

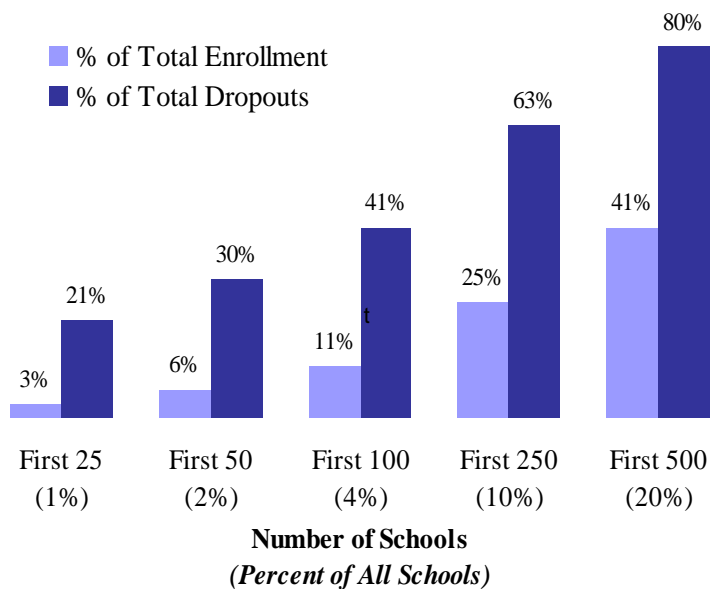
Which California Schools Have the Most Dropouts?

By Susan Rotermund

In 2005-06, 69,613 students dropped out of the 2,462 California schools that enroll students in the 9th through 12th grades.¹ A close examination of the data by school reveals that dropouts are concentrated within relatively few schools: 25 schools (1%) accounted for more than 20% of California's dropouts, and

100 schools (4%) accounted for almost half of all the dropouts in the state (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
California Schools with the Highest Number of Dropouts, 2005-2006



SOURCE: California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) [Electronic Version]. Retrieved October 2, 2007 from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/studentdatafiles.asp>.

were charter schools, two were alternative schools and one was a regular high school (see Table 1). Of the 100 schools with the highest number of dropouts, 42 schools were non-traditional. Altogether, non-traditional schools enrolled 12% of California's high school students, yet they accounted for more than 40% of California's dropouts (see California Dropout Research Project Statistical Brief 6). It should be noted that schools enroll different types of students, so school dropout rates, by themselves, do not reveal whether a school is effective or ineffective in retaining students or helping them graduate.

Independent Study

Independent study is another part of the alternative education system in California. Independent study students are not part of the traditional high school system; instead, students work independently, according to a written agreement, and under the general supervision of a credentialed teacher. In 2005-06, 206 schools enrolled primarily independent study students. The 50,000 students in these schools accounted for 3% of California's 9th through 12th grade students, but 13% of the dropouts.

¹Dropout figures in this report were current on their date of retrieval, but they may not agree with more recent figures that reflect updated information provided by school districts.

Table 1
California Schools by Highest Number of Dropouts and School Type, 2005-2006

School Type	Number of Schools (Independent Study)	Enrollment	Dropouts	Average School Dropout Rate
All Schools				
Regular	1,037 (11)	1,738,474	35,265	2%
Charter	271 (75)	76,463	11,492	9%
Alternative	1,154 (120)	158,299	22,700	14%
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,462 (206)</i>	<i>1,974,645</i>	<i>69,613</i>	<i>4%</i>
Top 25 Schools				
Regular	10 (0)	35,806	3,954	12%
Charter	9 (6)	9,883	7,506	76%
Alternative	6 (2)	9,393	3,271	49%
<i>Total</i>	<i>25 (8)</i>	<i>55,082</i>	<i>14,731</i>	<i>43%</i>
Top 100 Schools				
Regular	58 (0)	192,233	12,925	7%
Charter	17 (9)	16,669	9,125	67%
Alternative	25 (4)	17,379	6,839	50%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100 (13)</i>	<i>226,281</i>	<i>28,889</i>	<i>28%</i>

SOURCE: *Ibid*, see Figure 1

Individual School Dropout Rates

Schools may have similar numbers of dropouts but considerably different dropout rates. For example, a large school with 3,000 students and 150 dropouts would have a relatively low annual dropout rate of 5%, while a smaller school with 500 students and 150 dropouts would have a much higher annual dropout rate of 30%. The statewide average dropout rate for schools in California was 3.5% in 2005-06. More than half of California high schools (1,560) had dropout percentages less than or equal to that, and 662 schools reported *zero* dropouts (see Table 2) that year. On the other hand, more than one-third of schools (889) had dropout rates higher than the state average in 2005-06, and 83 schools had dropout rates greater than 50%, meaning that more than half of the students enrolled in those schools dropped out that year.

Nine California schools had dropout rates greater than 100%. Although this outcome seems improbable, it is a direct result of California's method of collecting enrollment and dropout data. The state collects enrollment data only once at the beginning of the school year, but collects dropout data throughout the entire school year. Thus, a student who enters a school after the enrollment collection date is not counted as being enrolled at that school, but *can* be counted as a dropout.

To view a list of all California high schools that can be sorted by county, district, school, enrollment, number of dropouts, and dropout rates visit: <http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/sb7table.php>

Table 2
California Schools by Dropout Rate and School Type, 2005-2006

	No Dropouts	0-3.5%	3.5-7%	7-20%	20-50%	Above 50%	No Enrollment*
Traditional	158	724	44	72	24	14	1
Non-Traditional	504	174	164	268	234	69	12
Total	662	898	208	340	258	83	13

*These schools did not report enrollment figures, but did report dropouts. A dropout rate cannot be calculated for these schools.

SOURCE: *Ibid*, see Figure 1