



**THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL**

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, & ASSESSMENT

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RESEARCH STUDY: FY25 DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES COLLEGE MATRICULATION SUMMARY

May 31, 2026

The District has received the FY25 high school graduates' college matriculation data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).¹ The Department of Research, Evaluation, & Assessment (DREA) has performed a preliminary analysis of college enrollment for students who graduated from the District between FY21 and FY25², persistence rates³ for students who graduated from the District between FY20 and FY24, and degree completion for students who graduated between FY18 and FY21.

This document provides an analysis of college enrollment, including the District graduates' college enrollment by year, institution type, and student demographics. To gain an understanding of middle and high school student achievement impact on college enrollment, the relationships with grade 8 Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) achievement and high school SAT scores are also examined. The report also details enrollment, persistence, and completion rates at the most popular postsecondary institutions ⁴ for the District's high school graduates.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

General Enrollment Trends FY21 Through FY25

- Fifty-seven percent of District graduates in FY25 enrolled in a postsecondary institution in the fall after graduation. This represents a slight one-percentage-point decrease from FY24 (58%) and FY23 (58%) (Table 1)⁵, and the same as FY21 (57%).
- Despite the slight dip in the enrollment rate for FY25, the total number of graduates enrolled reached a five-year high of 7975 students, driven by a significant increase in the total number of District graduates (14,010).
- From FY21 to FY24, the percent of District graduates attending a postsecondary institution (57% - 59%) remained consistently lower than the enrollment rates of national high school graduates during the same period of (61% - 63%) (Table 1).⁶ National high school data are not yet available for FY25 graduates.

¹ The summarized data as reported by the NSC and may differ from the graduate counts from the Florida Department of Education because some students request their enrollment and/or degree records to be blocked from sharing.

² Graduates is defined as end-of-year grade 12 students who earned a standard diploma (which does not include special diplomas or GEDs).

³ Persistence rate is the percentage of fall enrolled students who return to college at any institution for their second year.

⁴ Postsecondary institutions refer to colleges and universities.

⁵ The overall enrollment changes may be impacted by colleges and universities that have withdrawn from the NSC or some students' enrollment and/or degree records are blocked at the student's request.

⁶ Reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.htm>

Table 1. Number and percent of District graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation

Year	Number of District Graduates	Number of Graduates Enrolled in College	Percent of Graduates Enrolled in College	National High School ⁷
FY25	14,010	7,975	57%	NA
FY24	13,740	7,888	58%	63%
FY23	12,898	7,539	58%	61%
FY22	12,506	7,401	59%	62%
FY21	13,126	7,419	57%	62%

Note: The college enrollment may be impacted by NSC Institution inclusion rate for the year or students electing to block enrollment records.

- For each cohort from FY21 to FY24, the percentage enrolled in the first year increased by 7 - 9 percentage points relative to the fall, with small additional increases in the second and third years (Table 2).

Table 2. Percent of District graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions for the first time in the fall and for the first time in the following four years^{8,9}

Year	Percent Enrolled in Fall	Percent Enrolled by the end of First Year	Percent Enrolled in the Second Year	Percent Enrolled in the Third Year	Percent Enrolled in the Fourth Year	Total Percent*
FY25	57%	NA	NA	NA	NA	57%
FY24	58%	66%	3%	NA	NA	69%
FY23	58%	67%	4%	2%	NA	73%
FY22	59%	68%	4%	2%	1%	75%
FY21	57%	64%	5%	2%	1%	72%

Note: NA indicates no data available. * Total percent may differ due to rounding.

- FY25 graduates' public college enrollment rate (51%) dipped slightly from FY22 (53%) through FY24 (52%), yet remained higher than the FY21 rate (50%) (Table 3). Meanwhile, private college enrollment held steady (Table 4), consistently hovering between 5% and 6% across all five years. Similarly, enrollment rate at in-state colleges decreased slightly from FY22 to FY24 but remained higher than in FY21 (Table 4).

⁷ "National High School" refers to national high school graduates between age 16 to 24 as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor.

⁸ Graduates are defined as Grade 12 students who earned a standard diploma (which does not include special diplomas or GEDs). College enrollment does not include students who joined the military after graduation.

⁹ Fall is defined as anytime during the calendar year of graduation (e.g., May to December); the first year is the graduated year's May to next year July; the second year is August to next July, etc.

