

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE: June 7, 2011, 12:01 a.m. EDT

CONTACT: Kacy Sellers, (301) 280-3227, CommDesk@epe.org

National Graduation Rate Rebounds; 1.2 Million Students Still Fail to Earn Diplomas

*Report Investigates Options Between Diploma and Four-Year Degree;
Explores Multiple Pathways to College and Career*

Individualized Graduation Reports Issued for All 50 States and D.C.

WASHINGTON—June 7, 2011—A new national report from *Education Week* and the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center finds that the nation's graduation rate has increased significantly, following two consecutive years of declines and stagnation. With this dramatic turnaround, the nation's graduation rate stands at 72 percent, the highest level of high school completion in more than two decades. The report shows that the nation's public schools will generate about 145,000 fewer dropouts than the previous year. These new findings offer reason to believe that the past decade's unprecedented efforts to combat the nation's dropout crisis are starting to produce results.

"Just as Americans have been following the stock market and employment reports for signs of an economic turnaround, education-watchers have been on the lookout for improving graduation rates for the better part of a decade," said Christopher B. Swanson, vice president of Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit organization that publishes *Education Week*. "It looks like we are finally seeing strong signs of a broad-based educational recovery, which we hope will gain further momentum."

Some meaningful education beyond high school is now recognized as the gateway to middle-class life. Although national leaders from the public and private sectors have called for more Americans to earn college credentials, researchers, policymakers, and politicians remain divided on exactly how much and what kinds of higher education are really needed for both individuals and the nation to prosper. The report, *Diplomas Count 2011: Beyond High School, Before Baccalaureate—Meaningful Alternatives to a Four-Year Degree*, explores the pros and cons of new thinking about the educational and economic viability of postsecondary pathways between a high school diploma and a four-year degree.

The high-profile push to boost levels of college completion comes amid continuing concerns about the pace of improvements in high school graduation and the extraordinarily concentrated nature of the nation's dropout crisis. Despite the marked progress highlighted in the report, nearly 3 out of every 10 students in America's public schools still fail to earn a diploma. That amounts to 1.2 million students falling through the cracks of the high school pipeline every year, or 6,400 students lost every day. Most nongraduates are members of historically disadvantaged minority groups. Dropouts are also more likely to have attended school in large, urban districts and to come from communities plagued by severe poverty and economic hardship.

The report—part of an ongoing project conducted by the Bethesda, Md.-based Editorial Projects in Education—also tracks graduation policies for all 50 states and the District of Columbia and presents an updated analysis of graduation patterns for the nation, states, and the country's 50 largest school systems. The new analysis focuses on the class of 2008, the most recent year for which data are

available. *Diplomas Count 2011* was produced with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The report's journalism chronicles the space between a diploma and four-year college education, by exploring efforts to build meaningful pathways that may not end with a bachelor's degree, including: next-generation high school programs that combine college-preparatory studies with updated career and technical education; early-college high schools geared to the local labor market; and community colleges, the key institutions linking many high school graduates to higher education and the workplace.

DIPLOMAS, DEGREES, AND DOLLARS

Policymakers and reform leaders increasingly make the case for aggressive measures to improve schools in both economic and educational terms, arguing that a more educated population leads to a workforce that is better prepared for the demands of a 21st-century global economy. To explore these dynamics, the EPE Research Center conducted an original analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, which collects information on 3 million individuals every year.

The report finds that about 39 million Americans, nearly one-third of the prime working-age population, have some postsecondary education but less than a four-year degree. The typical subbaccalaureate worker earned \$30,000 in 2009, about \$8,000 more than a high school graduate. More than a quarter of adults with an associate degree have annual incomes at or above the median level of four-year college graduates.

The center also characterized 469 distinct occupations based on the educational level of typical job-holders and identified 50 occupations in which the majority of workers have a subbaccalaureate level of postsecondary schooling. Median annual earnings within that segment of the labor market vary dramatically, from only \$18,000 for massage therapists to \$73,000 for managers in the firefighting and fire-prevention field.

