

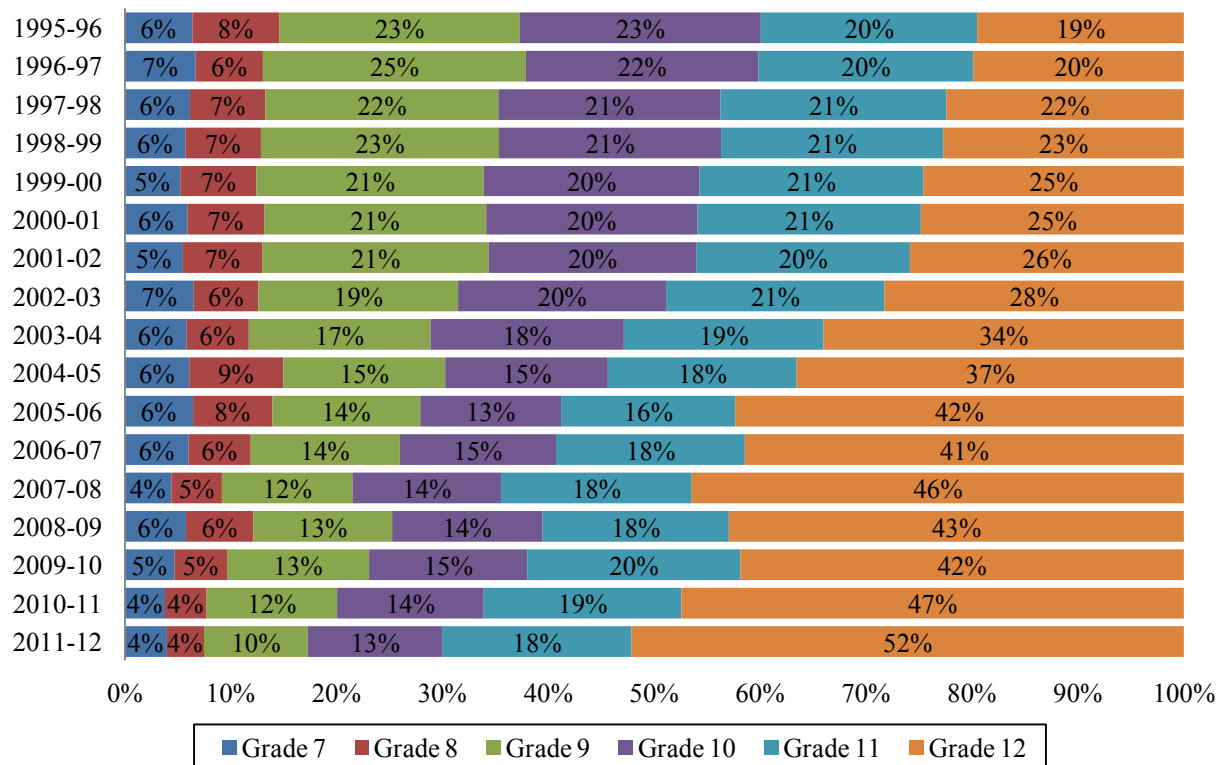
When Do California Students Drop Out of School? An Update to Statistical Brief 9

By Lauren Taylor

Knowing when students drop out of school is important to the development and creation of prevention programs. By identifying when a student may leave school, educators, policymakers, and funding organizations can discern where funding and support needs to be distributed to prevent as many student as possible from dropping out. This statistical brief is an update and extension to statistical brief 9, which compared the proportions of California dropouts by grade and the ten-year trend in dropout rates by grade from 1995-96 to 2005-06.

