

Education

Teens Who Drop Out

★
★ Teens Not in School and Not Working

★
★ Children With Disabilities At School

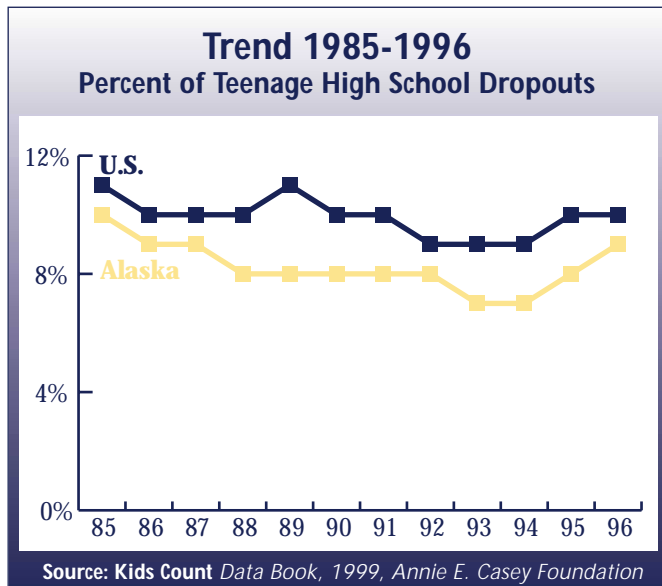




Education costs money, but then so does ignorance.

*Claus Moser,
German-born academic*

Teens Who Drop Out



Definition

The national Kids Count program calculates this indicator, as shown in the trend graph, as the percentage of teenagers 16 through 19 who are not in school and who have not graduated.

The available Alaska data on dropouts by race, region, and school district are either for grades 7 through 12 or 9 through 12—which includes teenagers younger than 16. Therefore, the Alaska dropout rates shown

Data provided by Annie E. Casey Foundation and Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, unless otherwise noted

in the tables on this page and on page 42 show lower dropout rates than the trend graph. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development includes as dropouts (1) those who have left school without graduating or completing an approved program; (2) those who have moved out of the school district or the state and are not known to be enrolled elsewhere; (3) those who are in adult education programs or schools not approved by the district; and (4) those who were suspended or expelled and failed to return to school.

Significance of Indicator

Research shows that teenagers who don't finish high school are more likely to use drugs, to get into trouble with the law, and to face a future of unskilled, low-paying jobs.¹

What About Alaska?

Over the past decade, the percentage of teenagers 16 and older dropping out of school in Alaska has consistently been smaller than the national average. But Alaska's rate has gone up in the past few years. In 1996, 9 percent of teenagers 16 or over dropped out of school, compared with 10 percent nationally.

The table on page 42 shows that during the 1996-97 school year, just under 5 percent—1,728 students—of the 35,557 Alaska students in grades 9 through 12 dropped out of school. Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Black students are more likely to drop out than White or Asian students, as the table below shows.

Alaska's 1996-97 dropout rate was lower than the 5.6 percent in the previous school year and was virtually the same as the national rate of 5 percent for students in grades 9-12. That rate has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years.²

Alaska Dropouts By Ethnicity, Grades 7-12, 1996-97

Ethnicity	Percentage of Total Enrollment	Percentage of Total Dropouts
White	65.8	53.3
Alaska Native/American Indian	22.1	32.1
Black	4.6	6.5
Hispanic	2.7	4.0
Asian	4.7	4.0

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Report Card to the Public, School Year 1996-97, April 1998



Teens Who Drop Out (continued)

Alaska High-School Dropouts, 1996-97 School Year

Region/District	Number of Dropouts 9-12	Number Enrolled 9-12	Dropout Rate 9-12
Alaska Total	1,728	35,557	4.9%
Anchorage Schools	352	12,928	2.7%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough Schools	135	3,602	3.7%
Gulf Coast Region			
Chugach Schools	3	48	6.3
Copper River Schools	9	193	4.7
Cordova City Schools	2	138	1.4
Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools	114	3,125	3.6
Kodiak Island Borough Schools	21	806	2.6
Valdez City Schools	11	224	4.9
Regional Total	160	4,534	3.5%
Interior Region			
Alaska Gateway Schools	8	166	4.8
Delta/Greely Schools	7	271	2.6
Denali Borough Schools	3	118	2.5
Fairbanks N. Star Borough Schools	481	4,495	10.7
Galena City Schools	0	33	0
Iditarod Area Schools	6	106	5.7
Kuspuk Schools	6	119	5.0
Nenana City Schools	3	40	7.5
Tanana Schools	0	26	0
Yukon Flats Schools	10	118	8.5
Yukon/Koyukuk Schools	9	189	4.8
Regional Total	533	5,681	9.4%
Northern Region			
Bering Strait Schools	18	338	5.3
Nome City Schools	2	198	1.0
North Slope Borough Schools	28	426	6.6
Northwest Arctic Borough Schools	27	444	6.1
Regional Total	75	1,406	5.3%

