OMAHA Public Schools

RESEARCH DIVISION

Omaha Public School District 2024-25 Graduation and Dropout Report

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Executive Summary/Key Findings

- The 2025 4-year graduation cohort is the first cohort to include Buena Vista and Westview. The addition of these schools has changed the enrollment and cohort population of all high schools in both size and demographic makeup. School level results are likely impacted by these cohort population changes.
- In the 2025 graduation cohort, 2,722 students obtained a regular diploma in four or fewer years, resulting in a district-wide graduation rate of 71.5%.
- Conversely, 1,086 (28.5%) students did not complete their coursework on time to graduate in four years. About half of non-graduates remained enrolled in the district while the other half were either not enrolled, have dropped out, or aged out by the end of the 2024-25 school year.
- The 4-year cohort graduation rate has decreased 2.6% over the last five years dropping from 74.1% in 2021 to 71.5% in 2025.
- The 4-year graduation rate increased at Benson (1.4%), Bryan (1.6%), and North (1.1%) from 2024 to 2025 while four other high schools experienced a decrease (Burke, Central, Northwest, and South).
- When analyzing individual schools over the last five years, we see variations in this trend. Burke had maintained the highest graduation rates in the district until 2025 where their graduation rate dropped from 76.9% in 2024 to 74.1% in 2025. Bryan and Central both achieved a 75% graduation rate in 2025 while Westview's first graduating class achieved the highest rate in the district over the last five years at 87.9%. South had the largest decline from 71.6% in 2024 to the district low at 64.4% for 2025.
- Students who were not eligible for free or reduced lunch had consistently higher graduation rates than their eligible peers, reflecting a potential socioeconomic impact on graduation rates. The gap between Eligible and Not Eligible students has decreased from its peak of 18.3% in 2021 to only 5.9% in 2025.
- Current English Learners (EL) have a significantly lower 4-year cohort graduation rate compared to non-EL students. The graduation rate for EL students is particularly affected by the delayed onset of required graduation coursework and a late arrival in a US school for some ELs.
- Students who were previously ELs but exited the program prior to their last enrollment in the district, have a 4-year cohort graduation rate that is consistently higher than students who were never an EL.
- Students without an individualized education program (IEP) graduate at higher rates than those with an IEP.
- Female students consistently graduate at higher rates than male students.
- Asian, Black or African American, and White students are graduating at a higher rate than Hispanic or Latino and students of Two or More Races. The graduation rates for the combined American Indian or Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander group are particularly unstable, due to smaller cohort sizes.
- Students in the 2025 4-year graduation cohort who did not graduate on time were more likely to have first enrolled in the district after 9th grade, changed schools or

programs during high school, and to have been chronically absent in 9th grade compared to students who graduated in four years.
- The 4-year cohort dropout rate was 14.6% in 2025, an increase of 0.5% from the previous year.
- All high schools had an increasing 4-year cohort dropout rate over the last five years. Benson, Burke, and North are the only schools to decrease dropout rates from 2024 to 2025.
- About 10.9% of the 2025 4-year cohort arrived in a US school less than 4 years from their expected graduation. This is a 125% increase in this group of students from the 2024 4-year cohort where only 4.9% of the cohort arrived in a US school less than 4 years from their expected graduation.

Introduction

There are many student data outcomes that are important indicators of success for school districts, schools, and the communities they serve. Public school districts are often measured by their ability to ensure students graduate from high school. Graduation from high school is largely a culminating metric that is impacted by almost every effort meant to support the progression of our students to the next grade, academic level, and ultimately graduation. For all our students in the Omaha Public School District (OPS), the completion of high school is a critical milestone that significantly impacts their prospects in college, career, and life. High school graduates are less likely to be unemployed and earn approximately $8,000 more per year than those with less than a high school diploma (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Additionally, students who graduate are more likely to pursue higher education and secure better job opportunities, which leads to higher lifetime earnings. Conversely, high dropout rates can have a long-term impact on the community and local economy, as dropouts are more likely to experience unemployment, depend on public assistance, and have health issues (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

A regular review of data on graduation and dropout rates within our district allows us to identify trends and issues that can inform our support of high school graduation and long-term student well-being. Graduation rates are a key metric in evaluating the effectiveness of schools and districts and a valuable way of understanding the unique challenges within school communities. Examining dropout rates specifically provides information that can inform early identification and intervention strategies. Whether a student has academic struggles, chronic absenteeism, behavioral issues, or socioeconomic challenges, there are supports and resources available to help them graduate. Developing an understanding of our graduation and dropout rates is a foundational step to enhance the quality of education, the efficacy of academic programs, and the success of intervention strategies.

The Council of Great City Schools' (CGCS) Academic Key Performance Indicators report for the 2023-24 school year highlighted a median graduation rate of 83.6% across member districts, with a notable median increase of 3.4 percentage points in 4-Year Cohort graduation rates from 2018-19 to 2023-24. Although OPS' current

graduation rate falls below the CGCS median, it is essential to recognize the diverse conditions and resources among the CGCS member districts. However, comparing OPS to CGCS member districts offers a more relevant benchmark for OPS than national averages, as it reflects the complexities of urban education environments. Taken as a whole, comparability data provides insight that contributes to our ongoing efforts to address the unique needs of our students and enhance educational outcomes (Council of Great City Schools, 2024). To see information on the graduation rates of other urban school districts, please see the reference list and Appendix A: National and District Comparison.

OPS consists of a diverse student body, with varying socioeconomic backgrounds, races/ethnicities, and educational needs. A total of 52,577 students were enrolled on October 1 of the 2024-25 school year and about 3,500 additional students enrolled for part of the year. About 41.4% of all students are ethnically Hispanic or Latino while 20.9% identify as White, 23.3% as Black or African American, 7.3% as Asian, 6.3% as two or more races, 0.7% as Native American, and 0.1% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. About 17.9% of all students at the high school level are English Learners while 15.8% of high school students had an individualized education program (IEP). Additionally, 71.1% of high school students were eligible for educational benefits, a district metric that replaces free or reduced lunch eligibility as an economic indicator.

Current Efforts to Improve Graduation Rates

Many factors impact graduation rates and the likelihood of a student completing high school or dropping out. Socio-economic challenges can significantly limit a student's access to essential resources and the stability that support success in high school. Access to adequate healthcare, dental care, mental health support, financial stability, and reliable transportation can all play a role. Beyond these, a student's educational experience, including the special services they require, the availability of tutoring, and the nature of relationships with teachers and other students is crucial to their success. Some students spend portions of their high school career in alternative settings or in programs outside of OPS because of the services they require. English Learners can require substantial support to graduate in four years especially if they are entering the district late in their school career. Finally, absenteeism plays a significant role in student success and is most prominent at the high school level.

Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, students entered their high school journey reinforced by the Nine for Nine Supports for Freshman. These supports include several focused initiatives that are intended to encourage a student's success in high school. All 9th grade students are assigned to a Freshman Academy team which creates a smaller learning community to assist transitioning to high school. Other supports include new tools and time to monitor a student's on-track for graduation status, encouraging student and family involvement in school activities, and the new Freshman Seminar course, where students explore interests, strengths, and pathway options within their school. Students are also enrolled in an advisement course where a caring adult can help them develop critical thinking skills, monitor academic progress, and build leadership skills.

During their freshman year, students select an academy or a pathway depending on the school they are enrolled in. Academies are a small learning community of students taking classes together with a career focus. Similarly, pathways are a series of four or more classes focused on a group of related careers, or clusters. Students in both academies and pathways continue to take their core classes (English, math, social studies, and science) along with career-focused classes and traditional electives. The academies and pathways enrich a student's high school experience and allow them to gain skills that will be transferable to any career field while exploring career interests. These efforts are promising for increasing graduation rates over the long term, as they are designed to foster students' engagement by providing a stronger connection between learning and real-world applications.

In addition to these efforts within a traditional high school setting, multiple alternative programs provide students with further opportunities to obtain the 49 specific credits needed to graduate on time. Programs like Accelere allow students to obtain credits for graduation in a different setting than a traditional high school. Courses offered online through Edmentum provide opportunities to make up failed courses on a student's timeline. Finally, summer learning has expanded through Next Level Learning (NLL) to give high school students another session to earn high school credits towards graduation. In the summer of 2024-25 NLL efforts led to a 3.9% increase in 12th grade students who were on track to graduate.

Other significant initiatives include expanded access to tutoring through a partnership with Paper. Paper tutoring includes one-on-one live chat sessions with experts, in both English and Spanish, in hundreds of subjects. Additionally, a recent shift to the high school, college, and career planning tool, SchooLinks, offers a career interest inventory, course planning tools, financial aid information, resume tools, certification tracking, virtual reality campus tours, and a wide variety of career-related information (SchooLinks, 2023). The first cohort of students to experience the Freshman Academy district wide and benefit from many of these initiatives graduated in 2025. Thus, there is reason to be optimistic about the efforts our district is already making to improve our students' high school experience and prepare them for college, career, and life.

