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GRADUATION AND DROPOUT REPORT 2013



When Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau took office in 2009, there were 2,272 public school students who dropped out of school, and Montana had a dropout rate of five percent. For a state with a school population as small as Montana, these numbers were unacceptable. In today's economy, a quality public education is the key to economic prosperity for our young people. As parents, taxpayers, business owners and educators, Montanans cannot ignore the long-term economic consequences of students not graduating from high school.

Understanding the potential economic consequences for individuals, communities and our state, Superintendent Juneau made dropout prevention a priority of the Office of Public Instruction.

Graduation Matters Montana

Inspired by the early successes of the Graduation Matters Missoula initiative, Superintendent Juneau launched Graduation Matters Montana in 2010. Graduation Matters Montana is a statewide effort to ensure Montana students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. Juneau's effort has drawn from national best practices and strategies that are working right here in Montana.

Under the umbrella of Graduation Matters Montana and with the goal of ensuring Montana students are college and career ready, Superintendent Juneau successfully advocated for raising Montana's English and math standards, engaged student voices through her statewide Student Advisory Board, built public-private partnerships at the state and local level, and worked with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education to expand dual-credit opportunities and offer the ACT at no cost to every high school junior. Additionally, Juneau continues to advocate to the Montana Legislature to raise the legal dropout age from "age 16" to "age 18 or upon graduation," adopt anti-bullying legislation, and provide funding for schools to educate students older than 18 years of age.

Most importantly, Superintendent Juneau traveled to communities across the state to ask schools and businesses to join her in creating local Graduation Matters initiatives. Beginning with a three-year investment of \$450,000 from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, Juneau has been able to add \$25,000 from State Farm Insurance, \$100,000 from the Student Assistance Foundation, \$30,000 from the Steel Reese Foundation, \$20,000 from AT&T, and additional investments from First Interstate Bank Foundation, Northwestern Energy, Optimum Cable, IBM and the Going to the Sun Rally Foundation, resulting in more than \$600,000 in private funds to grant out directly to school-community efforts to raise graduation rates and improve college and career preparedness.

Montana's dropout rate costs our state millions of dollars each year:

- Nearly 80% of male inmates and 75% of female inmates at Montana State Prison are high school dropouts.¹
- Almost 30% of Montana's high school dropouts meet the federal definition of low-income, which is twice the rate of high school graduates.²
- High school dropouts earn \$9,200 less per year than high school graduates and about one million dollars less over a lifetime than college graduates.³
- The economy of Montana would see a combination of crime-reduction savings and additional revenue of about \$19.6 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5 percent.⁴

An estimated \$90,000 has enabled the OPI to provide technical assistance, materials and training to communities and to convene the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Board.

To date, 33 communities have joined Superintendent Juneau’s statewide effort by creating locally-designed Graduation Matters initiatives, including all of Montana’s largest communities and 10 communities on or near American Indian reservations. As a result, more than 70% of high school students in our state are currently attending a school with a Graduation Matters initiative.

Producing Results

The positive results of these state and local partnerships have been demonstrated in the data over the past three years. Since the launch of Graduation Matters Montana, the statewide dropout rate has been on the decline, and the graduation rate has gone up. Montana’s high school dropout rate has decreased from 5 percent in 2009 to **3.6 percent in 2013**, and the graduation rate has increased from 80.7 percent in 2009 to **84.4 percent in 2013**. This means that **772 fewer students dropped out** in 2013 than in 2009. The credit for this improvement belongs to the school leaders, teachers, community members, parents and students who have put in the work at the local level to make a difference for students who may not have made it to graduation without their efforts.

Definitions

Dropout Rate: Counts students who were enrolled in school on the date of the previous year’s October enrollment count or at some time during the previous school year and were not enrolled on the date of the current school year October count.

Graduation Rate: Counts students who complete a district’s graduation requirements in four years or less from the time an individual enrolled in the 9th grade or has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) allowing for more than four years to graduate.