	Number of Dropouts 9-12	Number Enrolled 9-12	Dropout Rate 9-12
--	-------------------------	----------------------	-------------------

Southeast Region

Alyeska Central School*	45	793	5.7
Annette Islands	4	133	3.0
Chatham Schools	2	81	2.5
Craig City Schools	3	124	2.4
Haines Borough Schools	1	153	0.7
Hoonah City Schools	6	87	6.9
Hydaburg City Schools	0	30	0
Juneau Borough Schools	91	1,703	5.3
Kake City Schools	4	45	8.9
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools	110	854	12.9
Klawock City Schools	4	63	6.3
Mt. Edgecumbe High School	0	287	0
Pelican City Schools	0	7	0
Petersburg City Schools	5	217	2.3
Sitka Borough Schools	37	569	6.5
Skagway City Schools	1	48	2.1
Southeast Island Schools	4	82	4.9
Wrangell City Schools	3	141	2.1
Yakutat City Schools	3	40	7.5
Regional Total	323	5,457	5.9%

Southwest Region

Aleutian Region Schools	0	6	0
Aleutians East Borough Schools	7	103	6.8
Bristol Bay Borough Schools	0	75	0
Dillingham City Schools	20	134	14.9
Kashunamiut Schools	8	51	15.7
Lake and Peninsula Borough Schools	0	122	0
Lower Kuskokwim Schools	59	764	7.7
Lower Yukon Schools	36	333	10.8
Pribilof Island Schools	0	38	0
Southwest Region Schools	10	110	9.1
Saint Marys Schools	1	24	4.2
Unalaska City Schools	2	91	2.2
Yupiiit Schools	7	98	7.1
Regional Total	150	1,949	7.7%

* State-run correspondence school with students statewide.

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Division of Teacher Learning and Support



Teens Who Drop Out (continued)

Among regions, the Anchorage school district had the lowest regional dropout rate (2.7 percent) in the 96-97 school year. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Gulf Coast region had rates below 4 percent. The highest regional dropout rate was in the Interior (9.4 percent), followed by that in the Southwest region (7.7 percent).

In individual school districts within regions, the highest dropout rates in 1996-97 were in the Kashunamiut schools (15.7 percent), the Dillingham schools (14.9 percent), and the Lower Yukon schools (10.8 percent) in Southwest Alaska; in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough schools (12.9 percent) in Southeast; and in the Fairbanks North Star Borough schools (10.7 percent) in the Interior.

Costs and Prevention

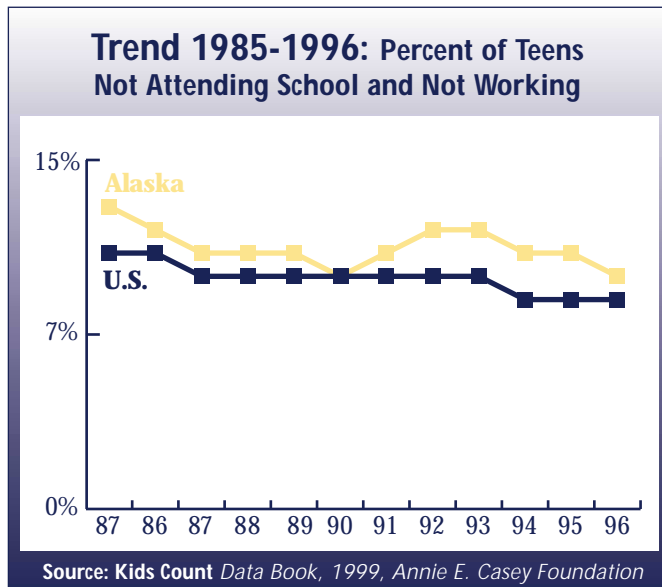
- Many dropouts report leaving school because they didn't like it or had failing grades. Others got into trouble at school.³
- Most of those who drop out think of it as a temporary move—that they will go back to school at some point.⁴
- The strain of living in poverty can hurt grades and lead teenagers to drop out.⁵