Four-Year Graduation Cohort Review

A graduation cohort is a group of students that enter 9th grade at the same time with the expectation of graduating in four years. Students that enter high school in our district in 10th through 12th grade are similarly entered into a graduation cohort that would have been four school years from their 9th grade year. In our district, any student that enters 9th grade or transfers into the district during high school will be assigned to a high school cohort. Students enrolling in a traditional high school are included in that school's cohort. Students with an initial enrollment in an OPS program and students with an initial enrollment in an interim or contracted location, are included in a traditional high school's cohort based on the high school attendance area in which their home address is located. The overall district cohort and each school's cohort will continue to change

each year based on changes in student enrollments, transfers out of the district, and transfers into the district. To see information on the methodology/calculation of graduation and dropout rates, please see Appendix B: Graduation and Dropout Rate Calculation Methodology.

The high school journey for individual students can vary significantly. Traditionally, a high school student enrolls in 9th grade, spends all four years enrolled at the same school, and then graduates. However, many high school students in OPS enroll after 9th grade, are enrolled in non-traditional programs, and have interrupted school experiences. These students are still considered part of a traditional high school's graduation cohort, and the district remains accountable for their graduation. This section is intended to review the experience of students in the 2025 graduation cohort as it relates to their graduation status, changes in their school enrollments, and attendance in their 9th grade year.

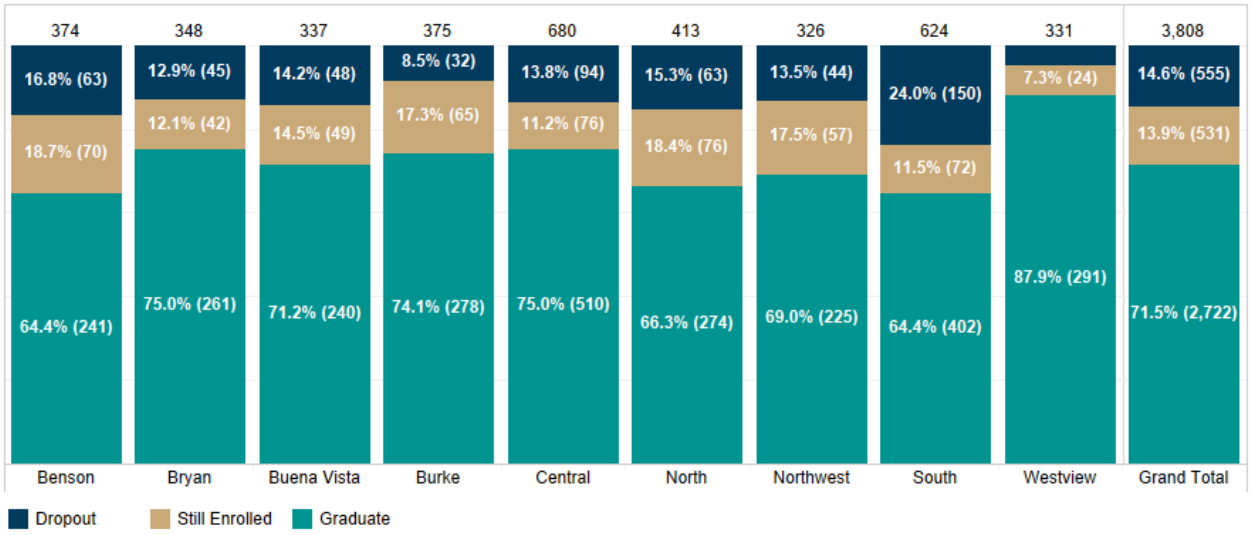
The 2025 4-year graduation cohort is the first cohort to include Buena Vista and Westview which opened in the 2022-23 school year with 2025 12th grade students joining these schools at 10th grade. The addition of these schools has changed the enrollment and cohort population of all high schools in both size and demographic makeup. These results, especially at the school level, should be contextual with the understanding that populations in the 2025 cohort are different when compared to previous cohorts.

The 2025 4-year graduation cohort includes 3,808 students that were expected to graduate at the end of the 2024-25 school year (Figure 1). Within this cohort, 2,722 students obtained a regular diploma in four or fewer years, resulting in a district-wide graduation rate of 71.5%. It is noteworthy that a vast majority (89.8%) were enrolled in OPS in 8th grade prior to high school, 75.3% were enrolled in their cohort school for all four years, and 96.1% of cohort members matching this description graduated from their cohort school in 2024-25 or graduated early in 2023-24. Additionally, only 37.1% of graduates who were enrolled in 9th grade were considered chronically absent in their 9th grade year. These rates remain consistent across the nine high schools included in the cohort. These experiential measurements suggest that most graduates in the cohort follow the traditional path to high school graduation.

Conversely, 1,086 (28.5%) students in the cohort did not complete the coursework required to earn a regular diploma in four years but OPS remains accountable for their graduation (Figure 1). This population can be divided into two distinct groups that represent students who are still enrolled at a school or program at the end of the 2024-25 school year and students who were not enrolled at the end of the year or who have dropped out or aged out (would turn 22 within that school year) at some point over their high school experience. While this population did not graduate on time, they still have an opportunity to remain enrolled or to re-enroll and be included in the 5-, 6-, and 7-year cohorts and positively influence those graduation rates. In this review, a student who

was not enrolled at the end of the school year or who dropped out or aged out at some point over their high school experience will be referred to as a “dropout”.

Figure 1. 4-Year Cohort Status by Cohort High School



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Still Enrolled

About 531 students, roughly half of the students who did not graduate in four years, were still enrolled in an OPS school or program or in an interim or contract setting at the end of the 2024-25 school year. This population makes up about 13.9% of the total cohort. About 78.9% (419) of these students were enrolled at a traditional high school while 17.1% (91) were enrolled at an OPS program like Independent Studies, Accelere, or Blackburn. Another 4.0% (21) of students were enrolled in an interim or contract setting like a juvenile justice center, or a program not run by the school district focused on providing behavioral or other special education services. These rates are similar at Benson, Bryan, Burke, and North. However, we observed higher rates of students still enrolled at their cohort high schools at Buena Vista (85.7%), Central (89.5%), and South (87.5%). In contrast, a smaller proportion of students remained enrolled at their cohort schools at Northwest (64.9%) and Westview (62.5%). This group of students are the most likely to remain enrolled and positively impact the 5-, 6-, and 7-year graduation rates.

Students still enrolled had a varied high school experience. Only about 37.6% of these students were enrolled at their cohort school for four school years compared to 75.3% of graduates. This suggests that these students had enrollment changes throughout their high school career or enrolled in the district after 9th grade. Only about 75.7% of students who were still enrolled have an 8th grade enrollment record in OPS compared to 89.8% for graduates. The remaining population recorded their first enrollment in 9th grade (6.0%), 10th grade (5.1%), 11th grade (6.0%), and 12th grade (7.2%). Overall,

24.4% of students who were still enrolled came to OPS after 9th grade compared to just 10.2% of graduates.

There are also differences in the student attendance rates in 9th grade between the still enrolled and graduate populations in the cohort. For the students who were enrolled in 9th grade, 76.3% of the still enrolled population were chronically absent in 9th grade compared to just 37.1% for the graduate population. Additionally, only 12.7% of the still-enrolled population attended 95% or more of their 9th grade year compared to 34.7% of graduates. This group of students are more likely to be Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino, more than three times as likely to have an IEP, and about two and a half times as likely to be an EL student compared to graduates. To see additional tables examining this information for the 4-year cohort, please see Appendix C: 4-Year Cohort Review.

Dropout

About 555 students, 14.6% of the total cohort, were not enrolled or had dropped out or aged out by the end of the 2024-25 school year. The students who are not enrolled at the end of the school year will likely transition to dropouts if they had not returned to our district or transferred out to another district by the fall of the following school year. Students who dropped out, aged out, or who were not enrolled at the end of the school year will be referred to as a "dropout" throughout the report.

About 46.8% of these students had an enrollment in the 2024-25 school year. However, because dropouts are generally recorded in enrollment records the year after a student fails to return to school, most of these students likely withdrew in their 11th grade year (2023-24). Another 35.6% of these students had a final enrollment in the 2023-24 school year suggesting that they withdrew in their 10th grade year (2022-23). Regardless of when a student drops out, if they were less than 22 years of age within the school year, they can re-enroll to continue their education. Additionally, if a student dropped out in our district, they would remain in our cohort unless they enroll in another school district and that change is recorded in the student information system and transmitted to NDE.

About 94.1% (522) of these students had a final enrollment at traditional high school while another 3.2% (18) were enrolled at an OPS program like Independent Studies, Accelere, or Blackburn. Another 2.7% (15) of students were enrolled in an interim or contract setting like a juvenile justice center, or a program not run by the school district focused on providing behavioral or other special education services.

The population of dropouts also have a non-traditional high school experience when measured by looking at how long a student was enrolled at their cohort school and when they first enrolled in OPS. Only about 12.6% of the dropout students were enrolled at their cohort school for 4 school years compared to 75.3% for graduates (Appendix C, Table C4). Only 54.8% of the dropout students have an 8th grade enrollment record in OPS compared to about 89.8% for graduates. The remaining

population recorded their first enrollment in 9th grade (31.9%), 10th grade (6.8%), 11th grade (4.0%), and 12th grade (2.5%). Overall, about 13.3% of these students came to OPS after 9th grade compared to just 5.5% of graduates.