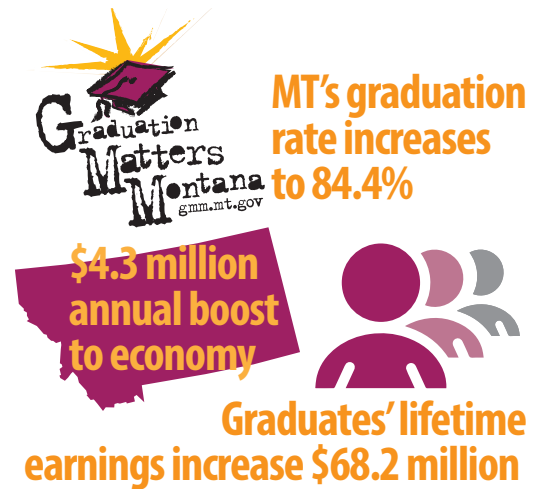
***Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate:** The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently “adjusted” by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the 9th grade and the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or pass away during that same period.

Completion Rate: Counts students who complete the high school graduation requirements of a school district, including early graduates, during the previous school year, or complete the high school graduation requirements of a school district at the end of summer prior to the current school year.

	Dropouts	H.S. Dropout Rate	Graduation Rate	Completion Rate
2008-2009	2,272	5.0%	80.7%	81.7%
2009-2010	1,896	4.3%	80.2%	82.0%
2010-2011	1,859	4.3%	82.2%*	82.2%
2011-2012	1,744	4.1%	83.9%*	83.7%
2012-2013	1,500	3.6%	84.4%*	84.2%

Economic Impact

According to calculations made by the Alliance for Excellent Education, Montana is likely to see significant economic gains as a result of the increase in its high school graduation rate from 2009 to 2013. The Alliance estimates Montana will see a \$4.3 million annual boost to the state's economy going forward and an increase of \$5.1 million in spending on homes and a \$600,000 increase in automobile sales. Collectively, the additional graduates will likely earn an additional \$68.2 million over the course of their lifetimes, compared to if they had not graduated from high school.



Graduation and Dropout Data Collection and Comparison Tools

Since 2007-08, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has been implementing improvements to its processes for tracking student achievement, including graduation and dropout rates. These improvements include the implementation of a student information system, AIM (Achievement in Montana), which collects enrollment, demographic and program participation information at the individual student level. The advent of a statewide student information system using data verified at the state and local level has improved the accuracy and reliability of Montana's dropout data. This report reflects the sixth year of collecting and verifying data using Montana's statewide student information system.

In spring 2012, the OPI launched its new online education data system, GEMS (Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students). The data reporting system provides access to multiple years of data and interactive reports on student achievement, graduation rates, enrollment, program and course offerings, financial information, and college readiness. GEMS allows the public to compare Montana schools and districts side-by-side. To review graduation and dropout data by school and district, go to: <http://gems.opi.mt.gov>.

Dropout Rate

The dropout count is a one-year snapshot. It is measured by counting students who were enrolled in school on the date of the previous year's October enrollment count or at some time during the previous school year and were not enrolled on the date of the current school year October count. The dropout rate is calculated as the number of dropouts divided by the enrollment for the previous year.