SPECIAL WEB-ONLY FEATURES AVAILABLE AT EDWEEK.ORG

- The full *Diplomas Count 2011* report and interactive tools: www.edweek.org/go/dc11.
- State Graduation Briefs for the 50 states and the District of Columbia featuring detailed data on current graduation rates and trends over time, definitions of college and work readiness, and state requirements for earning a high school diploma: www.edweek.org/go/dc11/sgb.
- The public release event for *Diplomas Count 2011* will be streamed live in a simulcast from Washington, D.C. The webcast will be available at 10 a.m. EDT on June 7, 2011, on edweek.org.
- EdWeek Maps, a powerful online database, lets users access graduation rates and other information for every school system in the nation and easily compare district, state, and national figures at maps.edweek.org.

#

The EPE Research Center is the research division of the Bethesda, Md.-based nonprofit Editorial Projects in Education. It conducts policy surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in the Quality Counts, Technology Counts, and Diplomas Count annual reports. The center also conducts independent research studies and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online data resources. The EPE Research Center is on the Web at www.edweek.org/rc.

NEW FINDINGS

DIPLOMAS COUNT 2011: Beyond High School, Before Baccalaureate

NOTE: Embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. EDT on Tuesday, June 7, 2011

About *Diplomas Count 2011*

The 2011 edition of *Diplomas Count*, titled *Beyond High School, Before Baccalaureate—Meaningful Alternatives to a Four-Year Degree*, explores the pros and cons of new thinking about the educational and economic viability of postsecondary pathways between a high school diploma and a four-year degree. The report also features the EPE Research Center's original, comprehensive analysis of high school graduation rates, completely updated for this year's report, and identifies the leading epicenters of the graduation crisis.

To help guide your reporting, we have highlighted some of the key findings below. For the purposes of the national totals presented below, the District of Columbia is counted as a state.

GRADUATION RATES REBOUND

A new analysis of high school completion from the EPE Research Center, using its Cumulative Promotion Index method and data from the U.S. Department of Education, finds that the national **graduation rate for public schools stands at 71.7 percent** for the class of 2008, the most recent year for which data are available.

- The new findings point to a **significant turnaround** for the nation. The graduation rate jumped nearly 3 percentage points from 2007 to 2008, more than offsetting the nationwide declines of the previous two years.
- At 72 percent, the nation's graduation rate has reached its **highest point since the 1980s**.
- **Progress was also widespread**. Each major racial and ethnic group also posted gains of at least 2 percentage points, with African-American students improving most rapidly.
- Graduation rates also increased in three-quarters of the states.

A DECADE OF IMPROVEMENT

From 1998 to 2008, the **nation's graduation rate increased by 6 percentage points** on average.

- **Thirty-eight states posted gains** over the past decade, including double-digit increases in six states: Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Tennessee.
- Graduation rates have increased for all major **racial and ethnic groups**, with African-Americans showing the most rapid improvements. As a result, the black-white graduation gap narrowed by 2 points over the past decade.

- Because improvement for whites outpaced that of other minority groups, the gaps between Native Americans and whites and between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites have widened somewhat.

HISTORICAL DISPARITIES PERSIST

While all demographic groups and most states have made progress, large graduation gaps persist, both among racial and ethnic groups and across the states. These disparities remain a cause for concern.

- Asian-Americans and whites remain the nation's highest-performing groups, posting graduation rates of 83 percent and 78 percent, respectively, for the class of 2008. Fifty-eight percent of Latinos finished high school with a diploma, while 57 percent of African-Americans and 54 percent of Native Americans graduated.
- High school graduation rates for **minority males** consistently fall near or below the 50 percent mark.
- On average, 68 percent of male students earn a diploma compared with 75 percent of female students, a **7-percentage-point gender gap** that has remained virtually unchanged for years.