Table 3. Number and percent of District graduates enrolled in public and private institutions in the fall after graduation

Year	Number of District Graduates	Number Enrolled in a Public College	Percent Enrolled in a Public College	Number Enrolled in a Private College	Percent Enrolled in a Private College
FY25	14,010	7,160	51%	815	6%
FY24	13,740	7,205	52%	734	5%
FY23	12,898	6,709	52%	830	6%
FY22	12,506	6,633	53%	768	6%
FY21	13,126	6,570	50%	849	6%

Table 4. Number and percent of District graduates enrolled in an in-state and out-of-state postsecondary institution in the fall after graduation

Year	Number of District Graduates	Number Enrolled in an In-State College	Percent Enrolled in an In-State College	Number Enrolled in an Out-of-State College	Percent Enrolled in an Out-of-State College
FY25	14,010	7,135	51%	840	6%
FY24	13,740	7,167	52%	772	6%
FY23	12,898	6,706	52%	833	6%
FY22	12,506	6,584	53%	817	7%
FY21	13,126	6,605	50%	814	6%

Table 5. Number and percent of District graduates enrolled in two and four-year postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation¹⁰

Year	Number of District Graduates	Number Enrolled in a Two-Year College	Percent Enrolled in a Two-Year College	Number Enrolled in a Four-Year College	Percent Enrolled in a Four-Year College
FY25	14,010	235	2%	7,740	55%
FY24	13,740	283	2%	7,656	56%
FY23	12,898	257	2%	7,282	56%
FY22	12,506	239	2%	7,162	57%
FY21	13,126	242	2%	7,177	55%

Enrollment by Student Demographics

- A persistent enrollment gap remains between Female (63%) and Male (50%) graduates in FY25. While Female enrollment is two percentage point lower than FY24, Male enrollment has slightly declined by three percentage points since its FY22 peak (53%).

¹⁰ The NSC has classified Palm Beach State College (formerly Palm Beach Community College) as a four-year institution for all years in this analysis.

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- White graduates (71%) continue to enroll at higher rates than Black (52%) and Hispanic (47%) graduates. While Black enrollment has stabilized since FY24, Hispanic enrollment saw a 3-point drop in the last year. Notably, the White-Hispanic gap widened to 24% in FY25, while the White-Black gap (19%) remains slightly narrower than its FY21 level (20%).
- Special Populations: ESE enrollment (38%) remains a high point, maintaining a 4-point increase over FY21 (34%). In contrast, ELL enrollment dropped to a five-year low of 28%, a significant decrease from the 40% seen in FY22. FRL enrollment (47%) also saw a slight decline of 2 percentage points from the previous year.

Table 6. Number of graduates and percent enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation by demographic groups

Group	FY25		FY24		FY23		FY22		FY21	
	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct
ALL	14,010	57%	13,740	58%	12,898	58%	12,506	59%	13,126	57%
FRL	7163	47%	8091	49%	7,300	49%	7,127	50%	8,203	48%
ESE	1823	38%	2010	38%	1,828	36%	1,694	37%	1,642	34%
ELL	2278	28%	1456	34%	1,182	35%	1,076	40%	1,307	33%
Female	7215	63%	6963	65%	6,587	64%	6,430	65%	6,663	63%
Male	6795	50%	6777	51%	6,311	52%	6,076	53%	6,463	50%
Black	3900	52%	3623	52%	3,463	54%	3,235	55%	3,528	49%
Hispanic	5126	47%	4978	50%	4,407	49%	4,120	51%	4,310	48%
White	4057	71%	4244	69%	4,173	70%	4,324	68%	4,308	69%

College Choice

For all years, Palm Beach State College (PBSC) has been the most common college choice for District graduates (Table 7). In FY25, Enrollment at PBSC has decreased by 1 percentage point to 23% relative to the FY24 enrollment of 24%.

Table 7. Number and percent enrolled in the five most frequently attended colleges/ universities in the fall after graduation

Institution	FY25		FY24		FY23		FY22		FY21	
	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct
Palm Beach State College	3,179	23%	3,265	24%	2,938	23%	2,932	23%	2,739	21%
Florida Atlantic University	714	5%	826	6%	854	7%	843	7%	882	7%
University of Central Florida	657	5%	613	5%	615	5%	557	5%	502	4%
University of Florida	528	4%	544	4%	554	4%	514	4%	545	4%
Florida State University	378	3%	334	2%	330	3%	354	3%	510	4%

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Student Achievement and College Enrollment

- For FY25, students scoring below 400 in Reading decreased by 2 percentage points (from 27% in FY24 to 25% in FY25). Similarly, the Math cohort below 400 saw a 5-point drop, falling from 36% to 31%. Enrollment for the 400–499 and 500–599 score groups increased by 2 to 4 percentage points (for both Reading and Math) over the previous year. Performance in the highest brackets (600–800 for both SAT Reading and Math) remained stable and consistent with FY24 levels.