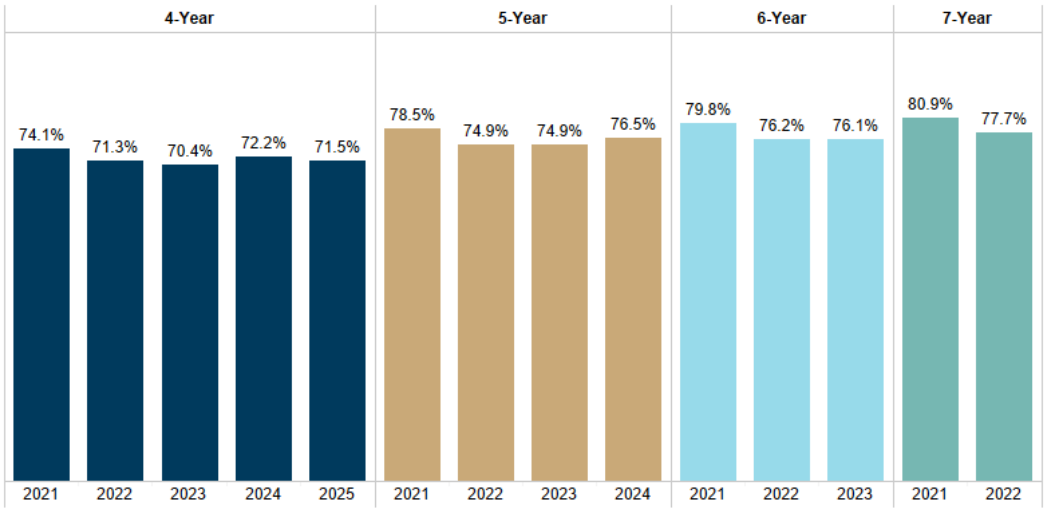
Again, we see differences in the student attendance rates in 9th grade when we compare the dropout to the graduate populations in the cohort. For students who were enrolled in 9th grade, 78.2% of the dropout population were chronically absent in 9th grade compared to just 37.1% for the graduate population. Additionally, only 8.3% of the dropout population attended 95% or more of their 9th grade year compared to 34.7% of graduates. The dropout population is also more likely to be Hispanic or Latino and more than five times as likely to be an EL student compared to graduates.

The dropout population also includes a large group of students that have recently arrived in a US school, generally as EL students. About 40.7% of all dropouts arrived in a US school less than 4 years from their expected graduation. This compares to just 3.9% of graduates, 16.2% of students still enrolled, and 10.9% of the cohort overall. In the 2024 cohort, only 4.9% of students had arrived in a US school less than 4 years from their expected graduation and only 13.6% of dropouts had recently arrived. Overall, only about 25.0% of students who arrived in a US school less than 4 years from their expected graduation graduated while 20.7% are still enrolled and 54.3% have dropped out. The 2025 cohort appears to be specifically impacted by students arriving late to a US school and will likely continue to impact cohort dropout and graduation rates of future cohorts with similar makeup. To see tables examining this information for the 4-year cohort, please see Appendix C: 4-Year Cohort Review.

Graduation Rate Trends

The following section examines trends in graduation cohorts across the last five school years and several demographic groups. Figure 2 demonstrates the graduation rates for the 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7-year cohorts across five years, from 2021 to 2025. The highest graduation rate observed is the 7-year rate for the 2021 cohort, which was 80.9%. When viewed from a cohort perspective, all cohorts increased among the 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7-year measurements as more students still enrolled in our district successfully graduate. When viewed from a year-to-graduate perspective, the 4-year cohort graduation rate has been gradually decreasing from 2021 to 2025, with a slight rebound in 2024. The overall 4-year graduation rate decreased from 74.1% in 2021 to 71.5% in 2025, a decrease of 2.6%. A similar trend is noticeable for the 5-year cohort with the overall graduation rate dropping from 78.5% in 2021 to 76.5% in 2024.

Figure 2. Cohort Graduation Rates



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

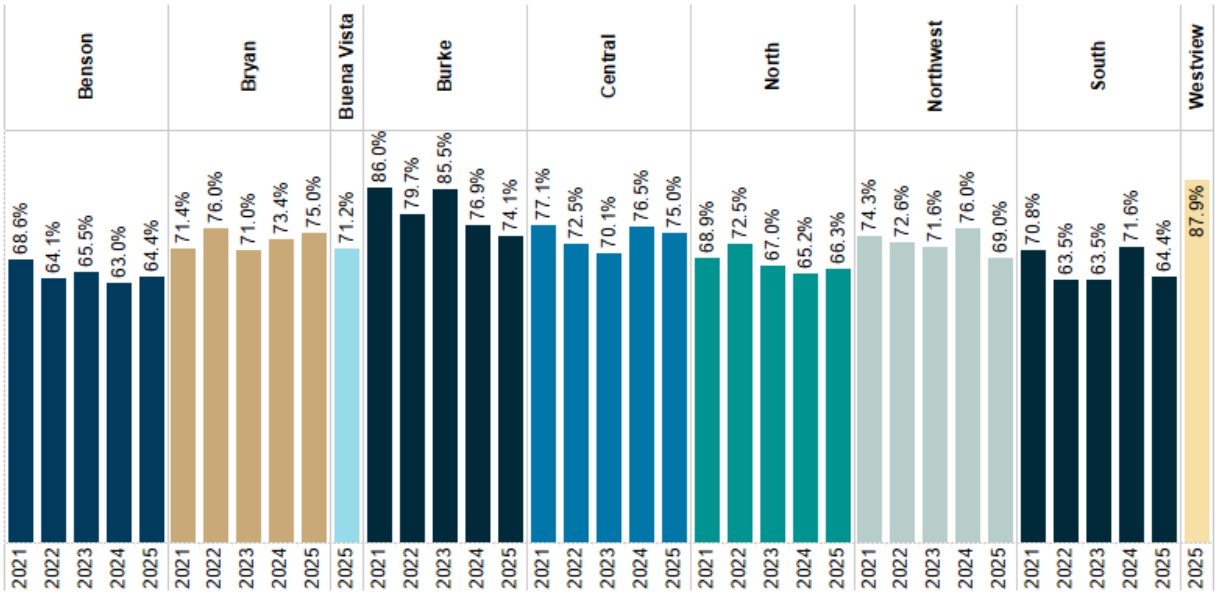
Graduation Rates by High School

When the 4-year graduation rates are viewed from a cohort high school perspective, we see several differences between schools (Figure 3). It is important to note that while most students included in a school's cohort were enrolled there for all four years, student enrollment experiences are varied as discussed in the 2025 4-year cohort review. The 4-year graduation rate at Benson, Bryan, and North increased from 2024 to 2025 while four other high schools experienced a decrease (Burke, Central, Northwest, and South).

- Benson: The 4-year graduation rate increased by 1.4% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from a high of 68.6% in 2021 to 64.4% in 2025.
- Bryan: The 4-year graduation rate increased by 1.6% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, graduation rates have increased from 71.4% in 2021 to 75.0% in 2025.
- Buena Vista: The 2025 class represents Buena Vista's first 4-year cohort, establishing a baseline graduation rate of 71.2%.
- Burke: The 4-year graduation rate decreased by 2.8% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from a high of 86.0% in 2021 to 74.1% in 2025.
- Central: The 4-year graduation rate decreased by 1.5% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from 77.1% in 2021 to 75.0% in 2025.
- North: The 4-year graduation rate increased by 1.1% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from 68.9% in 2019 to 66.3% in 2025.
- Northwest: The 4-year graduation rate decreased by 7.0% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, graduation rates have decreased from 74.3% in 2021 to 69.0% in 2025.

- South: The 4-year graduation rate decreased by 7.2% from 2024 to 2025, the largest decrease from the prior year among schools. Over the last five years, graduation rates have decreased from 70.8% in 2021 to 64.4% in 2025.
- Westview: The 2025 class represents Westview's first 4-year cohort, establishing a baseline graduation rate of 87.9%.