STATE AND DISTRICT PERSPECTIVES

Graduation rates vary dramatically across states and districts. Some systems thrive, while others struggle to make earning a diploma a reality for most students. An alarming 44-percentage-point chasm separates the highest- and lowest-performing states.

- The **leading states**—New Jersey, North Dakota, Vermont, and Wisconsin—each graduate more than 80 percent of their high school students. At **the other extreme**, fewer than 6 in 10 students graduate in the District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, and South Carolina.
- Wide variations are also found among the **nation's 50 largest districts**. Within that group, Detroit has the lowest graduation rate, at 33.4 percent, while Montgomery County, Md., tops the nation at 85.7 percent.
- The report also identifies the **epicenters of the graduation crisis**, 25 individual school systems that collectively produce a quarter-million dropouts each year, about one-fifth of the nationwide total. New York City is the leading producer of dropouts, with nearly 40,000 students failing to earn diplomas. Los Angeles ranks second, with 36,000 nongraduates.

UPDATED ROAD MAP TO STATE GRADUATION POLICIES

To provide context for high school completion rates and reform efforts, *Diplomas Count* **tracks key state policies** related to graduation.

- **College and work readiness:** Thirty-three states define what students should know and be able to do to be prepared for credit-bearing courses in college. Definitions of work readiness have likewise been established in 33 states.
- **Advanced diplomas:** Twenty-six states award advanced diplomas or some type of formal recognition to students who exceed standard graduation requirements.
- **Exit exams:** Twenty-four states require exit exams for the class of 2011, with 21 of those states basing exit exams on standards at the 10th grade level or higher.
- **Completing coursework:** In the typical state, earning a diploma requires that students obtain four course credits in English, three credits each in math and social studies, and two or three credits in science.

Diplomas Count 2011

online at www.edweek.org/go/dc11



Graduation in the United States

Nearly 72 percent of all public school students in the nation graduated from high school with a regular diploma in the class of 2008, signaling a dramatic turnaround following two consecutive years of declines. Over the past decade, graduation improved by 6 percentage points, with all racial and ethnic groups posting solid improvements since the late 1990s. Although all groups are improving, significant racial disparities persist nationwide, with a 29-percentage-point gap dividing Asian-American and Native American students, the groups with the highest and lowest graduation rates, respectively.

