



Study of Truancy and School Dropout Prevention in Virginia

June 24, 2008
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Study Mandate

- **In 2008, Delegate Franklin P. Hall introduced HB 1263 which:**
 - required local school boards to implement school dropout prevention programs and services which emphasize truancy prevention; and
 - amended the Code to address compliance with the compulsory school attendance law to strengthen the authority of local school boards.
- **Members of the House Education Committee reviewed the HB 1263 and determined that further study of these issues would be appropriate.**



Study Mandate (cont.)

■ Virginia Commission on Youth established the following goals to:

- ❑ review state laws and policies relating to the enforcement of compulsory school attendance, truancy and dropout prevention for consistency and clarity;
- ❑ review current initiatives overseen by the Board of Education (BOE) and the Department of Education (DOE) addressing truancy, attendance and dropout prevention;
- ❑ review existing local practices that are in place which address truancy and dropout prevention in each school division;
- ❑ evaluate the new certification data which will be submitted by local school divisions in the Fall of 2008 which demonstrate compliance with compulsory school attendance laws;



Study Mandate (cont.)

- ❑ assess factors related to the causes of academic underachievement, chronic truancy and school dropout and determine whether such students should also be considered “children in need of services” for compulsory school attendance purposes;
- ❑ consider the need and efficacy of defining “truancy” and “chronic truancy” in the *Code of Virginia*;
- ❑ determine the impact of suspensions, expulsions and other disciplinary actions on school dropout rates and whether disciplined students receive educational, social and community services during their suspension or expulsion from school; and
- ❑ recommend to the General Assembly such changes to state law and public policies and such other initiatives appropriate and necessary to implement a comprehensive approach to chronic truancy and dropout prevention.



Recent Truancy and School Dropout Studies

- SJR 329 (Locke, 2007) requested BOE to study high school dropout and graduation rates in the Commonwealth.
- HB 19 (Fralin, 2006) required the BOE to collect, analyze and report high school graduation and dropout data using a formula prescribed by BOE
 - Required the BOE to report to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health the formulas approved by BOE and to consider the 2005 Report of the National Governors Association Task Force on State High School Graduation.



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Recent Truancy and School Dropout Studies (cont.)

- HJR 130 (Hall, 2006) encourages DOE to monitor and collect data and information on the State's high school dropout and graduation rates. DOE will:
 - Determine the relevancy of the current process and procedures for defining, counting and reporting school dropout statistics and consider the need for revisions in such process and procedures and compliance by school divisions;
 - Compile data concerning the number of students who dropped out of school before the seventh grade and the reasons why, and the number of students who graduate annually, for school years 2002-2005;
 - Ascertain whether, by whom, and the manner in which students who are at-risk of dropping out are counseled to remain in school;
 - Identify local initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out, particularly populations with low high school graduation rates; and
 - apprise policymakers fully regarding the Commonwealth's dropout and high school graduation rates, and of any statutory, fiscal, or regulatory changes that may be necessary to avoid an increase in the school dropout rates.



Identified Issues

- **Chronic truancy and school dropout rates continue to be critical problems nationally and in the Commonwealth.**
 - ❑ In certain areas of the Commonwealth, dropout rates exceed the annual state and national dropout rates.
- **Truancy affects students of all ages, communities, backgrounds and school divisions.**
 - ❑ Data reveal that a disproportionate number of poor, urban and minority youth dropout of school each year, and that factors associated with school dropout are also linked to chronic truancy.
- **Unexcused absences from school are linked to numerous harmful social and personal consequences, among them are:**
 - ❑ Academic failure, school dropout rates, crime and violence, unemployment, substance abuse, adult criminality and incarceration, unwanted pregnancy and social isolation.



Identified Issues (cont.)

- **The gap between dropouts and high school graduates is widening as opportunities are increasing for higher skilled workers and are disappearing for the less skilled.**
- **Declining graduation rates threaten Virginia's economic stability to maintain a competitive advantage among industrialized nations.**
- **Legislation adopted to:**
 - review formulas to collect, analyze and report high school graduation and dropout data; and
 - improve the collection, calculation, and interpretation of dropout data to effect greater consistency and quality in pupil accounting and reporting practices.
- **Comparable data on truants is not available.**



Federal Guidance on Truancy

- Truancy, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, are students' unexcused absences from school.*
 - Truancy is defined differently by state and local school policies and laws, thus, establishing no universal definition.**

*Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Truancy Prevention*. (February 2008).

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Truancy Prevention*. (February 2008).