Figure 3. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by High School



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Graduation Rates by Demographic Group

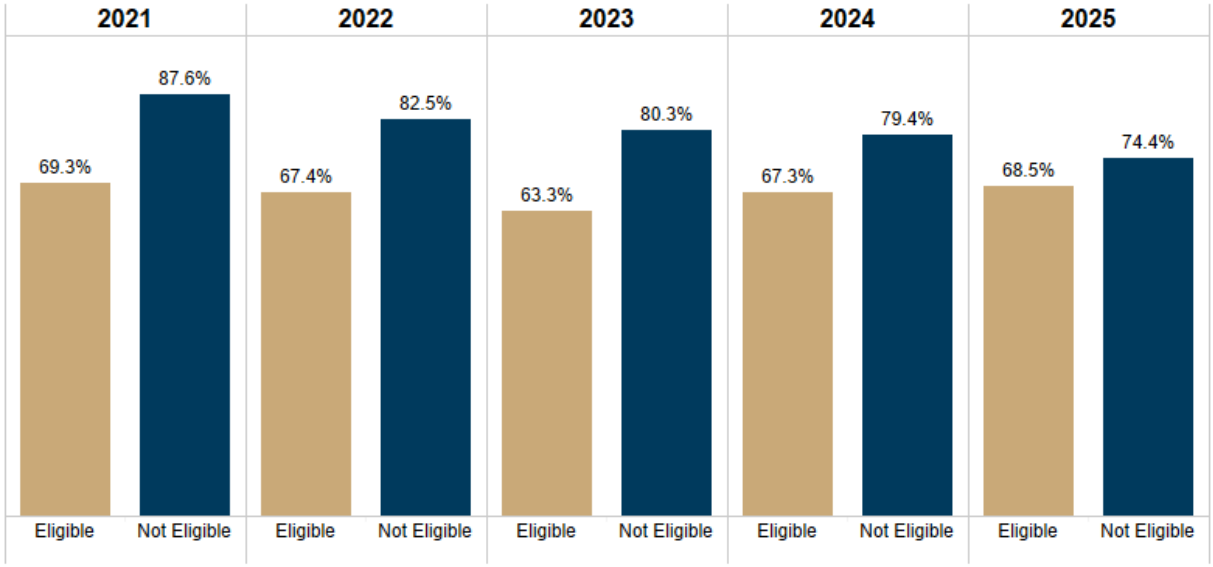
Over the last five years, students not eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch have consistently higher graduation rates compared to those who are eligible (Figure 4). The gap in graduation rates has decreased over that time to a difference of only 5.9% in 2025. OPS started participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in the 2022-23 school year, eliminating the need for free or reduced lunch forms. Therefore, the Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) free and reduced lunch eligibility metric, used in this reporting, only includes students who are directly certified and at a higher level of poverty for 2022-23 through 2024-25 school years. This measurement from NDE also likely doesn't identify many students who would be eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch or EBF and distorts some of the difference in graduation rates between eligible and non-eligible groups.

Female students have consistently higher graduation rates compared to male students over the past five years (Figure 5). The graduation rate for females was 76.9% in 2025 compared to 66.5% for male students, a gap of 10.4%.

The data also highlights disparities in graduation rates among different racial/ethnic groups as well (Figure 6). As of 2025, 4-year cohort graduation rates are highest for

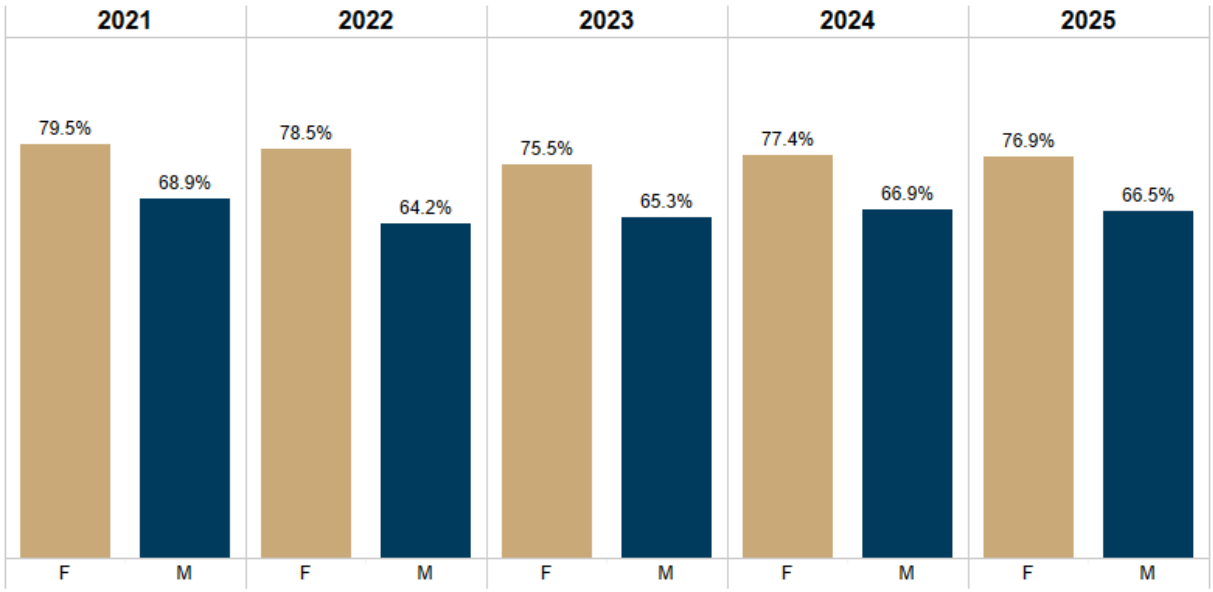
Asian, Black or African American, and White students and lowest for American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and Hispanic or Latino students. Across all racial/ethnic groups, there has been a general downward trend in graduation rates over the last five years. Percentages for the combined American Indian/Pacific Islander group show considerable instability, largely due to the relatively small number of students in this group, compared to other groups. Students who identify as Asian had a notable drop in graduation rates from a high of 86.0% in 2024 to 75.0% in 2025. Students that identify as Black or African American recorded a 4.9% increase in graduation rates from 2024 to 2025 achieving the highest rate over the last five years.

Figure 4. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Free or Reduced Lunch Status



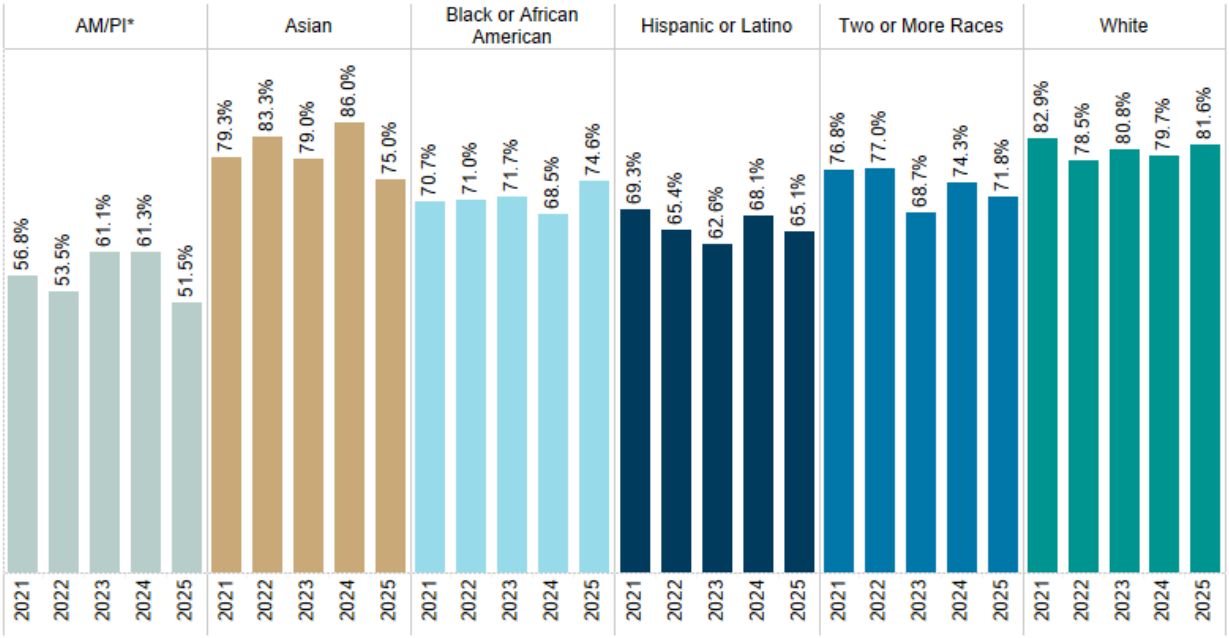
Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 5. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Gender



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 6. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. *AM/PI = American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander have been grouped due to small group size.*

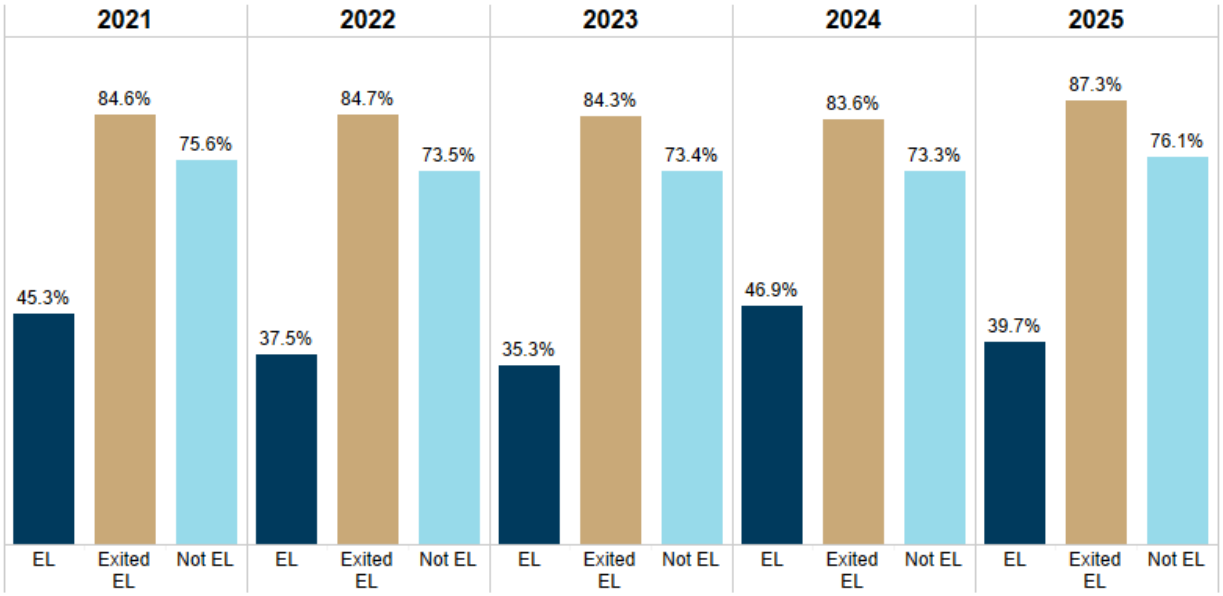
Graduation Rates by English Learner and IEP Status

Over the last five years, students that have exited the English Learner (EL) program prior to high school, or in high school, have consistently higher graduation rates than students who were never ELs or who are in the EL program. The average graduation rate of Exited EL over the last five years was about 84.9%, the highest of any student group analyzed (Figure 7).