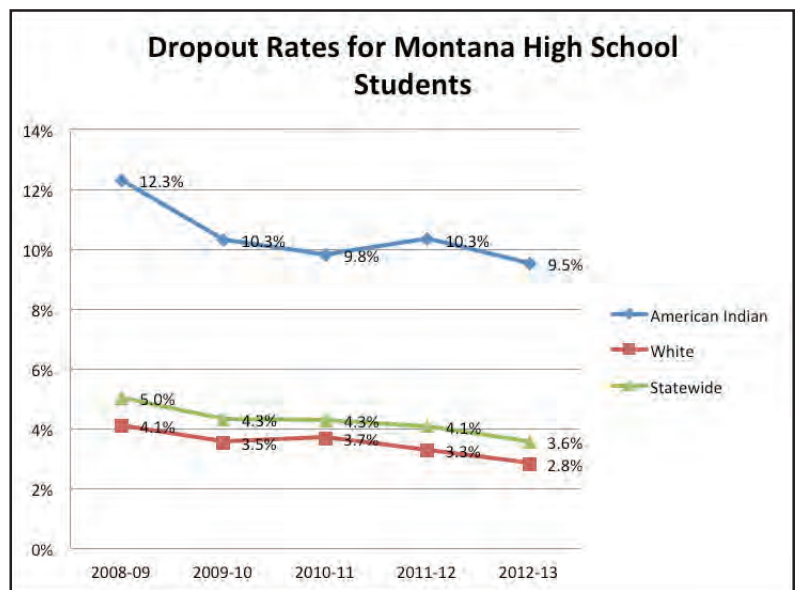
In this report for 2012-2013, the number of dropouts decreased by 247 students, and the dropout rate declined from 2.8 percent to 2.4 percent for grades 7-12. This is the lowest rate since the 2008 implementation of AIM. The high school dropout rate improved from 4.1 percent to 3.6 percent. Over the past five years, the high school dropout rate has decreased from 5 percent to 3.6 percent, resulting in 772 fewer dropouts in 2013 than in 2009.

2011-12 Montana Dropout Rate Summary

	Dropout Rates	Dropout Count	Enrollment
Overall Total (Grades 7-12)	2.4%	1,531	63,608
HS Total	3.6%	1,500	42,089
Gr 12	5.2%	509	9,784
Gr 11	4.6%	476	10,373
Gr 10	3.0%	318	10,676
Gr 9	1.8%	197	11,256
7 & 8 Total	0.1%	31	21,519
Gr 8	0.1%	12	10,895
Gr 7	0.2%	19	10,624
Gender			
Male	2.8%	911	32,921
Female	2.0%	620	30,687
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian	6.3%	408	6,483
Asian	0.8%	5	595
Hispanic	2.5%	59	2,330
Black	2.5%	15	608
Pacific Islander	3.6%	5	138
White	1.9%	1,004	52,434
Other	3.4%	35	1,020

As is consistent with previous years' data, more males than females dropped out, and the gap between male and female dropout rates increases as the grade increases. In the 9th grade, the male dropout rate is 1.9 percent and 1.6 percent for females. In 12th grade, the male dropout rate is 6.5 percent, and the female dropout rate is 3.8 percent.

The dropout rate for American Indian students in grades 7-12 decreased from 6.9 percent to 6.3 percent for the 2012-13 year. The high school dropout rate for American Indian students decreased from 10.3 percent to 9.5 percent.



Over the past five years, the high school dropout rate for American Indian students decreased from 12.3 percent to 9.5 percent. This trend is in the right direction; however, the dropout rate for American Indian students remains significantly higher than the dropout rate for all students. While American Indian students make up 10 percent of statewide student enrollment, they account for 27 percent of students in grades 7-12 who drop out of school.