	TEN-YEAR GRADUATION TREND (ALL STUDENTS)			GRADUATION RATES FOR STUDENT SUBGROUPS, CLASS OF 2008						
	Class of 2007	Class of 1997	Change 1998 to 2008 (percentage point)	Male	Female	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
Alabama	64.8	57.3	+7.5	60.5	69.7	76.9	75.4	52.1	53.9	71.1
Alaska	66.3	64.5	+1.8	‡	‡	‡	‡	58.9	‡	75.5
Arizona	67.0	59.4	+7.6	64.2	69.1	55.4	83.6	55.9	69.7	74.2
Arkansas	69.7	68.3	+1.3	66.3	74.3	51.4	‡	61.5	63.5	73.2
California	73.0	67.5	+5.5	67.2	75.7	‡	86.7	59.2	55.8	83.5
Colorado	73.3	67.6	+5.7	69.7	77.1	49.3	82.7	52.0	61.7	80.6
Connecticut	79.2	75.2	+4.0	76.1	82.0	30.4	81.7	54.3	63.6	86.1
Delaware	67.6	58.8	+8.8	61.8	73.2	‡	78.1	57.9	59.4	71.9
District of Columbia	43.0	37.3	+5.7	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Florida	63.9	51.6	+12.4	59.5	68.4	58.1	83.2	60.7	53.9	69.0
Georgia	58.8	52.2	+6.6	54.0	63.7	40.7	80.3	42.9	49.1	67.5
Hawaii	65.8	60.1	+5.7	64.0	67.9	47.5	67.1	61.2	63.2	62.9
Idaho	75.6	76.4	-0.8	73.4	79.2	44.4	‡	58.3	‡	78.4
Illinois	78.8	71.2	+7.6	69.2	75.9	‡	93.1	72.2	64.2	85.1
Indiana	72.8	69.6	+3.2	68.4	76.6	35.1	‡	54.9	51.8	76.0
Iowa	79.6	80.7	-1.2	77.3	81.1	49.8	76.8	58.5	51.4	82.3
Kansas	75.8	72.1	+3.7	71.4	76.4	38.5	74.8	55.0	55.4	79.5
Kentucky	72.8	62.2	+10.6	67.1	76.1	43.8	80.6	61.6	64.5	72.1
Louisiana	59.6	56.0	+3.6	53.7	66.1	54.1	80.2	57.1	51.6	66.0
Maine	76.5	71.6	+4.9	72.4	78.8	†	†	†	†	†
Maryland	76.8	78.9	-2.1	72.3	81.4	59.1	93.3	66.0	67.5	83.4
Massachusetts	77.5	72.6	+5.0	75.4	81.8	50.1	82.6	50.7	66.2	84.5
Michigan	73.6	67.5	+6.2	69.7	76.0	53.7	83.8	51.3	47.2	78.6
Minnesota	78.0	78.5	-0.5	75.0	80.1	36.3	71.2	45.5	46.8	82.2
Mississippi	61.4	56.8	+4.6	55.8	67.8	75.2	‡	47.0	57.3	66.0
Missouri	76.9	70.0	+6.8	73.7	79.1	61.5	76.4	57.7	57.9	80.9
Montana	75.8	77.1	-1.3	72.3	77.4	49.9	‡	53.0	45.8	79.2
Nebraska	77.3	77.6	-0.2	72.8	79.6	‡	‡	57.4	47.4	82.3
Nevada	44.3	68.9	-24.6	39.6	50.1	33.5	63.0	29.6	33.0	55.8
New Hampshire	78.2	72.2	+6.0	75.0	80.3	27.3	78.9	27.2	‡	78.3
New Jersey	86.9	75.8	+11.1	85.3	86.6	57.9	89.9	68.0	72.6	90.9
New Mexico	57.1	55.9	+1.2	53.5	61.6	53.3	71.8	51.9	59.0	68.0
New York	71.8	57.7	+14.1	68.0	73.8	‡	79.7	51.5	54.6	81.7
North Carolina	72.8	57.4	+15.4	72.4	82.9	59.5	78.2	57.6	72.3	80.4
North Dakota	80.2	81.3	-1.1	77.7	79.9	49.2	71.3	47.4	55.9	83.2
Ohio	74.3	67.3	+7.0	71.6	76.4	61.4	75.5	43.2	46.7	80.0
Oklahoma	70.0	69.7	+0.3	67.7	73.0	64.5	‡	56.7	59.9	71.9
Oregon	72.6	64.2	+8.4	68.8	75.2	47.7	81.8	61.0	58.9	73.8
Pennsylvania	77.7	73.9	+3.8	75.8	79.9	34.8	81.6	53.5	55.2	83.0
Rhode Island	69.7	69.3	+0.3	65.3	73.3	‡	66.5	56.1	57.4	74.3
South Carolina	58.6	50.8	+7.9	52.8	65.2	†	41.5	35.9	50.4	64.9
South Dakota	78.7	78.0	+0.7	74.8	79.0	32.3	‡	‡	77.7	84.4
Tennessee	76.9	56.9	+20.0	73.2	80.1	52.6	86.3	64.2	67.9	79.5
Texas	66.6	60.2	+6.5	64.0	69.5	52.0	89.2	58.2	58.8	76.3
Utah	71.9	77.2	-5.3	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Vermont	82.7	75.5	+7.3	78.0	80.7	‡	‡	‡	‡	83.5
Virginia	72.7	74.5	-1.8	67.8	77.5	65.6	88.6	57.0	59.0	78.4
Washington	65.6	67.8	-2.2	61.9	70.4	37.5	73.6	51.3	45.6	69.5
West Virginia	71.7	72.3	-0.6	68.7	74.5	‡	70.4	47.3	61.3	72.1
Wisconsin	81.3	75.6	+5.7	78.5	83.1	‡	82.6	56.2	50.7	86.0
Wyoming	71.3	71.9	-0.7	67.3	73.7	32.4	‡	55.4	‡	73.8
U.S.	71.7	65.6	+6.1	67.7	74.7	53.9	82.7	57.6	57.0	78.4

† Value not calculated because necessary data field(s) not reported in the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data and not provided by state education agency.