English Learner (EL) students that remain ELs in high school often face a longer journey to graduation as they develop proficiency in English before fully engaging with the standard curriculum. For example, some ELs must take sheltered EL courses before they take English 1-2 to get English credits like most ninth-grade students. Further, some ELs may enter the district as an older student in 9th grade or later after coming to the United States from other countries. Consequently, these challenges can extend the time required for ELs to fulfill all graduation requirements, compared to their native English-speaking peers or those who gained proficiency in English through district English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum. However, all EL students have an opportunity to graduate in four years by following their individual graduation plan that may include summer learning and additional credit accrual opportunities.

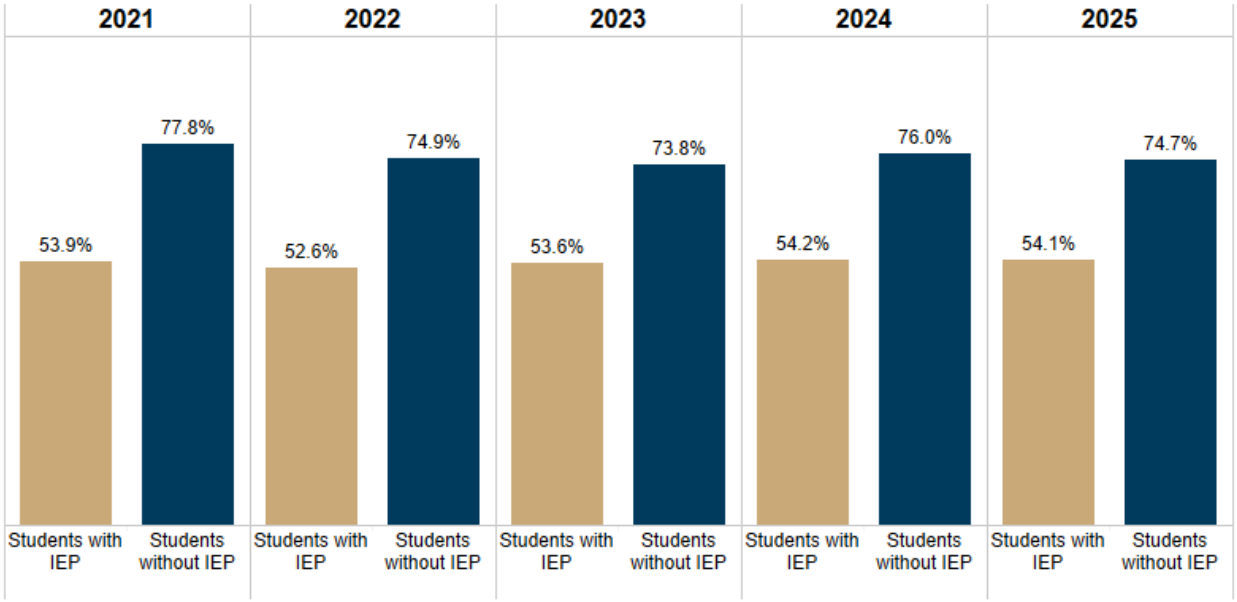
Students without an IEP consistently have higher graduation rates than their peers with an IEP (Figure 8). The gap between the two groups remains substantial throughout the last five years from 2021 to 2025, with an average gap of 21.7%. The graduation rates for students with an IEP have increased by 0.2% over the last five years. The special education needs that students require can vary from enrollment in a separate school to intermittent speech services within a traditional high school. Like students who are learning English, the need for special education services can extend the time required for students to fulfill all graduation requirements.

Figure 7. Graduation Rates by English Language Learner Status



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. English Learner Status for Exited EL students had been adjusted using the last enrollment in OPS. The Exited EL and Not EL rates will not match the Nebraska Education Profile because students are not disaggregated in this way.

Figure 8. Graduation Rates by IEP Status



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

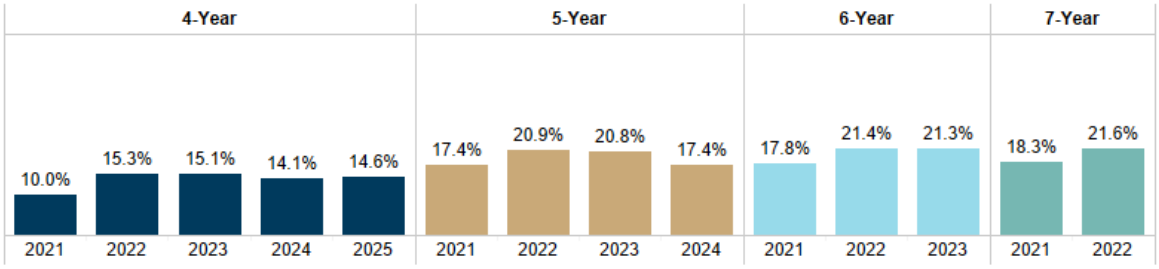
Dropout Rate Trends

The NDE collects and reports dropout rates each year for students in 7th through 12th grade. Unlike graduation rates, which are based on a graduation cohort, dropouts are

reported on a yearly basis as a proportion of the 7th through 12th grade population. These rates are not directly related to cohort graduation rates but provide the percentage of students that are disengaging from education across the population because they have aged out, dropped out, or are otherwise not enrolled in a school by the following school year. In 2024-25, NDE reported that 3.4% of OPS 7th through 12th grade students dropped out. This is a decrease from the previous year where 5.3% of students were reported to have dropped out. In the state of Nebraska overall, 1.3% of 7th through 12th grade students dropped out in 2024-25. To see information on the methodology/calculation of dropout rates, please see Appendix B: Graduation and Dropout Rate Calculation Methodology.

Alternatively, one can view dropout rates from a cohort perspective as we have in the analysis below. The rates discussed below include students who dropped out, aged out, or who were not enrolled at the end of the school year and the term “dropout” will be used to describe all these groups. The dropout rates below are calculated as a proportion of the cohort and not all students in 7th through 12th grade (Figure 9). The dropout rate is not a direct reciprocal with graduation rates because some students remain enrolled in school even though they have not graduated or dropped out. For all cohorts, the dropout rate has been mostly increasing since 2019. Notably, the 4-year cohort dropout rate increased from 10.0% in 2021 to 14.6% in 2025. The 5-year cohort increased in 2022 and 2023 to above 20.0%, but has since declined, returning to its 2021 level of 17.4%. The 6-year and 7-year cohort also experienced an increase in dropout rates with the 6-year cohort going from 17.8% in 2021 to 21.3% in 2024 and the 7-year cohort going from 18.3% in 2021 to 21.6% in 2022.

Figure 9. Cohort Dropout Rates



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

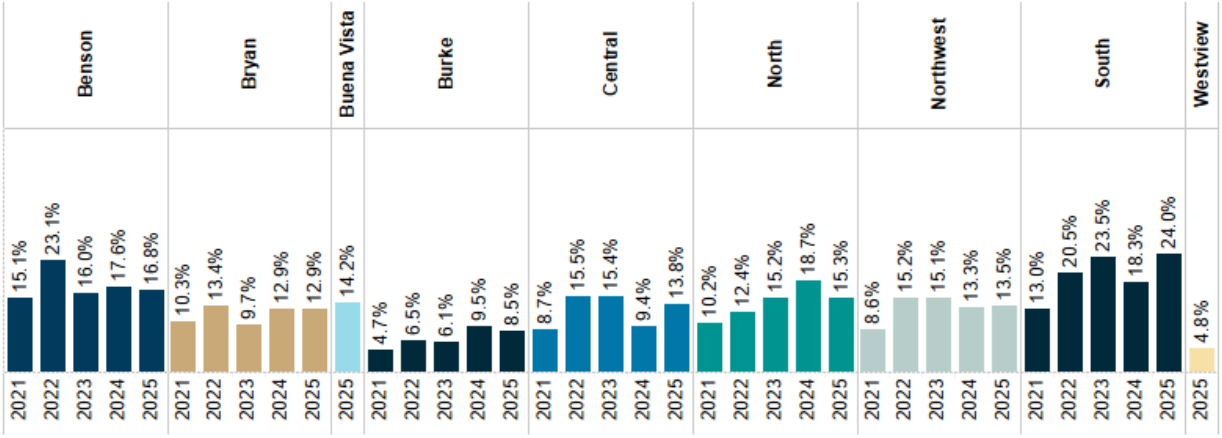
Dropout Rates by High School

When the 4-year dropout rates are viewed from a cohort perspective, we see several differences between schools (Figure 10). It is important to note that students counted at a cohort school could have aged out or dropped out directly from that high school, from an OPS or non-OPS program, or were not enrolled by the fall of the following school year. All high schools have experienced an increasing dropout rate over the last five years, with the exception of Buena Vista and Westview, which just established their baseline in 2025. Five schools (Benson, Bryan, Burke, North, and Northwest) have

experienced a decreasing or stable dropout rate between 2024 and 2025 while Central and South experienced an increase.