Truancy – Related Terminology

- The Terminology used in referring to children and youth who do not attend school regularly:
 - Truants
 - Status Offenders
 - Children in Need of Supervision
 - Defendant
 - Member of an assistant unit
 - Student, minor, child or juvenile



Virginia's Truancy Laws

- In Virginia, the law does not specifically define a truant but does define a child who is habitually and without justification absent from school as a "child in need of supervision" when certain other conditions are met.
- DOE is using a proxy measure to report truancy: the number of students with whom a conference was scheduled after the student had accumulated six absences during the school year, in accordance with §22.1-258, *Code of Virginia*.



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Virginia's Truancy Laws (cont.)

§22.1-254	Compulsory Attendance Laws
§22.1-258	Appointment of Attendance Officers
§22.1-259	Teachers to Keep Daily Attendance Records
§22.1-260	Reports of Children Enrolled and Nonenrolled
§22.1-261	Duties of Attendance Officers
§22.1-262	Complaints to Court When Parents Fail to Comply
§22.1-263	Violations Constitute Misdemeanor
§22.1-265	Inducing Children to Absent Themselves
§22.1-266	Law Enforcement Officers and Truant Children
§22.1-267	Proceedings Against Habitually Absent Children
§22.1-269	Duties of the Board of Education
§22.1-279.3	Parental Responsibility and Involvement Requirements
§16.1-241.2	Proceedings Against Certain Parents



Virginia's Truancy Laws (cont.)

- §22.1-258 of the *Code of Virginia* addresses the responsibilities of the student, parent and school employees with respect to attendance, identification procedures and the provision of services as well as the imposition of sanctions in the event of noncompliance.
- The primary element of this section with respect to identification is that an “unexcused absence” is defined as one in which the parents are unaware and non-supportive of their child’s nonattendance.



Overview of Laws Reflecting Graduated Approach to Truancy

Circumstance	Required Action
Any absence when parent is unaware and supports the absence	Reasonable effort to notify by telephone and to obtain an explanation of absence
5 absences	Reasonable effort to have “direct contact” via telephone or in person to explain consequences of continued nonattendance and to jointly develop a plan to resolve nonattendance
6 absences	In-person conference scheduled in 10 days, held not later than 15 days, to resolve issues related to nonattendance. Conference may include other community service providers; produce attendance plan.
Next absence, after conference	Enforcement of the law through either CHINS complaint or proceedings against parents.



Background on Truancy and School Dropouts

- **The cause of truancy and school dropouts vary among each student.**
 - ❑ family difficulties at home;
 - ❑ drug and alcohol abuse;
 - ❑ Illiteracy;
 - ❑ teenage pregnancy;
 - ❑ boredom in the classroom;
 - ❑ school safety; and
 - ❑ ineffective teaching staff, which can all lead to school dropouts.



Background on Truancy and School Dropouts (cont.)

- Truancy is costly due to lost of education funding, court costs and the need for on the job training for uneducated individuals.
- Truancy is often considered an indication of future delinquent and criminal activity.*
 - 48% of truants have a history of convictions compared to 14% of non-truants (out of 400 youth).**
 - Chronic truants are 12 times more likely than non-truants to report to having committed a serious assault.**
 - Chronic truants are also 21 times more likely to report having committed a serious property crime.**
 - Chronic truants are 7 times more likely to be arrested than non-truants.**

*Source: Virginia Commission on Youth. *Study of Truants and Runaways*. (1999).

**Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). (2007).



Background on Truancy and School Dropouts (cont.)

- **Truancy is a clear warning that youth may drop out of school.**
 - Truancy is difficult to measure.
 - In Virginia, each division school adopts its own truancy policy.



National Cost

- Increasing the male graduation rate by only 5% would result in a savings of \$49 billion in crime-related costs annually.*
- Over a lifetime, a high school dropout contributes about \$60,000 less in federal and state taxes.**

*Source: Alliance for Excellent Education, *Saving Futures, Saving Dollars: The Impact of Education on Crime Reduction and Earnings*, 2006.

**Source: Alliance for Excellent Education, *The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools*, 2007.



National Cost (cont.)

- As of 1997, 41% of prison inmates, and 31% percent of probationers 18 years and older had not graduated from high school or earned a GED, compared with 18% of the general population.*
- The average dropout costs society more than \$800,000 over the course of his or her lifetime.**