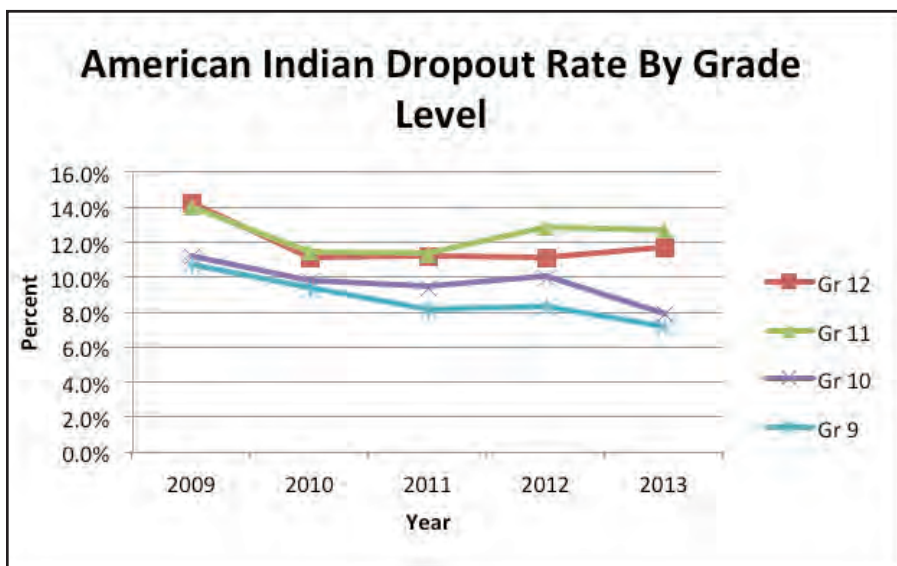
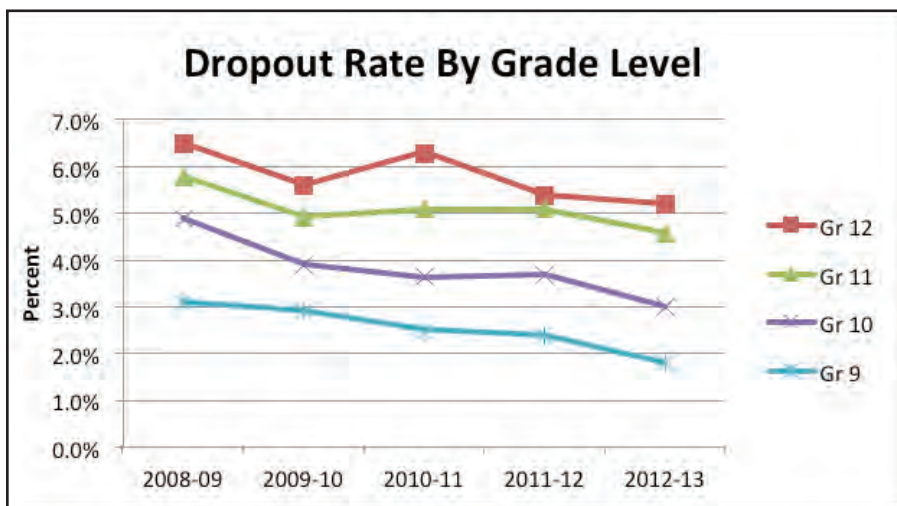


Raising the Legal Dropout Age

Montana is one of only 17 states in the nation that allow 16-year-olds to drop out of high school. Montana’s legal dropout age of 16 was established in 1921 – a time of very different social and economic demands. In today’s global economy, a student needs, at minimum, a high school diploma to find a decent-paying job.

In Montana, the 11th and 12th grades continue to show the highest dropout rates. For all students, the dropout rate is 5.2 percent in 12th grade and 4.6 percent in 11th grade. For American Indian students, the highest dropout rate is in the 11th grade at 12.7 percent with 11.7 percent in grade 12. Students who are 16 or 17 accounted for 999 of the students in Montana who dropped out in 2013 or 65 percent of all dropouts.

Believing that we should set a statewide expectation of high school graduation, Superintendent Juneau has introduced legislation in both the 2011 Legislative Session and the 2013 Legislative Session to raise the legal dropout age in Montana to “age 18 or upon graduation.”



Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

The graduating class of 2010-2011 was the first cohort for which the Office of Public Instruction was able to calculate a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. This rate is the percentage of students in a cohort, adjusted for transfers in and out of school, district, or state, that graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of the student's first enrollment in ninth grade. For the graduating class of 2012-2013, the cohort began ninth grade in the fall of 2009.