- Benson: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 0.8% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, dropout rates have been stable at about 16% to 17% except for a spike in 2022 to 23.1%.
- Bryan: The 4-year dropout rate did not change from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, dropout rates increased from 10% to about 13% in 2025.
- Buena Vista: The 2025 cohort is the school's first 4-year cohort and sets a baseline dropout rate of 14.2%
- Burke: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 1.0% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, dropout rates increased from 5% to almost 9% in 2025.
- Central: The 4-year dropout rate increased by 4.4% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, dropout rates increased from 9% to almost 14% in 2025.
- North: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 3.4% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, dropout rates have generally increased, peaking at 18.7% in 2024, before dropping to 15.3% in 2025.
- Northwest: The 4-year dropout rate increased by 0.2% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, dropout rates generally decreased after peaking at 15.2% in 2022.
- South: The 4-year dropout rate increased by 5.7% from 2024 to 2025. Over the last five years, dropout rates have nearly doubled, peaking at 24.0% in 2025, the highest in the district.
- Westview: The 2025 cohort is the school's first 4-year cohort and sets a baseline dropout rate of 4.8%

Figure 10. 4-Year Cohort Dropout Rates by Cohort High School



Note: Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

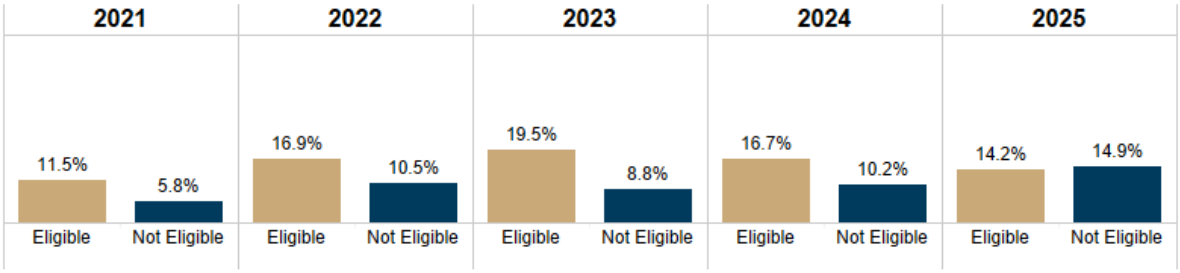
Dropout Rates by Demographic Group

Over the last five years, the dropout rate for students eligible for free or reduced lunch increased from 11.5% to 14.2% (Figure 11). Students who were not eligible have seen an increase in dropout rate increasing from 5.8% in 2021 before reaching 14.9%, a five-year high, in 2025. These data are likely impacted by the district's use of CEP and NDE's use of direct certification to determine eligibility over the last three years.

Generally, male students experienced higher dropout rate compared to their female peers (Figure 12). The rates for females were 11.2% in 2025 compared to 17.6% for male students, a gap of 6.4%.

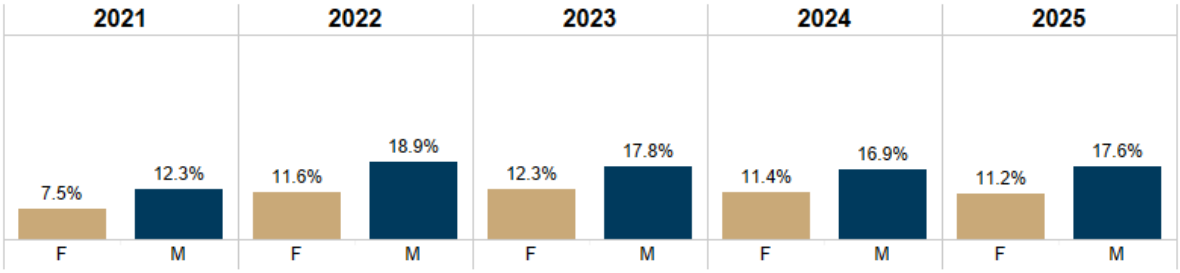
The data highlights disparities in dropout rates among different racial/ethnic groups (Figure 13). As of 2025, 4-year cohort dropout rates are lowest for Black or African American and White students and highest for Asian and Hispanic or Latino students. Percentages for the combined American Indian/Pacific Islander group show considerable instability, largely due to the relatively small number of students in this group. Black or African American students have experienced a 5.4% decrease in dropout rates since the previous year going from 13.7% in 2024 to 8.0% in 2025. Asian students had the largest spike of any racial/ethnic group increasing from 8.6% in 2024 to 14.2% in 2025.

Figure 11. 4-Year Cohort Dropout Rates by Free or Reduced Lunch



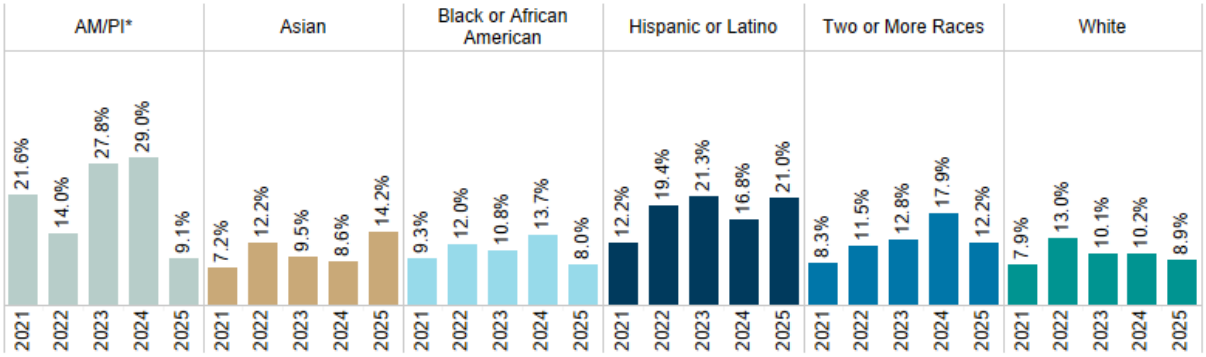
Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 12. 4-Year Cohort Dropout Rates by Gender



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 13. 4-Year Cohort Dropout Rate Trend by Race/Ethnicity



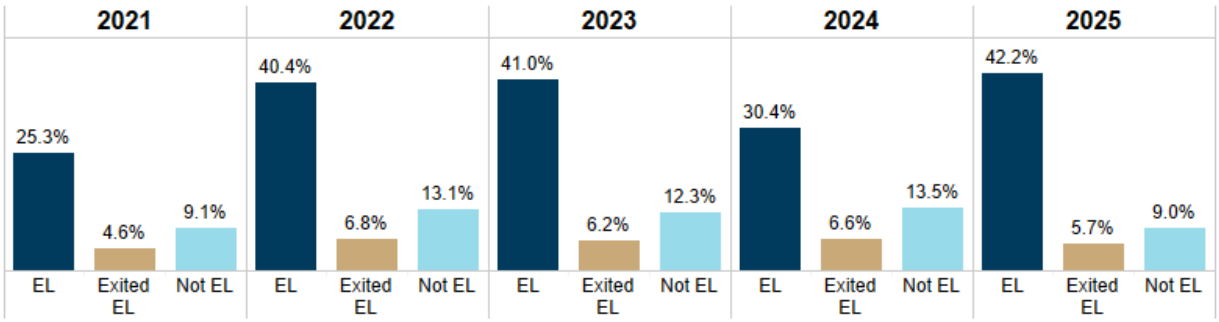
*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. *AM/PI = American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander have been grouped due to small group size.*

Dropout Rates by English Learner and IEP Status

Students that have exited the EL program prior to high school, or in high school, have consistently lower dropout rates than students who were never ELs or who are currently in the EL program over the last six years (Figure 14). The average dropout rate of Exited ELs over the last five years was about 6.0%, the lowest of any student group analyzed. Notably, dropout rates for ELs increased from 30.4% in 2024 to 42.2% in 2025. This represents a 11.8% increase, which is the largest of any student group analyzed and for a student demographic that has been growing in size. This group of ELs is specifically impacted by the late arrival to a US school as noted previously in this analysis. About 56% of all ELs in the 2025 cohort arrived in a US school less than 4 years from their expected graduation. The dropout rate for students who were never ELs decreased from 9.1% in 2021 to 9.0% in 2025.