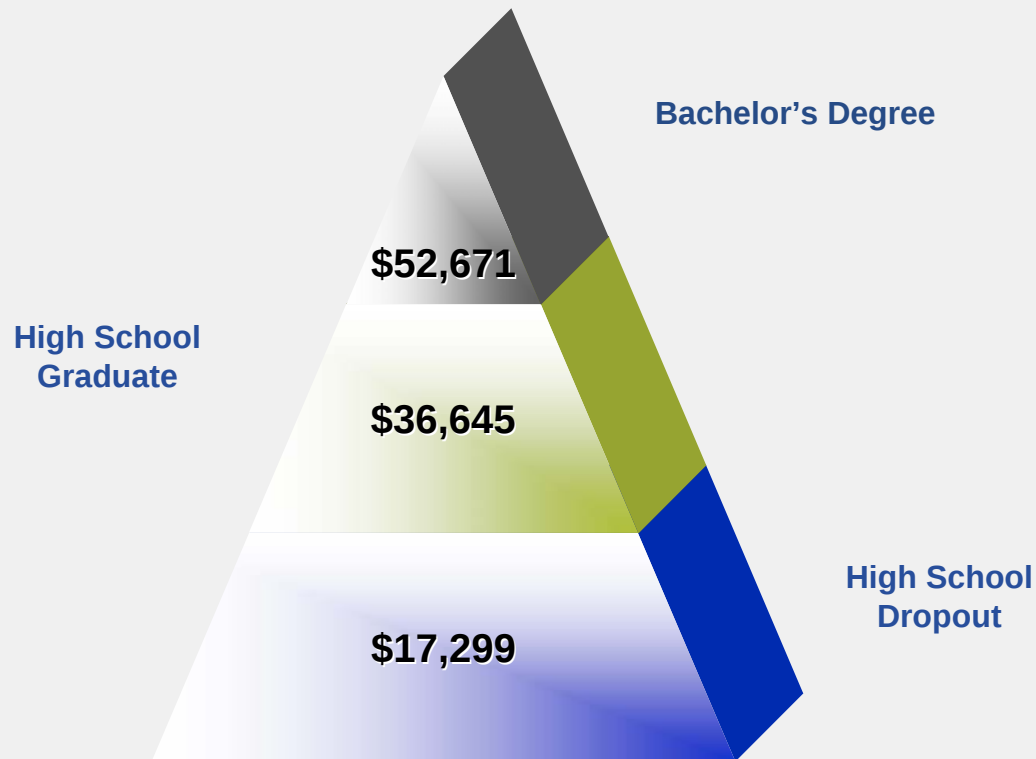
*Source: Harlow, C.W., "Education and Correctional Populations," Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, January 2003, NCJ 195670.

**Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Truancy Prevention.



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Personal Cost



Source: Alliance for Excellent Education, *The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools*, 2007.



Employment Rates

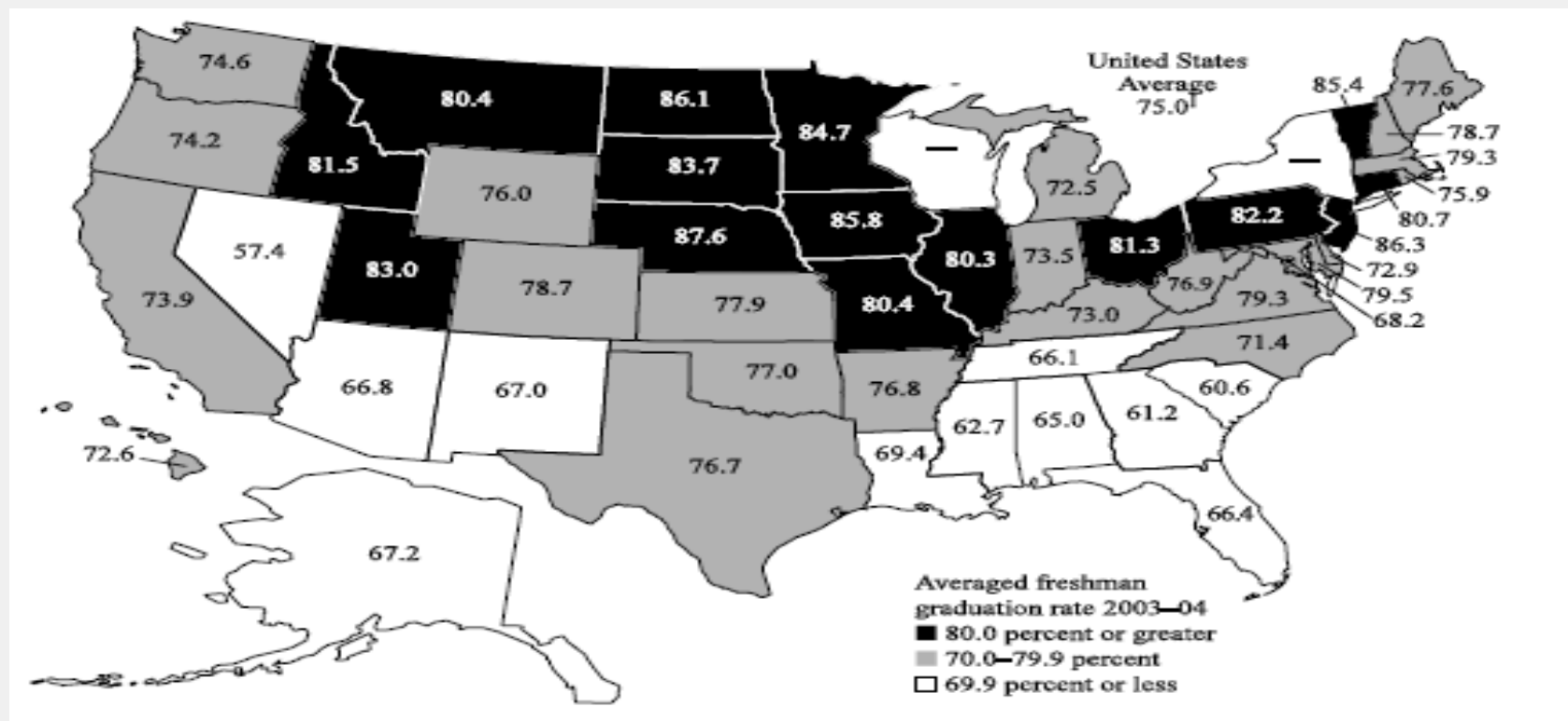
- High school dropouts had only a 52% employment rate in 1999, compared to 71% for high school graduates, and 83% for college graduates.*
 - High school dropouts earned only 65% of the median earnings of those who worked full-time in 1999 .*