- Doing better in school can keep some teenagers from dropping out. One study found that students in danger of not graduating from high school felt more self-confident and adequate as their scores on math tests increased.⁶
- Becoming a parent accounts for more than 25 percent of girls who drop out and about 8 percent of boys.⁷
- But about 28 percent of teenage girls who have babies had dropped out of school *before* they got pregnant.⁸
- Nationwide, Hispanic students are most likely to drop out. Only 62 percent of Hispanic youths complete high school, compared with 91.5 percent of Whites and 83 percent of Blacks.⁹
- White, Asian, and Black students who smoke frequently as early as the seventh grade are more likely than their counterparts to drop out when they reach high school—even if we take into account other factors like demographic differences, academic orientation, family structure, early delinquency, and school environment.¹⁰
- Early use of marijuana is a strong predictor of which Hispanic students will drop out when they reach high school.¹¹

- Teenagers from higher income families who drop out of school are more likely to commit crimes than are teenagers from poorer families, according to some recent research.¹²
- A significant share of high-school dropouts ultimately serve prison terms.¹³
- A male high-school dropout is likely to earn about \$260,000 less during his working years (18-65) than a male who completes 12 years of school.¹⁴



Teens Not In School and Not Working



Significance of Indicator

This is essentially a measure of teens who aren't doing much of anything to contribute to society. They're not continuing their education and they're not part of the working world.

What about Alaska?

The percentage of idle 16- to 19-year-olds has been higher in Alaska than the national average for most of the past decade. But that percentage did drop nearly one quarter between 1985 and 1996. Still, 10 percent of Alaska's

teenagers 16 and over were idle in 1996, as compared with 9 percent nationally.

Costs and Prevention

- Teenagers who are neither in school nor working are much more likely to depend on welfare.¹⁵
- GED diplomas are not a substitute for high-school diplomas in today's working world. Even the military is making it harder for those holding just GEDs to enlist.¹⁶

- Those holding GED diplomas are less likely to complete college programs than are high-school graduates. GED holders working toward associate degrees are only half as likely as high-school graduates to earn the degrees. And only about 2 percent of GED holders working toward bachelor's degrees actually attain them.¹⁷
- Average wages of those holding GED diplomas are about 8 percent higher than those of dropouts without GED diplomas. But high-school graduates earn on average 12 percent more than those with GED diplomas.¹⁸

Definition

The percentage of teenagers 16 through 19 who are not enrolled in school, don't have jobs, and are not in the military. Some of these teenagers (especially the 18- and 19-year-olds) graduated from high school, but others dropped out. Some who didn't graduate have earned General Educational Development (GED) diplomas.

Data provided by Annie E. Casey Foundation, unless otherwise noted

Children with Disabilities at School

Definition

Disabilities range from impaired hearing or speech to emotional disturbances to mental retardation. Many disabilities interfere with children's ability to learn, and public schools typically offer special education to such disabled children. (Not all children with disabilities require special education—only those whose disabilities interfere with their ability to learn.) Special education is instruction tailored specially for individual children, depending on their disabilities.

Significance of Indicator

Until recent times, most schools segregated disabled children into special classes. But now, many children with disabilities are in regular classrooms and receive special education right in those classrooms—or spend a part of the day in regular classes and a part in separate special education classes.

Research shows that children with disabilities gain academically and socially when they attend classes with all students, rather than being segregated into classes solely for special education. And research also shows that the academic performance of children who are fortunate enough to be without disabilities is not compromised when children with disabilities attend the same classes.

Information provided by Millie Ryan of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, State of Alaska

Policymakers hope that educating children with disabilities alongside other children will be an important step in helping them overcome barriers to getting jobs and to being integrated into the broader society as they grow older. Statistics show that the current employment picture for Alaskans with significant disabilities is dismal, as it is for adults with disabilities elsewhere in the country. Nearly two thirds of adults who received services from the Alaska Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities in the late 1990s were unemployed, compared with the annual average state unemployment rate of 8 percent. And those who had jobs mostly worked part-time.