This is the third year the OPI has had the data to calculate the four-year adjusted cohort rate. The cohort graduation rate has increased from 82.2 percent in 2011 to 84.4 percent in 2013.

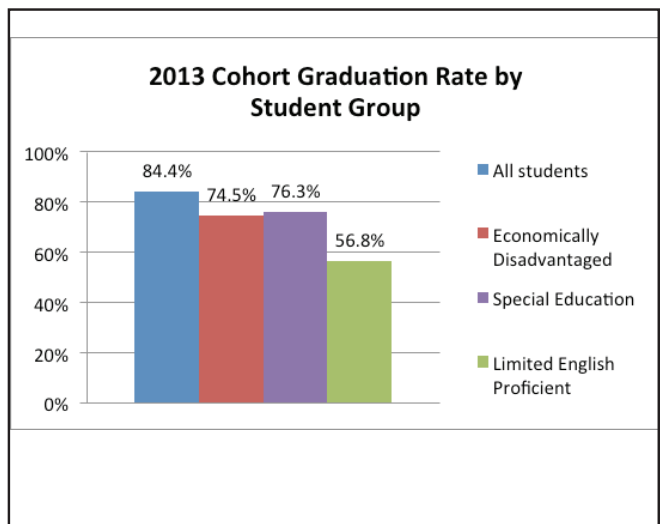
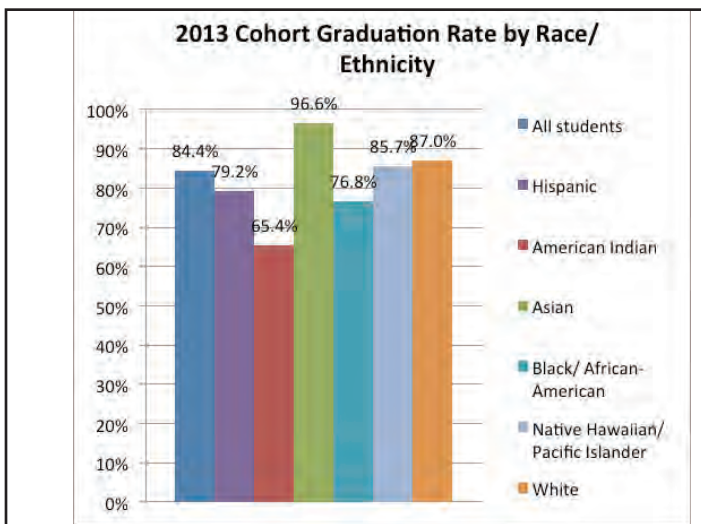
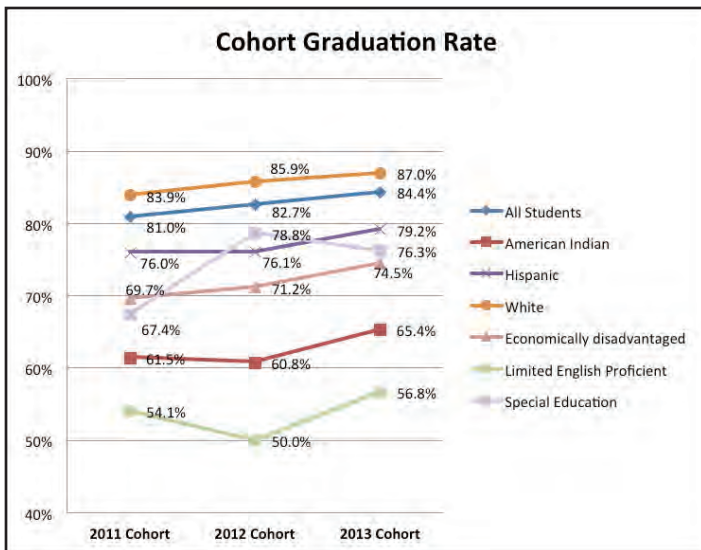
Over the past three years, the statewide cohort graduation rate has continually increased. Between 2011 and 2013, the graduation rate for every student group except for African American students increased. American Indian students have seen an increase from 61.5 percent in 2011 to 65.4 percent in 2013, and the graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students has increased from 69.7 percent to 74.5 percent.

