



2021 Dropout Rate Interpretation Guide

Because of the disruptions to school operations caused by COVID, DEED advises caution when interpreting data from the 2020-2021 school year. We have never experienced such widespread interference to our educational systems, which means that there is no standard for understanding the impact on data quality. It is possible that the 2020-2021 dropout rates were impacted by the changes in instructional delivery throughout the school year. To assist the data consumer, DEED has developed this interpretation guide to help you determine whether these data are appropriate for your proposed use.

To provide a frame of reference for the 2020-2021 data, DEED has calculated the year-over-year change in state-level dropout rates from school years 2017-2018 to 2020-2021 for several key student groups (i.e., ethnicity and underserved groups). Comparing the magnitude of the differences of the various student groups provides critical information about how stable dropout rates are year-to-year. DEED advises users of statewide dropout rate data to assess the usability of the 2020-2021 data in the context of the year-to-year differences pre-pandemic.

The differences can be found in the table on the next page. The following procedure was used to generate the table. First, dropout rates were calculated at state-levels for each of the student groups for school years 2017-2018 to 2020-2021. Second, the between year differences were calculated for each consecutive pair of years. For example, for the 'All Students' group, there was a dropout rate of 2.75% in 2020 and 3.11 in 2021. The difference between the 2021 and 2020 dropout rate is 0.36% (as seen in the table). Compared to the difference between 2020 and 2019 for all students (-0.26%), the magnitude of the difference between 2021 and 2020 is larger, and the direction of the differences is not the same, i.e., the dropout rate increased from 2020 to 2021.

If you have any questions about the data or this interpretation guide, please contact John Jones, Data Manager for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

Questions to Consider

- 1) Is the difference between the current year and last year larger or smaller than differences between prior pairs of years?
- 2) How do the differences for my district/school compare to the state-level differences?
- 3) Are there any differences in instructional delivery in my district/school that could explain any differences observed above?

Table 1. Between Year Dropout Rate Differences from School Year 2017-2018 to 2020-2021

| Student Groups | SY 20-21 - 19-20 | SY 19-20 - SY 18-19 | SY 18-19 - SY 17-18 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| All Students | 0.36 | -0.26% | -0.07% |
| Male | 0.52 | -0.19% | -0.17% |
| Female | 0.2 | -0.32% | 0.02% |
| African American | -0.8 | 0.61% | -0.05% |
| Alaska Native/American Indian | -0.12 | -0.98% | 0.32% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | -0.33 | 0.06% | -0.53% |
| Caucasian | 0.75 | 0.1% | -0.16% |
| Hispanic | 0.09 | -0.19% | -0.29% |
| Two or More Races | 0.64 | -0.83% | -0.08% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 0.51 | -0.95% | -0.56% |
| Students With Disabilities | -0.24 | -0.2% | -0.26% |
| English Learners | -0.84 | -1.71% | -0.84% |

Note: "SY 20-21 – SY 19-20" means: The dropout rate from the 2019-2020 school year subtracted from the 2020-2021 dropout rate.