Including children who need special education in regular classes can cost more in the beginning—for personnel, professional development, and building renovations. But except for the cost of hiring more para-professionals, most costs are one-time

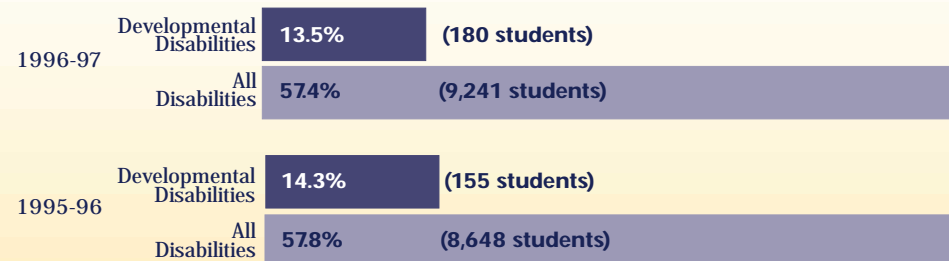
expenses. And even that increased cost may be offset, if other costs drop. For instance, if more children with disabilities were enrolled in regular classes, there might be fewer due process hearings, mediations, and referrals to special education. Transportation costs might also drop, if children with and without disabilities had the same schedules.

What About Alaska?

As of 1996-97, nearly 58 percent of Alaska students (from kindergarten through high school) with all kinds of disabilities who required special education were receiving that special education in regular classrooms.

But among children with *developmental* disabilities, less than 15 percent were in regular classrooms, as the figure below shows. A developmental disability is a severe disabling condition that begins early, persists indefinitely, and limits at least three of a

Percentages of Alaska Students (K-12) With Disabilities Attending Regular Classes*



* Students with disabilities who receive some special education. Excludes any students who may have disabilities but don't require special education.

Source: Millie Ryan, Governor's Council on Disabilities.

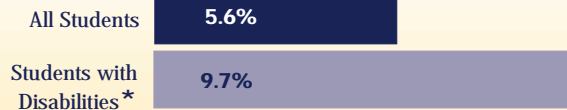


Children with Disabilities at School (continued)

child's critical functions like listening and talking, mobility, self-care, and learning. It includes, for example, children with mental retardation, autism, and brain injuries.

Teenagers with disabilities who are receiving special education (either in special education classes or in regular classes) are somewhat more likely to drop out of school than other teenagers. The bar graph below shows that in 1995-96, nearly 10 percent of disabled students 14 or older dropped out, as compared with about 5.6 percent among all Alaska students 14 or older. But the adjacent table shows that it is only teenagers with certain disabilities—emotional disturbances and specific learning disabilities—who drop out at higher rates. Students with other types of disabilities drop out at substantially *lower* rates than all students.

Student Dropouts (14 and older), 1995-1996



* Among students with disabilities receiving special education
 Source: Millie Ryan, Governor's Council on Disabilities

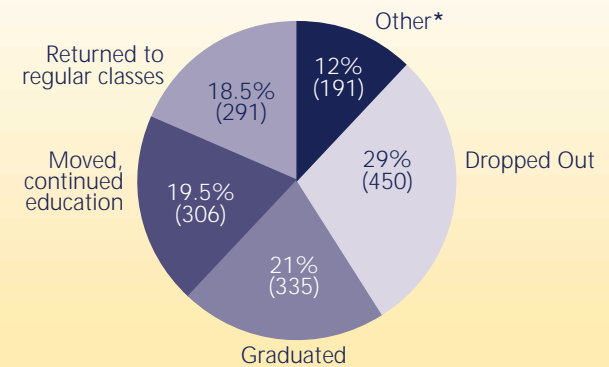
Students With Disabilities* Who Dropped Out, 1995-96

Type of Disability	Percentage who Dropped out
All Disabilities	9.7%
Developmental Disabilities	1.4%
Hearing Impairments	3.6%
Speech Impairments	4.5%
Visual Impairments	0%
Emotional Disturbances	19.8%
Orthopedic Impairments	0%
Other Health Impairments	3.2%
Specific Learning Disabilities	10.4%

* Among students with disabilities receiving special education.

Students receiving special education (again, either in special education classes or in regular classrooms) may leave special education programs for a number of reasons. The pie chart shows that in the 1995-96 school year, nearly 30 percent of those who left special education dropped out. But nearly 20 percent returned to regular classes, and another 21 percent who left the program graduated.

