

FACT SHEET

MISSOURI'S DROPOUT PREVENTION SUMMIT

- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will host a statewide, one-day Dropout Prevention Summit on April 20, 2009. More than 600 participants at 22 regional sites will be connected through a two-way broadcast from the Missouri School Board Association office in Columbia, Mo.
- The dropout prevention summit is designed to increase awareness, encourage collaboration, and facilitate action in communities to improve graduation rates.
- The goals are to 1) initiate local community or regional planning to reduce the dropout rate, and 2) identify and prioritize strategies and activities that will assist the state in helping local communities address the dropout problem.
- Key portions of the summit will be broadcast to 21 locations from the Missouri School Boards' Association office in Columbia. Video conferencing will permit two-way dialogue throughout the event.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education received a \$25,000 grant from the America's Promise Alliance to host the summit.
- The Department invited 144 school districts and communities to participate where dropout rates are four percent or higher, or where there is a high number of dropouts.
- For more information about the summit and dropout prevention, visit the DESE website at www.dese.mo.gov/dropoutprevention

MISSOURI

Goals

- The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is working with school districts to increase the percentage of 18-year-olds with a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. A goal within DESE's strategic plan is to decrease the state's annual dropout rate from 4.2 percent to 3 percent by 2011.

Data – Dropout Rates

- The overall state dropout rate has increased from a low of 3.3 percent in 2003 to 4.2 percent in 2008.
- From 1995 to 2004, the number and percentage of school districts with a 4-percent or higher dropout rate decreased favorably from 270 districts (60 percent) in 1995 to a low of 83 districts (18 percent) in 2004. In 2008, 104 districts (23 percent) had a dropout rate in excess of 4 percent.
- The dropout rate for minority students increased in 2008 to 8.7 percent, up from 6.7 percent in 2007. Breakout data show a larger decrease in the dropout rate for minority students between 1999 and 2004 than for non-minority students.
- In the two largest urban areas, the dropout rates are 21.1% in Kansas City and 18.7% in St. Louis. The St. Louis and Kansas City metropolitan areas have a combined 16 high schools with dropout rates being double the respective district's average. Rural schools also have observed increased in their dropout rates over the past five years, though their averages are not as high as the urban areas.
- The most recent year in which comparable data to national dropout rates is 2006. In that year, Missouri's dropout rate was lower than the national average – 4.0% compared to 9.3%, respectively.
- Missouri appears to be in the middle of the pack (26th) when compared to other states' event dropout rates in 2003-04, the most recent available through the National Center for Education Statistics.

Data – Dropout Reporting

- Schools report student dropout data annually to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for accountability purposes. Through the use of the new Missouri Student Information System (MOSIS), state officials will be able to track student progress and provide more accurate data. The state's enhanced data system generates a unique identifier for each student, which provides advancements in determining if and when a student graduates, even if they moved to a different district in the state during their high school career.

- As required by law (167.275 RSMo), all public and nonpublic secondary schools also are to report all students 16 years of age or older who drop out of school for any reason other than to attend another school, college or university or enlist in the armed services. This enables DESE to make a follow-up contact with the individuals and let them know about the availability of alternate programs, such as Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) classes in their area of the state. When schools report on a regular basis, such as monthly, it increases the chances of students receiving this important information.

Graduation Requirements

- In October 2005, the State Board of Education approved new and tougher minimum requirements for high school graduation that apply to all of Missouri's public schools. The new policy applies to members of the Class of 2010. The new standards raise the minimum number of credits needed to graduate to 24 (up from 22). Students will be required to earn four units in English and three units each in the areas of math, science and social studies. This represents an increase of one full unit in each of the four core academic areas. In addition, the new standards require a half-unit course in "personal finance" and a half-unit course in health education.

Graduation Rates

- In 2008, Missouri had a total of 61,752 graduates, representing a graduation rate of 85.2 percent. This is down from 86.3 percent in 2007.
- From 2004 to 2008, graduation rates fell somewhat for all minority student population sub-groups: Black from 85.6 to 85.2 percent; Asian from 93.7 to 92.2; American Indian 84.8 to 83.4; and Hispanic, 77.7 to 77.5 percent.
- In 2008, Missouri had 87.85 percent of 18-year-olds with a high school diploma or a GED certificate.
- Of the 60,200 Missouri students who graduated in 2007, 39.9 percent entered a four-year college; 26.8 percent entered a two-year college; 3.5 percent entered a postsecondary institution; 18.9 percent entered the workforce; 3.1 percent entered the military; and 2.4 percent entered some other field. The status is unknown for 5.5 percent of the graduates.