‡ Value not reported because of insufficient data for reliable estimate.

How Does the EPE Research Center Calculate Graduation Rates?

The Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)

The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center uses the **Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)** method to calculate graduation rates. The CPI represents the high school experience as a process rather than a single event, capturing the four key steps a student must take in order to graduate: three grade-to-grade promotions (9 to 10, 10 to 11, and 11 to 12) and ultimately earning a diploma (grade 12 to graduation). Each of these individual components corresponds to a grade-promotion ratio.

The equation below illustrates the CPI formula for calculating graduation rates. The class of 2007-08, the most recent year of data available, is used as an example.

$$\text{CPI} = \frac{\text{10th graders, fall 2008}}{\text{9th graders, fall 2007}} \times \frac{\text{11th graders, fall 2008}}{\text{10th graders, fall 2007}} \times \frac{\text{12th graders, fall 2008}}{\text{11th graders, fall 2007}} \times \frac{\text{Diploma recipients, spring 2008}}{\text{12th graders, fall 2007}}$$

Multiplying the four grade-specific promotion ratios together produces the graduation rate, the percent of public school 9th graders who will complete high school on time with a regular diploma. The CPI counts only students receiving standard high school diplomas as graduates, following the definition of a graduate established by the No Child Left Behind Act.

We can use a simplified example to further demonstrate how the center calculates the CPI. Let us suppose that a particular school district currently has 100 students enrolled in each grade from 9 through 12. We will also assume that 5 percent of students currently in grades 9, 10, and 11 will drop out of school this year and that 5 percent of seniors will fail to earn a diploma at the end of the year. So, for example, we would count 100 9th graders at our starting point but only 95 10th graders the following fall.

$$\text{CPI} = \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} = .815$$

Carrying out the calculation (shown above), we arrive at a graduation rate of 81.5 percent for this district. Given conditions in this hypothetical district (an effective 5 percent annual attrition rate for students at each grade level), only about 82 out of every 100 9th graders would be expected to finish high school with a diploma.

The CPI can be calculated for public school districts that have students enrolled in the secondary grades (9 through 12). State and national statistics are generated by aggregating the district-level data upward.

Notes on the Methodology

The EPE Research Center calculates graduation rates using data from the Common Core of Data (CCD), an annual census of public schools and school districts in the United States conducted by the U.S. Department of Education. Detailed methodological descriptions of the CCD can be found in technical documentation published by the National Center for Education Statistics (available online at nces.ed.gov/ccd). Delaware, Maine, and South Carolina did not report either total or subgroup diploma counts to the CCD for 2007-08. Comparable graduation data were obtained directly from the state education agency, where available. The center also revised certain enrollment data points using agency-reported information from the District of Columbia and Utah.

The center's goal is to provide a direct measure of the graduation rate for each of the roughly 11,000 school districts in the nation that enroll high school students. It was possible to do this for districts serving the vast majority (96 percent) of all public school students nationwide. But in a small number of cases—for example, if a particular piece of information needed to calculate the CPI indicator was missing—the center could not directly compute the graduation rate.

To avoid the unintentional disclosure of information about individual students, the EPE Research Center does not report results for very small demographic subgroups, those with fewer than five students in a given category. Additional procedures are employed to ensure that results are only reported in situations where sufficient data are available for a reliable calculation.