* Source: US Census Bureau: 2000.



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2003-2004 National Graduation Rates

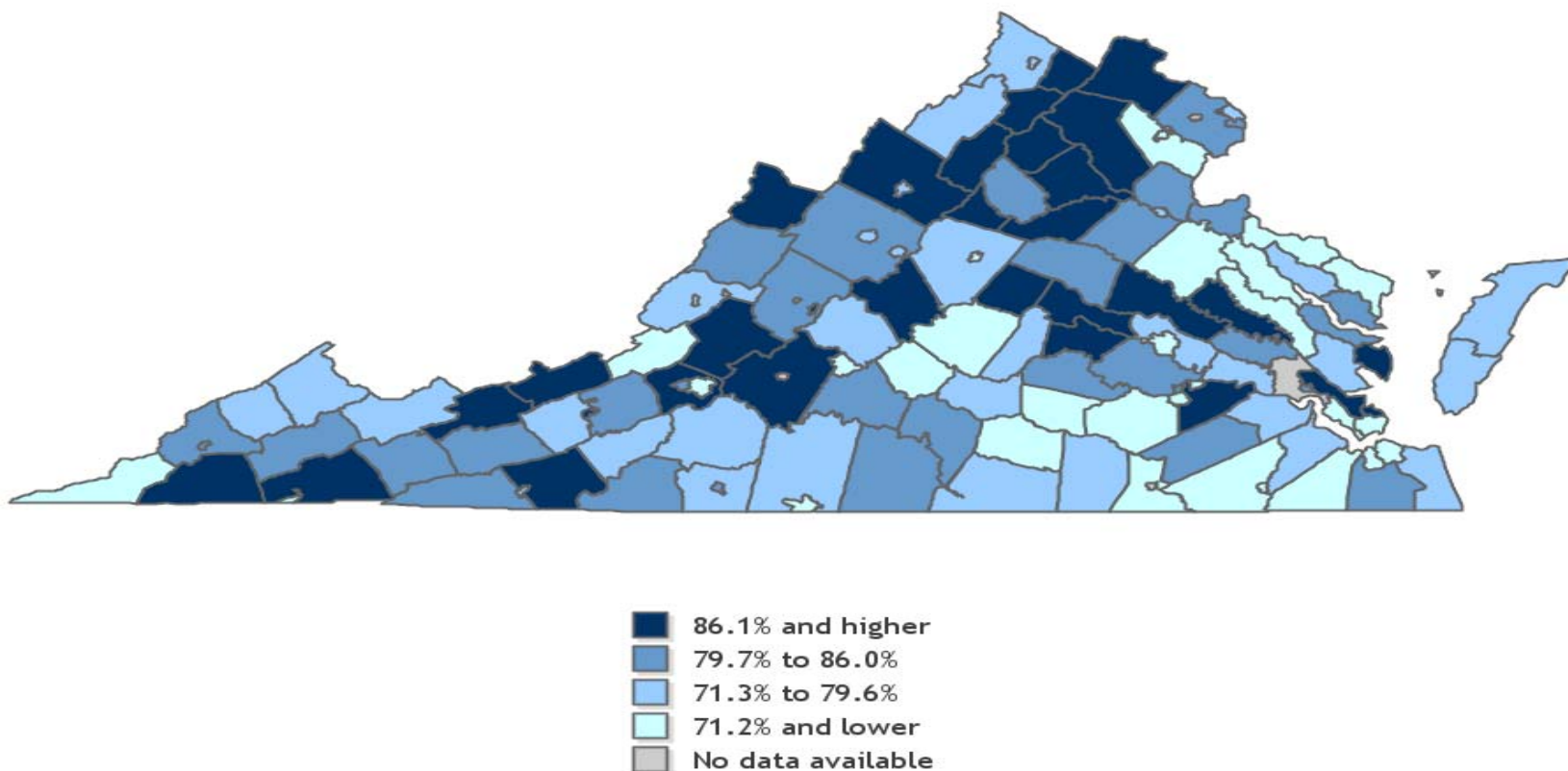


Source: Averaged freshman graduation rates of public high school students, by state: School year 