Students Ages 14-21 With Disabilities Who Left Special Education, 1995-1996



Total who left Special Education: 1,573

* Includes students who moved and their school status is unknown, students who reached the maximum school age of 22, and students who died.

Source: Millie Ryan, Governor's Council on Disabilities



Children with Disabilities at School (continued)

The table to the right shows that about 3,400—close to 75 percent— of the 4,600 teenagers with disabilities in Alaska during the 1995-96 school year had specific learning disabilities. Nearly 500 (10 percent) had developmental disabilities, and another 388 (8 percent) had emotional disturbances. Teenagers with emotional disturbances and specific learning disabilities drop out at much higher rates than those with other kinds of disabilities.

In recent years, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has tried to encourage placement of children with disabilities in regular classrooms by devoting resources to training, statewide assessment, and policy interpretation. A 1994 survey of Alaska special education directors identified a number of obstacles to including children with disabilities, especially those with the most severe disabilities, in regular classrooms:

- Insufficient time and funding
- Inadequate preparation of professional staff
- Resistance to change from regular education teachers

Students With Disabilities Who Left Special Education, 1995-1996

Type of Disability	Students with Disabilities, Ages 14-21	Students Who Left Special Education		
		Total	Dropouts	Other*
All Disabilities	4,620	1,573	450	1,123
Developmental Disabilities	491	78	7	71
Hearing Impairments	55	21	2	19
Speech Impairments	134	65	6	59
Visual Impairments	15	6	0	6
Emotional Disturbances	388	184	77	107
Orthopedic Impairments	13	5	0	5
Other Health Impairments	126	20	4	16
Specific Learning Disabilities	3,398	1,194	354	840

* Includes students who graduated, move elsewhere, reached the maximum school-age of 22, or died.

Source: Millie Ryan, Governor's Council on Disabilities

- Lack of support from administrators, parents, communities, and teachers' unions
- Lack of special education personnel
- Distance between sites and staff turnover
- Frustrations among those who teach special education

To help remove these obstacles, the education committee of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education recommended ways of helping children with disabilities move into regular classrooms:

- Encourage special education in regular classrooms through changes in the state funding formula
- Better equip teachers to work with students with and without disabilities, through changes in teacher training and certification
- Improve leadership among those responsible for moving disabled children into regular classes
- Work to change parental, community, and teachers' attitudes about special education in regular classrooms
- Improve coordination and cooperation among agencies, departments, and groups



Notes for Education Section

¹ J. Fagen, "Contributions of delinquency and substance use to school dropout among inner-city youths," *Youth and Society*, 21(3), 306-354, 1990.

² "National drop-out rate remains stable," *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 14(23), 5, 1998.

³ "Kids having kids—and dropping out," *Curriculum Review*, 35(5), 14, 1996; G.R. Jarjoura, "The conditional effect of social class on the dropout-delinquency relationship," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 33(2), 232-256, 1996; and W.J. Jordan, J. Lara, and J.M. McPartland, "Exploring the causes of early dropout among race-ethnic and gender groups," *Youth and Society*, 28(1), 62-94, 1996.

⁴ W. J. Jordan, et al. See note 3.

⁵ W.J. Jordan, et al. See note 3.

⁶ M.H. Jackson and R. Canada, "Self-concept and math among potential school dropouts," *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 22(3), 234-237, 1995.

⁷ "Kids having kids—and dropping out." See note 3.

⁸ J. Manlove, "The influence of high-school dropout and school disengagement on the risk of school-age pregnancy," *Journal of research on adolescence*, 8(2), 187-220, 1998.

⁹ See note 2.

¹⁰ P. Ellickson, K. Bui, R. Bell, and K.A. McGuian, "Does early drug use increase the risk of dropping out of high school?" *Journal of Drug Issues*, 28(2), 357-381, 1998.

¹¹ See note 10.

¹² G. R. Jarjoura. See note 3.

¹³ R. T. Stephens, "Dropping out and its ultimate consequence: A study of dropouts in prison," *Urban Education*, 26(4), 401-423, 1992.

¹⁴ See note 1.

¹⁵ *Indicators of Welfare Dependence: Teen Behavior Risk Factors*. Available online at: <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/hsp/indicator/TEEN5-8.htm>

¹⁶ D. Boesel, "The street value of the GED diploma," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(1), 65-69, 1998.

¹⁷ See note 16.

¹⁸ See note 16.