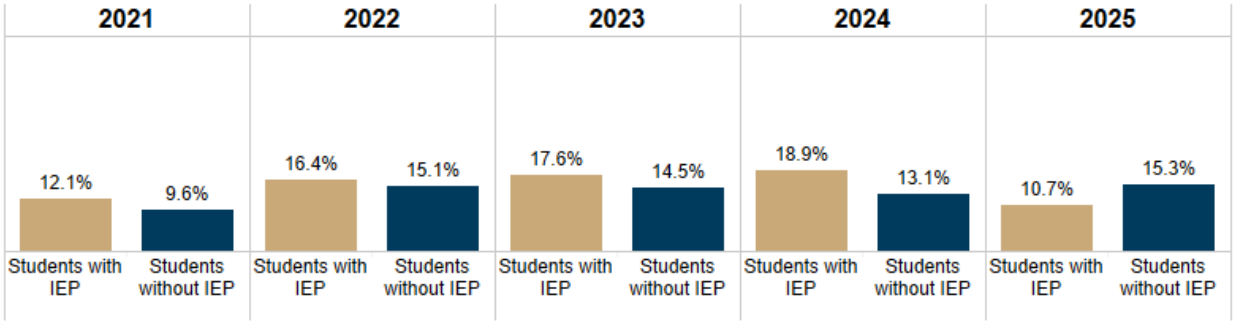
Students with an IEP generally have higher dropout rates than their peers without an IEP (Figure 15). However, for the first time since 2019, the trend reversed in 2025 where students without an IEP had a dropout rate of 15.3% while students with an IEP had a dropout rate of 10.7%.

Figure14. 4-Year Cohort Dropout Rates by English Language Learner Status



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. English Learner Status for Exited EL students had been adjusted using the last enrollment in OPS.

Figure 15. 4-Year Cohort Dropout Rates by IEP Status



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Conclusion

As we look to the future, there will be additional opportunities to dive deeper into the data in this report. Additional disaggregation of this information by cohort school can highlight the successful strategies or best practices they utilize that would be beneficial for district-wide implementation. Additionally, we should consider the efforts undertaken by other school districts that have found success in improving graduation rates for specific groups of students and for the overall population. Continued evaluation of the record keeping practices in the district's student information system will also benefit our understanding and measurement of these important metrics.

The journey toward improved graduation and dropout rates in OPS is ongoing. It will demand resilience, innovation, and a steadfast dedication to equity and excellence. As we move forward, we will continue to rely on data-driven strategies, engagement with our community partners, and most importantly, listening to and learning from our students. Their voices and experiences are the most critical guides for our work, helping us to build an educational community where every student is valued, supported, and empowered to achieve their fullest potential.

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Appendix A: National and District Comparison

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2019-2020 academic year, the average adjusted cohort graduation rate for public high school students in the United States reached a high of 87% since its initial measurement in 2010-2011 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). However, this figure does not necessarily reflect the graduation rates in urban districts, where there is considerable fluctuation due to a variety of factors such as socioeconomic conditions.

U.S. News reports that for the 2021-2022 school year, the average graduation rate across 49 states plus Washington, D.C. (excluding Oklahoma due to unavailable recent data) rose to 79%, which is a 2% increase from the previous year. The state-reported graduation rates varied widely, with the lowest average at nearly 73% and the highest at 92%, as per each state's education department data (U.S. News, 2023).

To enhance graduation rates, school districts can utilize a multifaceted strategy that addresses both academic and broader life circumstances of students. For instance, employing graduation coaches to closely monitor and support students' academic journeys and offering personalized class schedules, such as night classes, can significantly accommodate students' needs, especially for students balancing work or internships. Building strong relationships between staff and students also plays a crucial role. Efforts to engage families in the educational process, through methods such as in-person home visits and/or virtual meetings (when most convenient for families), further support student success by involving them in crucial planning stages, including credit recovery programs (Breunlin, 2024).

For example, Harrison School District 2 saw an increase in its graduation rates, from 80.0% for the class of 2022 to 82.3% for the class of 2023, which has been attributed to such comprehensive strategies. This district, like Omaha Public Schools, faces challenges with lower graduation rates among specific student groups, highlighting the need for tailored approaches to meet diverse needs.

Denver Public Schools represents another case where aligning coursework with students' interests through vocational training, internships, and career and technical education classes contributed to an increase in its four-year graduation rate, from 76.5% in 2022 to 79% in 2023 (Breunlin, 2024). This strategy emphasizes helping students find relevance and purpose in their education, to help them discover what they most want to pursue and see the practical steps they need to take to achieve their dreams.

Appendix B: Graduation and Dropout Rate Calculation Methodology

Graduation Cohort Determination

When a student enrolls in 9th grade for the first time in Nebraska, they are assigned to a 4-year graduation cohort that is expected to graduate in 4 school years. Students that enter high school in 10th through 12th grade are similarly entered into a graduation cohort that would have been 4 school years from their 9th grade year. School districts upload enrollment and expected graduation year information to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) through the ADVISER system. Ultimately, the NDE keeps the final record of which students are in a cohort based on the information submitted by school districts. The school and district that a student is enrolled in when they first enter high school becomes their cohort. A student's membership in a cohort year does not generally change throughout high school but the school or district that they are assigned to can change.

In our district, any student that enters 9th grade or transfers into the district during high school will be assigned to a high school cohort. Students enrolling in a traditional high school are included in that school's cohort. Students with an initial enrollment in an OPS program such as JP Lord, Omaha Virtual High School, or the ESL Teen Literacy Center, and students with an initial enrollment in an interim or contracted location, are included in a traditional high school's cohort based on the high school attendance area in which their home address is located. The overall district cohort and each school's cohort will continue to change each year based on changes in student enrollments, transfers out of the district, and transfers into the district. These changes are predicated on the enrollment end status and the school of assignment field on a student's enrollment in the student information system. The following situations described below can cause a student's cohort to change or, in some cases, remain the same.

- If a student moved to a different traditional high school within our district, they would move to that school's cohort. **(Transfer Out of a School)**
- If a student moved to an OPS program (including interim and contracted locations), from a traditional high school, they would remain in their previous school's cohort. **(No Change)**
- If a student moved to another district, state, or country, they would be removed from both the school's and the district's cohort if they had the correct end status in the student information system. **(Transfer Out of the District)**
- If a student moved into OPS and enrolled at a traditional high school or lived in the home attendance area of that high school but enrolled at an OPS program (including interim and contracted locations), they would be added to the school's and district's cohort. **(Transfer In)**
- If a student dropped out or aged out from a traditional high school, or an OPS program (including interim and contracted locations), they would remain the school's and district's cohort. **(No Change)**

- If a student passed away, they would be removed from the school's and district's cohort. **(Transfer Out)**

The cohort determinations produce the denominator in the graduation rate calculations while the number of graduates produces the numerator. Graduation rates are calculated at the end of the cohort's 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th year in high school with the 4th year being the cohort's expected on-time graduation year. The NDE calculates 4-year graduation rates in November following each school year using the following formula. The 5-, 6-, and 7-year cohorts are also calculated at that time using similar formulas.

$$\frac{\text{\# of Graduates (4-Year only)}}{\text{\# of True Freshman + Transfers In – Transfers Out}}$$

New Cohort Dropout Determination

This new method of calculating dropout rates takes the same approach as the cohort graduation rates described above as it measures the percentage of the cohort students who have dropped out, aged out, or who are not enrolled. These three groups of students have been grouped together throughout this report as "dropouts" for simplicity. The cohort dropout rate is calculated as a proportion of the cohort, determined in the same way as the graduation cohort described above, and not all students in 7th through 12th grade as calculated by NDE. The dropout rate is not a direct reciprocal with graduation rates because some students remain enrolled in school even though they have not graduated or dropped out. Students are considered a dropout if they:

1. Were no longer enrolled but was eligible to return (enrollment code 205).
2. Completed the Withdrawn from Mandatory Attendance process (enrollment code 209).
3. Aged out - A student over the age of twenty-one to which the district/system is no longer required to provide a free, public education (enrollment code 208).
4. Drop out - A student completed the formal dropout process (enrollment code 202).

The cohort determinations produce the denominator in the dropout rate calculations while the number of dropouts, age out and not enrolled students produces the numerator. While this rate has no equivalent measurement from NDE, it provides an understanding of the population of students who have disengaged from their education prior to graduation.

$$\frac{\text{\# of Dropouts + Age Outs + and Not Enrolled (4-Year only)}}{\text{\# of True Freshman + Transfers In – Transfers Out}}$$

NDE Dropout Determination

NDE collects and reports dropout rates based each year for students in grades 7 through 12. Unlike graduation rates which are based on a graduation cohort, dropouts

are reported on a yearly basis. Students are considered a dropout based on the following conditions:

1. Was enrolled in school but withdrew at some time during the school year; and
    a. Was not enrolled on or before October 1 of the following school year; or completed the Withdrawn from Mandatory Attendance process as per 79-202. This form with appropriate approvals should be on file at the district. The students that complete this process should be recorded with an Exit Withdraw Type (Enrollment Code) 209.
2. Was enrolled on the last day of school; and
    a. Was not re-enrolled the following school year; and
    b. Was not enrolled on or before October 1 of the subsequent school year (i.e., was not reported as a dropout the year before).
3. Aged out - A student over the age of twenty-one to which the district/system is no longer required to provide a free, public education. The aged out enrollment status is used for this student. (Exit Enrollment Code 208.)

