

July 17, 2008

## Statement by Russell Rumberger, Director, California Dropout Research Project on New Dropout Figures Released by the California Department of Education on July 16, 2008

On July 16, 2008, the California Department of Education released dropout figures for 2006-07 that, for the first time, utilize data from a new statewide student-level data system (see: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr08/yr08rel94.asp>). In the new system, all students who transferred from one school to another had to have their reenrollment status verified by showing up as enrolled in another California public school. Students who could not be verified were identified as “lost transfers” and are now included in the new “adjusted” dropout figures.

These adjustments added 40,000 students to the number of dropouts reported using the old system. The number of dropouts in grades 9-12 increased from 87,456 to 127,292. In general, this new way of reporting dropouts provides a more accurate picture of the number of students who quit school.

But even without these adjustments, the original dropout figures (without the added “lost transfers”) show some ominous signs:

- The number of “original” dropouts increased by 20,000—or 30%—from 2005-06 to 2006-07, from 67,107 to 87,456
- In the five-year period from 2001-02 to 2006-07, the number of dropouts in California increased **nine times** faster than the number of high school graduates; dropouts increased from 47,827 to 87,456—or 83%, whereas the number of graduates increased from 325,919 to 355,713—or 9%
- In the same five-year period, the number of high school graduates in California increased at a slower pace than the number of high schools students (9% versus 13%)
- In 2006-07, more than 43,000 high school seniors neither graduated nor dropped out

The magnitude of these figures underscores the seriousness of the dropout crisis in California and the need to act. The California Dropout Research Project (CDRP) has issued 38 reports and briefs on the nature, causes, and consequences of the crisis (see: <http://lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/>). On February 27, 2008, CDRP issued a report, *Solving California’s Dropout Crisis*, recommending actions that the state, school districts, and schools can take to improve California’s graduation rate.