Frequently Asked Questions about the calculation of the Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate can be found on the OPI website on the Measurement and Accountability webpage:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Reports&Data/Measurement>.

For the purposes of student confidentiality, cells with a count under five in the statewide graduation report (for both the four- and five-year adjusted cohorts) have been suppressed.

2013 Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate					
Student Group	Graduates	Dropouts	Continuing	Cohort Count	Cohort Graduation Rate
All students	9,111	1,401	282	10,794	84.4%
American Indian	779	329	84	1,192	65.4%
Asian	112	*	*	116	96.6%
Hispanic	263	61	8	332	79.2%
Black/ African-American	76	20	*	99	76.8%
White	7,857	985	185	9,027	87.0%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	24	*	*	28	85.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	3,527	1,002	203	4,732	74.5%
Limited English Proficient	235	139	40	414	56.8%
Special Education	884	216	59	1,159	76.3%



Five-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students in a cohort, adjusted for transfers in and out of school, district, or state, that graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of the student's first enrollment in ninth grade.

The OPI also calculates graduation rates for additional years, allowing schools and the public to recognize the percentages and numbers of students who continue and receive high school diplomas after the typical four year term. Some students take an additional year to graduate, and it is important to track their progress through Montana's public education system. Accordingly, the OPI has calculated the five-year adjusted cohort rate for the class of 2012.

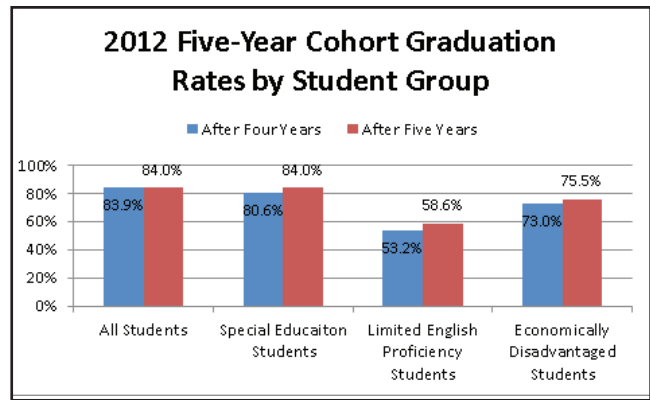
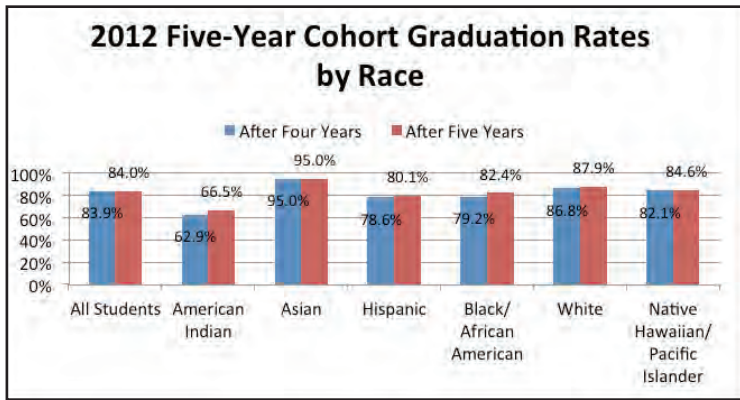
The four-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2012 was 83.9 percent. An additional 159 students graduated in 2013, making the five-year cohort graduation rate 84.0 percent. The "Fifth Year Graduates" column includes all students in the 9th grade 2008-09 school year who received a high school diploma after the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, even if they entered after the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