Similar to graduation cohort determination, the following considerations will indicate that a student is not considered a dropout.

- If they were a completer with a regular diploma.
- Transferred to another public district, special purpose school, nonpublic system, exempt (homeschool) or district-approved educational program and known to be receiving services. **(Transferred Out)**
- If the student died, they are removed from the calculation.

The following shows the calculation used to determine district dropout rates according to NDE and is meant to answer the question, “Of those students who were enrolled at official fall membership, how many dropped out?”

$$\frac{\text{\# of Dropouts (7-12th grade)}}{\text{\# of Students (7-12th grade) at Official Fall Membership}}$$

Appendix C: 4-Year Cohort Review

These tables were produced using the 2025 4-year graduation cohort file from the Cohort Detail Report in ADVISER and student enrollment and attendance information from Infinite Campus. This analysis was conducted to help describe this cohort's high school experience. Students who have dropped out, aged out, or who are not enrolled have been grouped together as "dropouts" for simplicity.

Table C1 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or who dropped out by cohort high school.

Table C1. 2025 4-Year Cohort Status by Cohort High School

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
Benson	241	64.4%	70	18.7%	63	16.8%	374	100.0%
Bryan	261	75.0%	42	12.1%	45	12.9%	348	100.0%
Buena Vista	240	71.2%	49	14.5%	48	14.2%	337	100.0%
Burke	278	74.1%	65	17.3%	32	8.5%	375	100.0%
Central	510	75.0%	76	11.2%	94	13.8%	680	100.0%
North	274	66.3%	76	18.4%	63	15.3%	413	100.0%
Northwest	225	69.0%	57	17.5%	44	13.5%	326	100.0%
South	402	64.4%	72	11.5%	150	24.0%	624	100.0%
Westview	291	87.9%	24	7.3%	16	4.8%	331	100.0%
Grand Total	2,722	71.5%	531	13.9%	555	14.6%	3,808	100.0%

Table C2 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by the first recorded enrollment in the Omaha Public Schools.

Table C2. 2025 4-Year Cohort Status by First Recorded Enrollment in 8th-12th Grade

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
8 or less	2,445	89.8%	402	75.7%	304	54.8%	3,151	82.7%
9	127	4.7%	32	6.0%	177	31.9%	336	8.8%
10	66	2.4%	27	5.1%	38	6.8%	131	3.4%
11	47	1.7%	32	6.0%	22	4.0%	101	2.7%
12	37	1.4%	38	7.2%	14	2.5%	89	2.3%
Grand Total	2,722	100.0%	531	100.0%	555	100.0%	3,808	100.0%

Table C3 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their final enrollment location.

Table C3. 2025 4-Year Cohort Status by Final Enrollment Location

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
Cohort High School	2,618	96.2%	419	78.9%	522	94.1%	3,559	93.5%
OPS Program	89	3.3%	91	17.1%	18	3.2%	198	5.2%
Non-OPS Program	15	0.6%	21	4.0%	15	2.7%	51	1.3%
Grand Total	2,722	100.0%	531	100.0%	555	100.0%	3,808	100.0%

Table C4 describes the proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who were enrolled in the same cohort school for four years that graduated, were still enrolled, and who dropped out by their cohort school. Out of 3,140 cohort students, 60.0% (1,883) were in the same cohort school for four years. Graduates were much more likely to be enrolled in the same cohort school for four years compared to the still enrolled students and students who dropped out.

Table C4. Percent of 2025 4-Year Cohort Enrolled at the Same Cohort School for 4-Years (Using Final Enrollment in Each Year) who Graduated, were Still Enrolled, or Dropped Out

	Graduate	Still Enrolled	Dropout	Total
Benson	69.3%	30.0%	14.3%	52.7%
Bryan	79.7%	45.2%	6.7%	66.1%
Burke	70.1%	30.8%	21.9%	59.2%
Central	78.8%	48.7%	12.8%	66.3%
North	66.8%	34.2%	11.1%	52.3%
Northwest	68.4%	28.1%	20.5%	54.9%
South	84.6%	45.8%	10.0%	62.2%
Grand Total	75.3%	37.6%	12.6%	60.0%

Note: Data for Westview and Buena Vista are not shown or included in the rates. As newly established schools in 2022-23, their 2025 graduates did not have a full 4-year enrollment period.

Table C5 describes the proportion of students that graduated, were still enrolled, and who dropped out within the 2025 4-year cohort who were enrolled in the same cohort school for four years by their cohort school. This table only includes 1,883 students who were enrolled in the same cohort school for four years out of the 3,140 students in the cohort. More than 87% of students enrolled in the same cohort school for four years graduated on time.

Table C5. Percent of Students who Graduated, were Still Enrolled, or Dropped Out in the 2025 4-Year Cohort who were Enrolled at Cohort School for 4-Years (Using Final Enrollment in Each Year)

	Same School Four Years							
	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Total	
Benson	167	84.8%	21	10.7%	9	4.6%	197	100.0%
Bryan	208	90.4%	19	8.3%	3	1.3%	230	100.0%
Burke	195	87.8%	20	9.0%	7	3.2%	222	100.0%
Central	402	89.1%	37	8.2%	12	2.7%	451	100.0%
North	183	84.7%	26	12.0%	7	3.2%	216	100.0%
Northwest	154	86.0%	16	8.9%	9	5.0%	179	100.0%
South	340	87.6%	33	8.5%	15	3.9%	388	100.0%
Grand Total	1,649	87.6%	172	9.1%	62	3.3%	1,883	100.0%

Note: Data for Westview and Buena Vista are not shown or included in the rates. As newly established schools in 2022-23, their 2025 graduates did not have a full 4-year enrollment period.

Table C6 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their attendance rate in 9th grade.

Table C6. 2025 4-Year Cohort 9th Grade Attendance Rate by Cohort Status (Only Students Enrolled in 9th Grade)

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
Not Chronic	855	34.7%	50	12.7%	38	8.3%	943	28.4%
At Risk	695	28.2%	43	10.9%	62	13.5%	800	24.1%
Chronically Absent	916	37.1%	300	76.3%	359	78.2%	1,575	47.5%
Grand Total	2,466	100.0%	393	100.0%	459	100.0%	3,318	100.0%

Table C7 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their free and reduced lunch status.

Table C7. 2025 4-Year Cohort Free and Reduced Lunch Status by Cohort Status

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
Eligible	1,305	47.9%	328	61.8%	271	48.8%	1,904	50.0%
Not Eligible	1,417	52.1%	203	38.2%	284	51.2%	1,904	50.0%
Grand Total	2,722	100.0%	531	100.0%	555	100.0%	3,808	100.0%

Table C8 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their race and ethnicity.

Table C8. 2025 4-Year Cohort Race and Ethnicity by Cohort Status

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
AM/PI*	17	0.6%	13	2.4%	3	0.5%	33	0.9%
Asian	174	6.4%	25	4.7%	33	5.9%	232	6.1%
Black or African American	668	24.5%	156	29.4%	72	13.0%	896	23.5%
Hispanic or Latino	1,104	40.6%	235	44.3%	356	64.1%	1,695	44.5%
Two or More Races	130	4.8%	29	5.5%	22	4.0%	181	4.8%
White	629	23.1%	73	13.7%	69	12.4%	771	20.2%
Grand Total	2,722	100.0%	531	100.0%	555	100.0%	3,808	100.0%

Table C9 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their EL status.

Table C9. 2025 4-Year Cohort EL Status by Cohort Status

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
English Learner	282	10.4%	129	24.3%	300	54.1%	711	18.7%
Not English Learner	2,440	89.6%	402	75.7%	255	45.9%	3,097	81.3%
Grand Total	2,722	100.0%	531	100.0%	555	100.0%	3,808	100.0%

Table C10 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their IEP status.

Table C10. 2025 4-Year Cohort IEP Status by Cohort Status

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
Students with IEP	324	11.9%	211	39.7%	64	11.5%	599	15.7%
Students without IEP	2,398	88.1%	320	60.3%	491	88.5%	3,209	84.3%
Grand Total	2,722	100.0%	531	100.0%	555	100.0%	3,808	100.0%

Table C11 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2025 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by the number of years they have been in a US school prior to their expected graduation.

Table C11. 2025 4-Year Cohort Years in US School Prior to Expected Graduation by Cohort Status

	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Grand Total	
0-2	15	0.6%	35	6.6%	19	3.4%	69	1.8%
>2-4	89	3.3%	51	9.6%	207	37.3%	347	9.1%
>4-6	28	1.0%	2	0.4%	12	2.2%	42	1.1%
>6-8	37	1.4%	4	0.8%	14	2.5%	55	1.4%
>8-10	81	3.0%	10	1.9%	19	3.4%	110	2.9%
>10	985	36.2%	126	23.7%	103	18.6%	1,214	31.9%
No Entry Date	1,487	54.6%	303	57.1%	181	32.6%	1,971	51.8%
Grand Total	2,722	100.0%	531	100.0%	555	100.0%	3,808	100.0%

Appendix D: Additional Charts

Figure D1. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