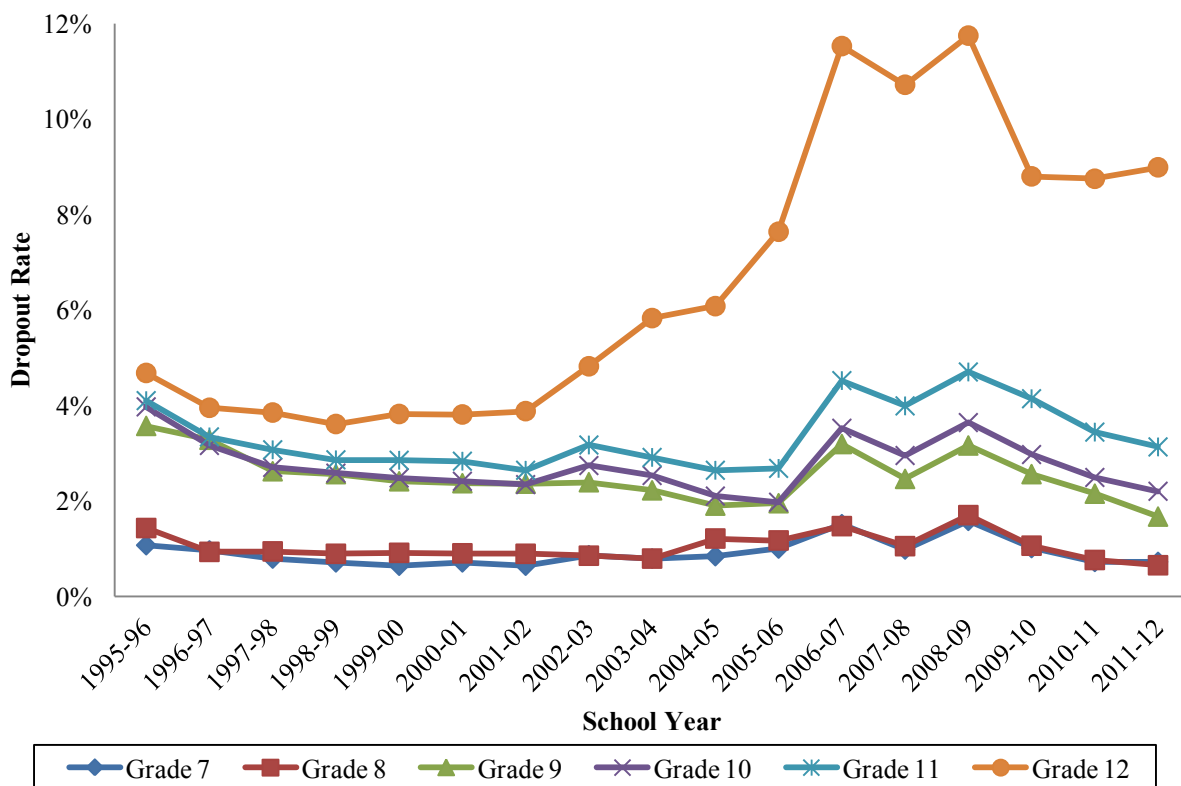
In Figure 1, the dropout trend over a seventeen year span shows that the proportion of students dropping out in grades 7-11 has decreased, while the proportion of students dropping out in 12th grade has more than doubled. Specifically, in 1995-96 twelfth graders accounted for 19.5% of all dropouts, which was smaller than the 9th, 10th and 11th grade dropout proportions. However, in 2011-12 twelfth graders accounted for 52.2% of all dropouts. This is 4 times the proportion of 9th grade dropouts and 3 times the proportion of 11th grade dropouts. This trend shows that dropouts are trying harder to stay in school longer before deciding to withdraw.

Figure 1. Proportion of total dropouts by grade, 1995-96 to 2011-12



A similar trend can be observed in annual dropout rates by grade level, shown in Figure 2. The trend in dropout rates over seventeen years shows that there was a spike in rates during the 2006-07 school year with twelfth grade having the largest increase. That is, the twelfth grade dropout rate went from 7.8% in 2005-06 to 11.0% in 2006-07; however, by 2011-12 the twelfth grade dropout rate had decreased to 9.9%. Overall, the dropout rate for grade 12 has increased by almost 5 percentage points, whereas the dropout rates for grades 7-11 remained nearly constant. The increase in dropout rates in 2006-07 and 2007-08 can be attributed, in part, to the requirement that students pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) beginning with the graduating class of 2006. The decrease in the dropout rate in 2009-10 can be attributed, in part, to the requirement that students with disabilities no longer had to pass the CAHSEE to graduate.¹

Figure 2. California dropout rates for 7th – 12th grades, 1995-96 to 2011-12



An interactive version of Figure 2 can be found at:

http://public.tableausoftware.com/views/StatBrief18/Dashboard2?:embed=y&:display_count=no#1

In the interactive version, Figure 2 can be filtered by ethnicity and gender.

¹ For more information on the CASHEE, see annual independent evaluations at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/evaluations.asp>