Programs/Initiatives

- Many districts already have improvement plans in place to address graduation rates and dropout rates. School district efforts to reduce the dropout rate may be strengthened through the Missouri School Improvement Program and full implementation of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program.
- Programs such as the Missouri Option Program, A+ Schools, Service-Learning, and Career and Technical Education encourage students to stay in school and obtain their high school diplomas.
- Service-Learning is a teaching methodology that uses both content and process standards to solve real community issues. Students who are defined as at-risk can effectively use service-learning activities to help them engage in hands-on projects that offer immediate feedback and challenges them to learn new interpersonal styles of coping.
- DESE supports initiatives for youths with disabilities that promote parental involvement, improvements in Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, postsecondary options through transition planning, and linkages with the business community.
- The DESE Safe Schools Grant program supports projects that focus on intervention services to address the needs of the specific targeted audience: students with violent, abusive, and/or chronically disruptive behavior to be approvable. Typically, an intervention project provides pull-out services (such as an alternative or management school) that promote academic and behavioral skills and strive to return students to regular classrooms when and where appropriate.
- The Missouri Student Success Network (MSSN) is an outgrowth of the nonprofit Alternative Schools Network Association (ASNA). With funding from DESE, MSSN provides a system that connects schools, parents, community agencies, professional groups and individuals to a statewide network of support focused on increased success of Missouri's at-risk students and youth. Recently, the MSSN surveyed administrators of alternative schools to identify challenges and barriers to student success. The five areas identified include effective instructional practices in alternative settings; parent involvement; mental health and community services; student attendance; and funding for sustainability.

AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE

- By 2010, the America's Promise Alliance aims to catalyze and support leadership summits addressing the high school dropout crisis in all 50 states, as well as with the 50 cities that research shows have the greatest concentration of low-performing high schools. These summits aim to increase awareness, encourage collaboration and facilitate action in those states and communities that want to improve their graduation rates. They are not interested in merely supporting a series of one-day events around the country, but are keenly committed to supporting a national campaign to improve policy and practice so more young people graduate from high school ready for college, work and adult life.
- The America's Promise Alliance grew out of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future in 1997. At that gathering in Philadelphia, Presidents Clinton, Bush, Carter and Ford (with Nancy Reagan representing President Reagan), challenged America to make children and youth a national priority.
- The current five-year goal of the America's Promise Alliance is to improve the lives of 15 million disadvantaged youth within the framework of "Five Promises," wrap-around supports that young people need for success in life: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education, and opportunities to help others. The alliance believes that children who receive at least four of the Five Promises are much more likely than those who experience only one or zero Promises to succeed academically, socially and civically.
- In 2008, the alliance commissioned *Grad Nation*, a new tool comprising the best evidence-based practices for keeping young people in school paired with suggestions for effectively preparing them for life after high school. It is a guidebook that provides a road map to help communities tackle the dropout crisis.
- According to America's Promise, cutting the number of dropouts in half nationally would generate \$45 billion annually in new tax revenue – assuming there are ultimately enough jobs to accommodate the graduates.

NATIONAL

Data

- The National Conference of Governors Center for Best Practices 2006 follow-up survey, "Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date," (Curran, 2006) shows that states are committed to calculating and reporting accurate, significant student-level data using a unique student identifier. Thirty-nine states plan to report the NGA Compact Formula graduation rate by 2010, and three states were already reporting a rate consistent with the NGA model (AZ, NY and TX). (Source: *National High School Center, State Approaches to More Reliable and Uniform Dropout and Graduation Data, August 2007*)
- The U.S. Department of Education issued new regulations in October 2008 that will improve the ability for graduation rates to be calculated in a way that is transparent and comparable across schools, districts, and states. Effective in School Year 2010-11, states are required to report a uniform, comparable, and accurate graduation rate known as a "four-year adjusted cohort rate," which measures the percent of students in a ninth grade cohort that graduate with a regular diploma in four years or less. Regulations also permit states to use an additional "extended-year" graduation rate that measures how many students graduate in more than four years. (Source: *Alliance for Excellent Education, Federal High School Graduation Rate Policies and the Impact on Missouri, March 2009*)

Programs/Initiatives

- No Child Left Behind holds schools and school districts accountable for higher standards and results. The following five indicators track the United State's education attainment: achievement in reading and math, achievement gap, high school graduation, college readiness, and college completion. (Source: *U.S. Department of Education*)
- In his first address to Congress on Feb. 24, President Obama cited the nation's dropout rate as one of the highest in the industrialized world. The President said that it will be a "goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education – from the day they are born to the day they begin a career." (Source: *America's Promise Alliance*)