Class of 2012 Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rate							
Student Group	Graduates		Dropouts		Continuing	Graduation Rates	
	Four Year	Fifth year	Within four years	During fifth year	Enrolled for sixth year	Four Year	Five Year
All Students	9,460	159	1,692	108	24	83.9%	84.0%
American Indian	777	45	365	50	5	62.9%	66.5%
Asian	114	*	5	*	*	95.0%	95.0%
Hispanic	261	5	63	*	*	78.6%	80.1%
Black/ African American	99	*	20	*	*	79.2%	82.4%
White	8,177	105	1,056	54	17	86.8%	87.9%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	33	*	6	*	*	82.1%	84.6%
Special Education Students	871	37	137	26	15	80.6%	84.0%
Limited English Proficiency Students	167	17	115	14	*	53.2%	58.6%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	3292	113	1012	84	14	73.0%	75.5%

Providing State Funding for Students Older than 18

For some students, it takes more than four years to earn their high school diploma, yet schools in Montana do not receive any state funding to educate 19-year-olds. Students who need a “5th year” or an extra semester of high school are often highly motivated to graduate and need the extra time to earn core credits, may have transferred from a school system that makes them a “late start” in Montana’s school system, or dropped out of school due to family circumstances and have reenrolled in high school to earn their diploma.

In the 2012-2013 school year, 122 students who were 19 years of age or older were enrolled in the Fall Semester and 93 were enrolled in the Spring Semester. Currently, Montana is the only state in the nation that cuts off school funding when a student turns nineteen. The majority of states fund students until they are 21 years of age, including all of Montana’s neighboring states (ID, WY, ND, SD).



Montana should celebrate and incentivize local schools that are working to graduate every student. For this reason, Superintendent Juneau proposed legislation during the 2013 Legislative Session to provide state funding for students who are older than 18.

Conclusion

Creating a statewide focus on increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate through Graduation Matters Montana is paying off for students and communities. Montana’s high school dropout rate has decreased from 5 percent in 2009 to 3.6 percent in 2013, and the graduation rate has increased from 80.7 percent in 2009 to 84.4 percent in 2013. This means that 772 fewer students dropped out in 2013 than in 2009.

Graduation Matters Montana’s efforts are having an impact, not only on individuals, but on Montana’s economy. According to calculations by the Alliance for Excellent Education, Montana stands to see an estimated \$4.3 million annual boost to the state’s economy. Collectively, the additional graduates will likely earn an additional \$68.2 million over the course of their lifetimes, compared to if they had not graduated from high school.

Additional policy changes such as raising the legal dropout age to “age 18 or upon graduation” and providing state funding for students older than 18 could boost Montana’s graduation numbers and bring in additional revenue to the state of Montana in the form of decreased social costs and increased spending in Montana’s economy.

While the statewide graduation rate continues to increase, persistent achievement gaps still exist, particularly for American Indian students. American Indian students make up 10 percent of the student population but account for 27 percent of our state’s students who drop out. Graduation Matters communities have begun to launch in communities on or near reservations, and our efforts must begin to focus on finding and sharing best practices to decrease the dropout rate for American Indian students.

For more information about Graduation Matters Montana, go to: <http://graduationmatters.mt.gov>.

References

¹Montana Department of Corrections, *2009 Biennial Report*, Accessed 12/31/2012, <http://www.cor.mt.gov/content/Resources/Reports/2009BiennialReport.pdf>.

² Jeffrey A. Springer and David A. Stuit, "Montana's High School Dropouts: Examining the Fiscal Consequences," *The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice* (2010).

³ John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio Jr., and Karen Burke Morison, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts* (March 2006).

⁴"Montana High Schools," Alliance for Excellent Education, accessed 12/31/2012, <http://www.all4ed.org/files/Montana.pdf>.



**MT's graduation
rate increases
to 84.4%**

**\$4.3 million
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**Graduates' lifetime
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