2003-04, U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics. (June 2007).



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Virginia Localities
Graduation and Completion Rate (see note below), 2007

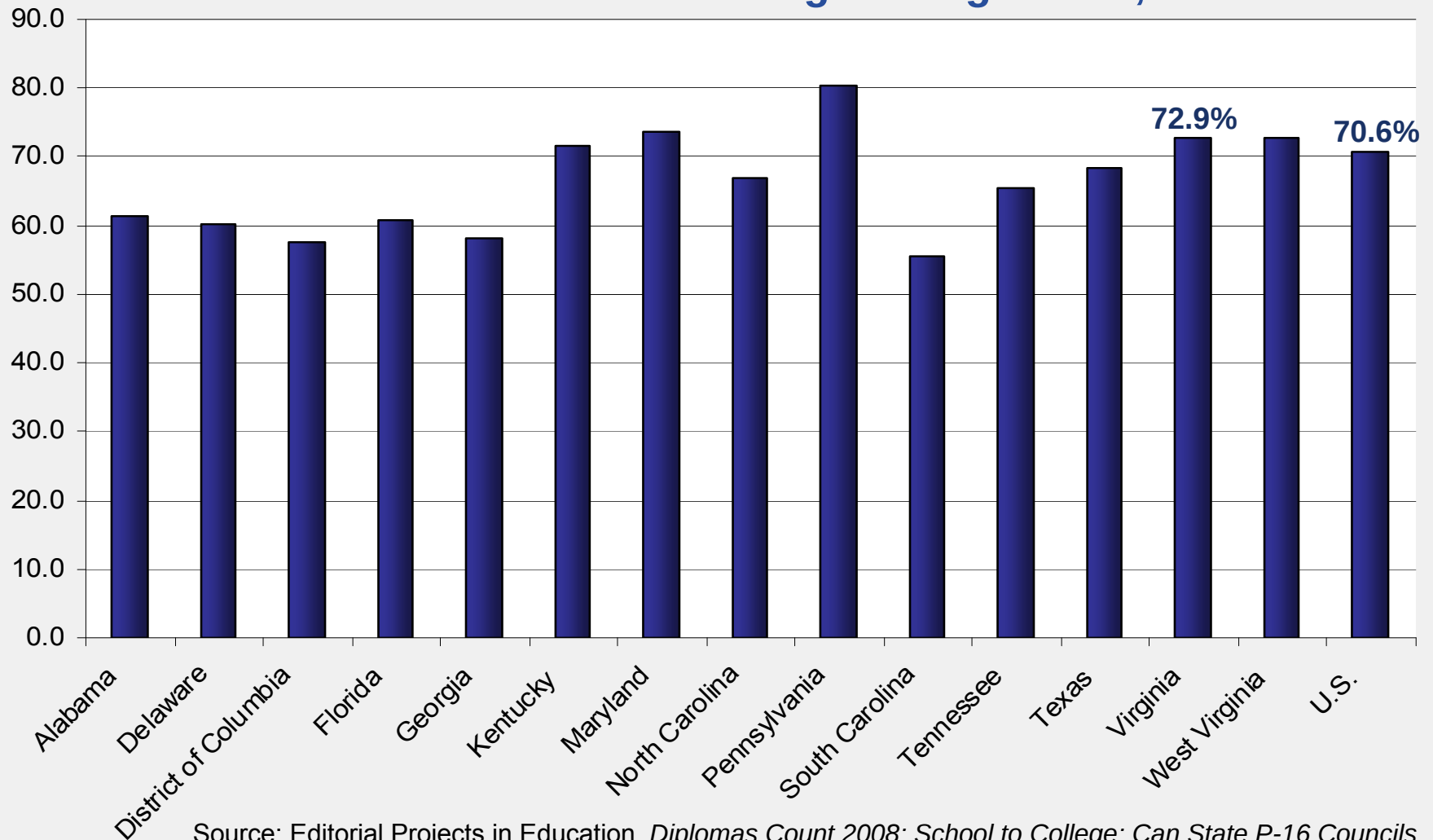


Source: Kids Count Data Sites: Kids Count State Level Data Online, 2008.

