
DelNorte	47.6	51.4	53.0	48.7	35.3	32.8	26.8	21.4
Eldorado	63.8	65.8	63.9	66.1	19.9	16.8	15.4	10.2
Highland	42.9	39.2	38.7	40.0	35.7	31.4	27.9	25.0
LaCueva	74.0	73.9	77.3	75.6	8.3	7.9	8.1	6.4
Manzano	55.7	52.7	53.4	56.6	24.8	23.6	18.5	14.1
Rio Grande	41.4	35.5	36.9	39.6	47.0	44.2	36.2	26.1
Sandia	57.9	63.0	61.3	59.4	22.9	18.3	16.8	18.3
Valley	50.8	51.2	51.3	51.9	34.2	25.6	25.7	20.7
West Mesa	40.9	41.9	42.0	41.9	38.9	30.8	28.3	25.6
District	51.5	51.4	52.2	52.9	30.6	26.0	23.0	18.4

Figure 2. Cohort Graduation Rate by Ethnicity

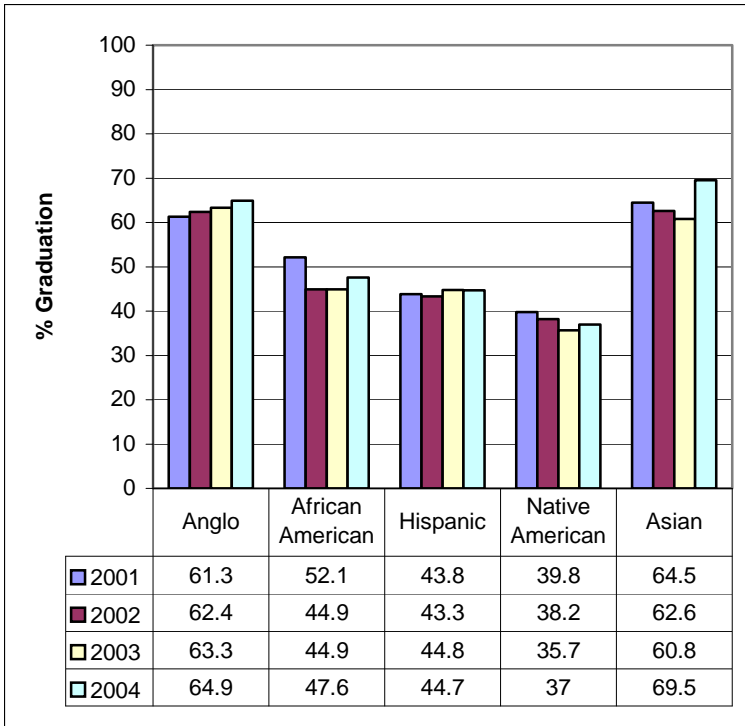
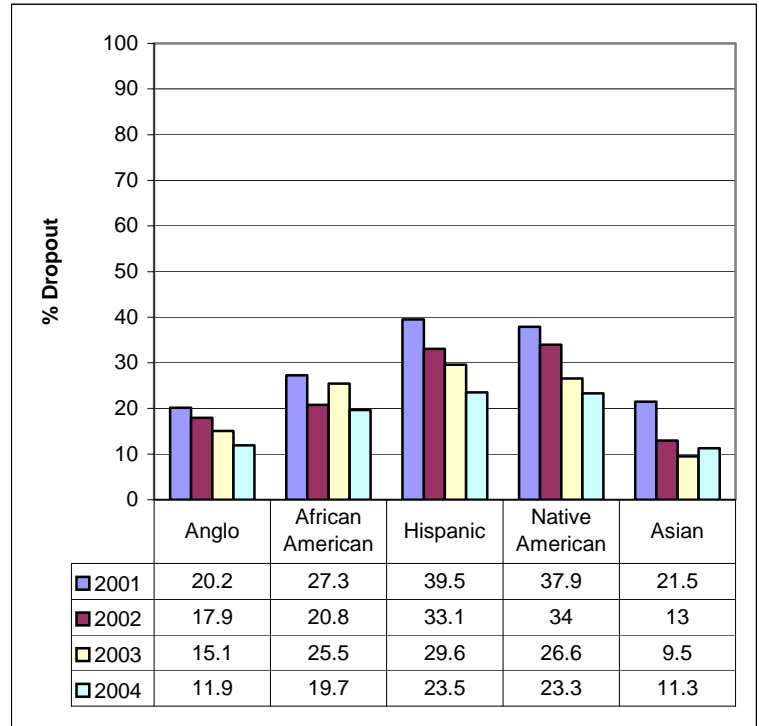


Figure 3. Cohort Dropout Rate by Ethnicity



Cohort dropout and graduation rates show some variability across the district and among schools. The variation in graduation has a slight trend upward, but the dropout rate has a consistent downward trend. Most significant for the past four year’s cohorts are that transfers are increasing on a yearly basis to a high in 2003 of 18.3%. However, school’s relative standing (high graduation rate/high dropout rates) does not seem to change. Research shows that family, community, school, and personal characteristics are factors associated with student success. School factors have not demonstrated a direct connection to dropout status, but the teacher quality has a direct impact on student achievement, which mitigates the impact of these non-school factors on dropout. Therefore, teacher quality and other successful school interventions are critical considerations in dropout prevention. The stability of the rates suggests that powerful and bold interventions will have the greatest likelihood of strong impact on cohort status rates and also will result in sustained low annual dropout rates. Prevention and intervention programs that have a significant impact on the entering ninth grade class and are sustained throughout that cohort’s high school experience should result in dramatic increases in cohort graduation and equally as dramatic reductions in cohort dropout rates.