A Pictorial View of California Dropouts and Graduates from the 2005-06 Graduating Class
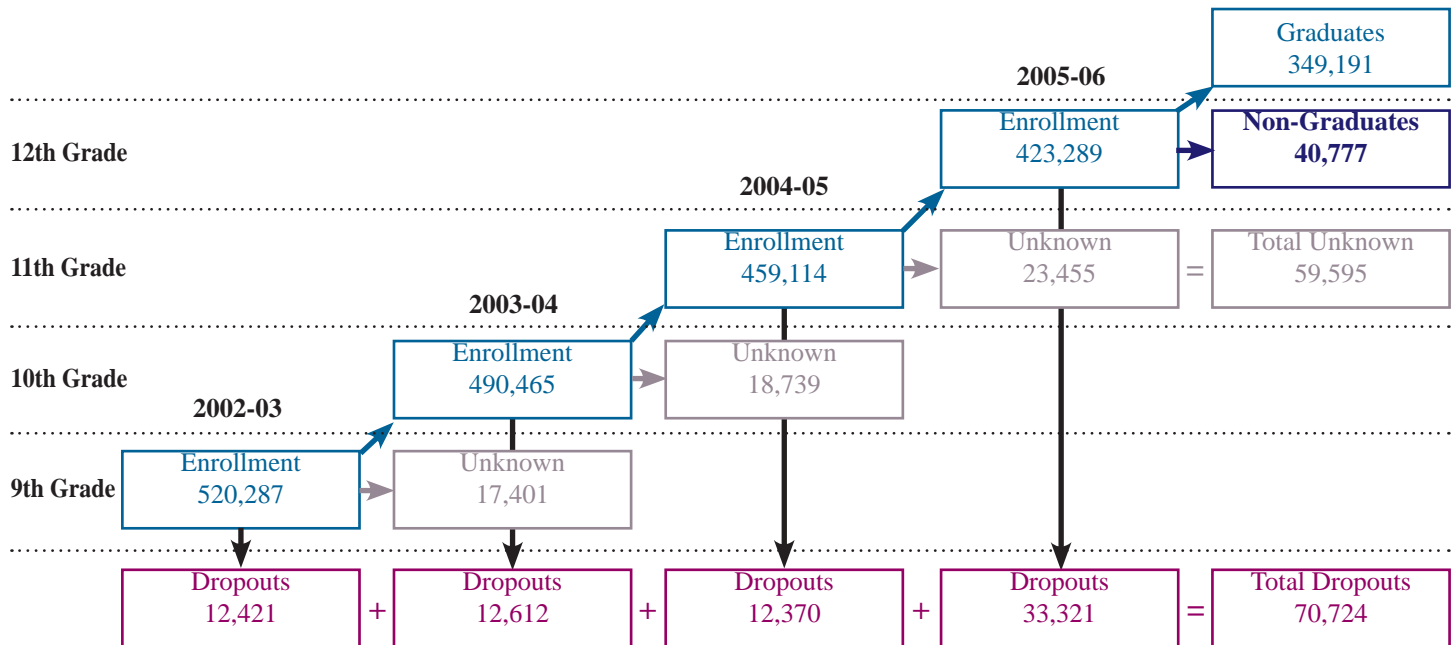
SOURCE: *California Department of Education. Dataquest. Retrieved November 1, 2007, from:* http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/
NOTE: *The figure excludes 3,248 students who dropped out of grade 7 in 2000-01 and 4,116 students who dropped out of grade 8 in 2001-02.*

What is California's Graduation Rate?

Until California completes its longitudinal student data system, it will not be able to compute an accurate measure of the four-year graduation rate—the proportion of students who enter the ninth grade and receive a high school diploma four years later. Instead, the California Department of Education (CDE) and other organizations estimate the rate using three numbers that schools report each year: (1) **Enrollment**—the number of students enrolled at each grade level on the first Wednesday of October; (2) **Dropouts**—the number of students from each grade level who leave the school anytime during the school year and do not graduate or transfer to another school; and (3) **Graduates**—the number of students who receive a high school diploma during the previous school year.

Figure 2 shows these numbers for the high school graduating class of 2005-06. The CDE estimates the four year graduation rate by dividing the number of graduates by the number of graduates *plus* the total number of dropouts, which produces a graduation rate of 83.2%. This estimate is probably too high because it ignores two other groups: (1) students enrolled in grades 9, 10, and 11 who neither drop out nor advance to the next grade (Unknown), and (2) students enrolled in grade 12 who neither drop out nor graduate (Non-grads). Another way to estimate the rate is by dividing the number of graduates by the number of students enrolled in the ninth grade four years earlier, which produces a rate of 67.1%. This figure is probably too low because it ignores students who were retained in the ninth grade. If 10% of ninth grade enrollment consists of retained students, the graduation rate would be 73.8%.

–from the California Dropout Research Project Policy Committee Report, February 2008