***Note:** These are approximate measures, more precise data on the individual student level will be available Fall 2008.



Estimated Graduation Rates in Neighboring States, Class of 2005



Source: Editorial Projects in Education, *Diplomas Count 2008: School to College: Can State P-16 Councils Ease the Transition?*



Rate Calculation – Issues

- Graduation and dropout rates are two distinct events and not the only educational outcomes for students.
 - A state's graduation rate will not necessarily be 100% minus the dropout rate.
 - ❖ Example - A state with a graduation rate of 83% will not necessarily have a dropout rate of 17%.
- There are also other educational outcomes. Students may:
 - fail a grade and take longer than four years to graduate;
 - drop out but eventually return;
 - transfer schools; or
 - receive alternative credentials and not be included in a count of graduates.



Virginia's Dropout Rate

- Until the 2001-2002 school year, DOE relied on the local school divisions to count the number of students who drop out of school each year.
- Beginning in 2004-2005, sufficient data were available to count the number of students who dropped out each year.
 - This provided the state with accurate annual dropout rates.
 - Annual rates are limited because they don't translate to the percent of students who dropout before leaving high school.
- Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, DOE has sufficient data that permits accurate calculations of a 4-year cohort dropout for schools, divisions and the Commonwealth.



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2006-2007 School Year

Division	Grades 7-12	Total Dropouts	Dropout Percentage
Accomack	2,516	93	3.70
Alexandria	4,208	137	3.30
Buckingham	1,081	54	5.00
Charlottesville	1,922	59	3.10
Colonial Heights	1,354	50	3.70
Cumberland	722	31	4.30
Danville	3,155	115	3.70
Franklin	681	32	4.70
Hampton	10,653	315	3.00
Hopewell	1,698	87	5.10

Source: Virginia Department of Education. *2006-2007 Dropout Statistics*. (April 2008).



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2006-2007 School Year (cont.)

Division	Grades 7-12	Total Dropouts	Dropout Percentage
King & Queen	372	11	3.00
Lee	1,641	94	5.70
Lunenburg	799	39	4.90
Manassas	2,857	86	3.00
Norfolk	14,474	447	3.10
Petersburg	2,259	170	7.50
Portsmouth	6,745	318	4.70
Richmond City	10,167	461	4.50
Roanoke City	5,544	202	3.60
Southampton	1,458	47	3.20
Suffolk	6,239	211	3.40
Westmoreland	902	27	3.00



Example Cohort and Event Dropout Rates

Student Group in Massachusetts	Annual Dropout Rate 2006-2007	Cohort Dropout Rate Graduating class of 2007
Massachusetts	3.8%	9.4%
Male	4.4%	10.8%
Female	3.3%	7.9%
Limited English Proficient	10.4%	24.6%
Special Education	5.8%	16.1%
Low-income	5.8%	17.8%
African American	6.4%	15.8%
Asian	2.6%	6.8%
Hispanic	9.1%	22.8%
Native American	4.9%	16.1%
White	2.7%	6.6%



Virginia's Graduation Rate

- Through the 2007 school year, DOE has published:
 - The total number of students who graduated each year; and
 - Graduation rate estimates, based on available data.
- Estimates could be unreliable when disaggregated and failed to reflect real-life events such as student mobility, declining school populations and ninth-grade retention.
- Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, DOE will have sufficient data to report accurate calculations of cohort graduation rates for schools, divisions and the Commonwealth.



Virginia's High School Graduation Rate Formula

- DOE has developed Education Information Management System (EIMS) that uses a unique student identifier to track students from school to school.
- In 2008, the EIMS will have collected 4 years worth of data.
- Data collected on the student record, as of 2004-2005, includes:
 - ❑ State Testing Identifier (unique number assigned to each student)
 - ❑ Division, school, current grade
 - ❑ Age, gender, race/ethnicity, and other demographics
 - ❑ Promotion/retention status
 - ❑ Reason for leaving school:
 - ❖ Graduated with a diploma or completed with a certificate
 - ❖ Dropped out or aged out
 - ❖ Transferred (out of school, division, state)
 - ❖ Extended absence due to illness, suspension, incarceration
 - ❖ Died
 - ❖ Diploma or other credential received (completers only)



Virginia's High School Graduation Rate Formula (cont.)