Diplomas Count 2011

online at www.edweek.org/go/dc11

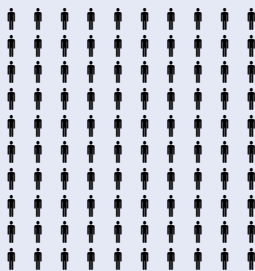
U.S. Public Schools Producing Fewer Dropouts, but 1.2 Million Fail to Graduate

Nationally, 1.2 million members of the public high school class of 2011 will fail to graduate with a diploma. That amounts to a loss of 6,400 students from the U.S. graduation pipeline every school day or one student every 27 seconds.

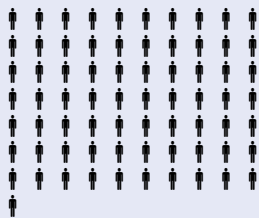
**Class of 2011:
1.2 Million Students
Will Fail to Graduate**

Diplomas Count uses the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) method to measure high school graduation rates as the percent of 9th graders who will earn a diploma four years later. The center can project the expected numbers of graduates and nongraduates for the class of 2011 by multiplying the CPI value for 2007-08 by the number of 9th grade students enrolled that year.

**4.1 Million
9th Graders in 2007-08**



**2.9 Million
Graduates in 2011**



**1.2 Million
Nongraduates in 2011**



= Approximately
42,000 students

Projection of Graduates and Nongraduates

	9th graders 2007-2008	Projected outcomes 2010-11		Total students lost each school day
		Graduates	Nongraduates	
Alabama	65,381	42,374	23,007	128
Alaska	10,633	7,049	3,584	20
Arizona	77,621	51,989	25,632	142
Arkansas	37,597	26,192	11,405	63
California	516,919	377,498	139,421	775
Colorado	63,024	46,191	16,833	94
Connecticut	43,652	34,558	9,094	51
Delaware	10,733	7,258	3,475	19
District of Columbia	4,161	1,789	2,372	13
Florida	231,598	148,082	83,516	464
Georgia	146,879	86,299	60,580	337
Hawaii	16,161	10,638	5,523	31
Idaho	21,287	16,095	5,192	29
Illinois	176,867	139,376	37,491	208
Indiana	83,588	60,846	22,742	126
Iowa	38,819	30,886	7,933	44
Kansas	37,429	28,367	9,062	50
Kentucky	56,864	41,382	15,482	86
Louisiana	53,840	32,096	21,744	121
Maine	14,796	11,317	3,479	19
Maryland	76,188	58,491	17,697	98
Massachusetts	59,625	46,237	13,388	74
Michigan	143,028	105,307	37,721	210
Minnesota	65,012	50,701	14,311	80
Mississippi	41,764	25,662	16,102	89
Missouri	77,616	59,654	17,962	100
Montana	12,105	9,180	2,925	16
Nebraska	23,771	18,380	5,391	30
Nevada	40,139	17,780	22,359	124
New Hampshire	17,467	13,659	3,808	21
New Jersey	106,527	92,540	13,987	78
New Mexico	29,736	16,976	12,760	71
New York	240,796	172,874	67,922	377
North Carolina	125,719	91,551	34,168	190
North Dakota	8,045	6,452	1,593	9
Ohio	153,270	113,904	39,366	219
Oklahoma	49,069	34,342	14,727	82
Oregon	44,517	32,330	12,187	68
Pennsylvania	149,659	116,286	33,373	185
Rhode Island	11,875	8,274	3,601	20
South Carolina	65,784	38,575	27,209	151
South Dakota	10,457	8,229	2,228	12
Tennessee	78,698	60,503	18,195	101
Texas	387,768	258,429	129,339	719
Utah	37,429	26,918	10,511	58
Vermont	7,107	5,880	1,227	7
Virginia	107,010	77,759	29,251	163
Washington	88,928	58,336	30,592	170
West Virginia	23,739	17,012	6,727	37
Wisconsin	73,435	59,689	13,746	76
Wyoming	7,069	5,037	2,032	11
U.S.	4,071,201	2,917,069	1,154,132	6,412