- As a result of the 2006 General Assembly's approval of HB 19, BOE approved the implementation of a new calculation for graduation rates.
- The National Governors Association (NGA) formula was selected, which was endorsed by all 50 governors in 2005.
- To utilize the NGA graduation rate formula, the state must be able to identify first-time 9th graders with a student-level longitudinal data system.*
 - Virginia has EIMS.
 - EIMS can track individual student enrollment and participation status from year to year.

*Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, *Implementing the NGA Graduation Rate Compact: Recommendations for State Data Managers*, 2006.



Virginia's High School Graduation Rate Formula (cont.)

Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate

- BOE had previously reported an annual or event dropout rate.*
- The new formula will now utilize a cohort graduation rate, which will track a group of students over time.*
- Students with disabilities and limited English proficient (LEP) students are allowed more than the standard four years to earn a diploma and are still counted as “on-time” graduates.**

*Source: Virginia Board of Education, *Report On the Study of High School Dropout and Graduation Rates in the Commonwealth* (Senate Document 16, 2007).

** Virginia Department of Education Informational Release, *Calculating Virginia's On-Time Graduation Rate*.



Virginia's High School Graduation Rate Formula (cont.)

- The NGA formula calculates a high school graduation rate based on the following formula:
 - Graduation rate = [on-time graduates in year x] / [(first-time entering ninth graders in year x-4) + (transfers in) – (transfers out)]
- This will reflect the percentage of students who were first time ninth graders in 2004-2005 and graduated in the 2007-2008.



Virginia's High School Graduation Rate Formula (cont.)

■ Strengths

- ❑ accounts for students who transfer into a cohort and students who transfer out;
- ❑ is not based specifically on dropouts;
- ❑ acknowledges that students transfer out of state, to private schools, to home schools and other educational settings;
- ❑ takes into consideration policy and instructional practices such as 9th-grade retention; and
- ❑ does not imply that all students are either graduates or dropouts.



Example Cohort Graduation Results

		Graduates		Non-High-School-Graduates				
Massachusetts	Cohort #	4-Year Rate	2006 Diff.	Still in School	Non-Grad Completer	GED	Dropped Out	Expelled
All Students	75,912	80.9%	+1.0	6.6%	0.9%	2.0%	9.4%	0.2%
Male	38,571	77.8%	+1.4	8.0%	0.9%	2.1%	10.8%	0.3%
Female	37,341	84.1%	+0.6	5.2%	0.9%	1.8%	7.9%	0.1%
Limited Eng. Prof.	3,981	53.3%	-1.2	15.9%	5.4%	0.6%	24.6%	0.2%
Special Education	13,594	62.8%	+1.7	16.6%	2.4%	1.9%	16.1%	0.2%
Low-Income	24,495	65.2%	+3.2	12.3%	1.9%	2.6%	17.8%	0.3%
African-American	6,519	65.2%	+0.8	14.3%	2.5%	1.7%	15.8%	0.5%
Asian	3,419	83.7%	-0.2	7.0%	1.0%	1.3%	6.8%	0.3%
Hispanic	9,156	58.5%	+1.6	13.6%	2.5%	2.2%	22.8%	0.4%
Native American	193	68.4%	-1.4	10.9%	2.1%	2.6%	16.1%	0.0%
White	55,704	86.4%	+1.3	4.5%	0.4%	2.0%	6.6%	0.1%
Pacific Islander	132	63.6%	+13.1	13.6%	1.5%	6.1%	15.2%	0.0%
Multi race, Non-Hisp.	789	79.6%	-6.5	8.2%	2.0%	1.3%	8.7%	0.1%
Urban	20,771	63.9%	+1.6	12.2%	2.0%	2.1%	19.5%	0.2%



Other Factors – No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- NCLB requires states to define graduation rates in a “rigorous and standardized” manner.
- States are required to make progress toward their state-determined graduation rate goal.
- The graduation rate among subsets of students – including those in poverty, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities – also would have to improve.
- Graduation rates must be reported annually to the U.S. Department of Education and must steadily increase each year, reaching proficient levels by Spring 2014.
- Variation must be explained in state accountability plans.
- Alternative graduation certificates, such as the GED program, cannot be counted as equivalent to high school graduation.



Other Factors – NCLB (cont.)

- NCLB required state education agencies to report truancy rates on a school-by-school basis to the U.S. Department of Education starting for the 2005-2006 school year.
- Every state is to determine the definition and the calculation.
- Moreover, 95% of students in each subgroup must be present when the NCLB accountability tests are given.



Other Factors – NCLB (cont.)

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measured under NCLB is measured in Reading and Math.
- Other academic indicators are also measured.
 - Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, school divisions may choose among:
 - ❖ attendance,
 - ❖ science,
 - ❖ writing, or
 - ❖ history and social science.



Recent Study Activities

■ Youth Roundtables

- The Virginia Commission on Youth conducted youth roundtables throughout Virginia in partnership with the Virginia Boys and Girls Clubs.

■ Site Visits

- The Virginia Commission on Youth scheduled site visits with local schools, school superintendents, departments of social services, court services units, J&DR judges, law enforcement and community organizations.



Youth Roundtables

- Over 70 students participated
- Over 20 youth-related community leaders were present, including:
 - State Senators, Delegates, School Superintendents, Ministers, Police Officers, Youth Leaders, Local Officials and Local Service Providers.



Youth Roundtables (cont.)

Location	Date
Danville	May 20, 2008
Hampton	May 27, 2008
Manassas	June 4, 2008
Norfolk	June 5, 2008
Richmond	TBA
Petersburg	TBA
Roanoke	TBA



Roundtable Questions

- What are some of the positive aspects of growing up in your area?
- Why do you think it is important to graduate from high school?
- What do you believe is the reason that some of your classmates skip school – don't attend school or dropout of school?
- What are some of the challenges that you face as teenagers that make completing school difficult?
- What could the school system or the community do to encourage students to graduate from high school?
- What do students need to succeed?



Factors Identified by Youth for Truancy and School Dropout

- Lack of motivation
- Family problems at home
- Gang violence
- Drug abuse
- Bullying
- Negative peer pressure
- Teenage pregnancy
- Stress and anxiety
- Boredom



Youth Identified Obstacles to Truancy and School Dropout (cont.)

- Support from family
- Peer pressure
- Lack of empathy from school administrators
- Additional teacher support (tests, personal)
- Culture
- Parent's denial of student behavior
- Overcoming low self-esteem



Resources Youth Identified as Positive for Truancy and School Dropout

- After school activities and centers
- Older teenagers as mentors
- Positive community leaders
- Youth counselors
- Family court (in some states)
- Imposing mandatory GPAs to participate in sports



Youth Identified Steps to Curb Truancy and School Dropout

- Anonymous peer counselors
- Additional tutoring for standardized tests
- Provide programs to improve low self-esteem
- Changing the image of attending school
- Provide after school jobs
- Additional information on trade schools and careers
- Increase teacher training
- Improve school security
- Stiffer penalties for chronic truants (family court)



Regional Site Visits

Location	Date
Hampton	May 27, 2008
Manassas	June 4, 2008
Lee County	June 13, 2008
Roanoke	June 16-17, 2008

**Richmond and Petersburg TBA*



Site Visit Interviews

- Site visit interviews scheduled with local school division representatives, school superintendents, principals, guidance counselors, attendance officers, J&D judges, court service unit officials, social service officials and sheriffs.
- Site visits to date:
 - **Hampton City**
 - **Manassas/Prince William**
 - **Lee County - completed**
 - **Roanoke City**



Site Visit Interviews (cont.)

■ Initial Findings from Site Visits

- ❑ Issues confronting school divisions impacting truancy/dropout rates are varied.
 - ❖ Prescription drug abuse
 - ❖ Teen pregnancy
 - ❖ Substance abuse
 - ❖ Factory work/hours impact families' ability to respond to truancy
 - ❖ Transient population
 - ❖ Generational issue
 - ❖ Diverse student body within school divisions
- ❑ Assortment of school division policies and procedures pertaining to truancy
- ❑ Some school divisions utilize J&DR Court whereas others do not.
- ❑ Several localities have truancy courts.
- ❑ Collaboration with law enforcement is crucial.
- ❑ Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) referrals typically utilized only for Special Education students.
- ❑ Some school divisions had a more comprehensive approach encompassing both prevention and intervention practices.
- ❑ Lack of leadership/collaboration
- ❑ Alternative schools are being used with success.



Future Activities

- J&DR Judges Conference, Committee on Education
 - August 11, 2008 at Virginia Beach
- Advisory Group
 - Review school division initiatives addressing truancy and dropouts during the Fall 2008
- Department of Education
 - Receive updated information on graduation rates available in the Fall 2008



Future Activities (cont.)

- Virginia Department of Education's Dropout Prevention Project Leadership Committee
- First meeting - June 24, 2008
 - Define the dropout issue
 - Discuss the cost of dropouts (educational, social and economic)
 - Discuss the contributing factors
 - Discuss dropout prevention
- Second meeting - September 23, 2008
- Host first statewide summit on dropout prevention - October 28, 2008



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