Table 8. Number of District graduates and percent enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation by SAT Reading score

Score Range	FY25		FY24		FY23		FY22		FY21	
	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct
1 - 399	2,295	25%	1,422	27%	901	29%	796	31%	1,032	22%
400 - 499	3,644	49%	4,439	45%	4,545	44%	4,176	49%	4,638	44%
500 - 599	3,633	72%	3,899	70%	3,828	69%	3,677	69%	3,681	69%
600 - 800	3,107	88%	2,990	87%	2,870	87%	2,695	83%	2,799	85%

Table 9. Number of District graduates and percent enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation by SAT Math score

Score Range	FY25		FY24		FY23		FY22		FY21	
	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct
1 - 399	3,067	31%	3,241	36%	2,603	35%	2,138	39%	2,522	32%
400 - 499	4,386	57%	4,007	53%	4,038	51%	3,892	54%	4,139	50%
500 - 599	2,804	77%	3,430	74%	3,444	75%	3,376	74%	3,484	73%
600 - 800	2,133	90%	2,072	90%	2,059	88%	1,938	86%	2,004	87%

- Table 10 demonstrates a correlation between 8th-grade (7th-grade for FY24) Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) English Language Arts (ELA)¹¹ scores and postsecondary enrollment. Graduates achieving Level 4 or 5 had the highest enrollment rates (71%-89%). In FY25, these rates reached new peaks, with Level 4 at 79% and Level 5 at 89. Those scoring Level 1 had the lowest (31%-35%). Graduates at Level 2 enrolled at rates of 49%-53%.
- Similarly, Table 11 shows a comparable trend for 8th-grade (7th-grade for FY24) FSA Math scores. Graduates scoring Level 4 or 5 had college enrollment rates of 67%-88%, Level 1 graduates enrolled at 32%-39%, and Level 2 graduates at 44%-52%.
- Overall, college enrollment rates for FY25 graduates were higher among level 4 and 5 students compared to FY24.

¹¹ For FY24 graduates, 7th FSA ELA and Math's levels were used in place of the concealed 8th –grade FSA exams from FY2020.

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Table 10. Number of District graduates and percent enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation by Grade 8 state assessment FSA ELA Level

Score Range	FY25		FY24		FY23		FY22		FY21	
	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct
Level 1	2,108	33%	1,883	33%	1,606	31%	1,461	35%	1,790	31%
Level 2	2,130	53%	2,367	50%	2,002	49%	1,958	50%	2,230	49%
Level 3	2,660	64%	2,402	64%	2,795	63%	2,653	63%	2,578	62%
Level 4	1,997	79%	2,175	76%	2,365	76%	2,147	71%	2,108	73%
Level 5	1,261	89%	1,479	86%	1,450	84%	1,742	81%	1,569	82%

Table 11. Number of District graduates and percent enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation by Grade 8 state assessment Math Level

Score Range	FY25		FY24*		FY23*		FY23*		FY21*	
	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct
Level 1	2,877	39%	1,961	38%	1,536	34%	1,327	36%	1,574	32%
Level 2	1,637	52%	1,622	47%	1,331	45%	1,325	49%	1,492	44%
Level 3	2,581	66%	2,431	57%	2,523	56%	2,555	56%	2,614	58%
Level 4	1,554	78%	1,832	71%	2,018	70%	2,047	69%	2,093	67%
Level 5	1,632	87%	2,491	85%	2,880	83%	2,796	79%	2,622	80%

* Note: Since FY20, grade 8 FSA Math was not required for grade 8; the students might take Algebra EOC or Geometry EOC. The summary is based on the highest performance level the students received. Also, for FY24, grade 7's highest math score level was used.

Persistence Rate: FY20 to FY24 Cohorts

- For FY24, the District persistence rate was 84% which was increased from FY20 (+3%).
- Across years, the persistence rate¹² for District graduates enrolled in college was higher than the National persistence rate (Table 12), While the District outperformed or matched the National '20 and Under' benchmark from FY20 to FY22, it fell slightly below that specific average in FY23 (83% compared to 85%).

Table 12. First - Year persistence rate for the District high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions

Cohort Year	District Enrolled Count	District Persistence Rate	National Persistence Rate	National 20 (age) and under* Persistence Rate
FY24	7,982	84%	NA	NA
FY23	7,580	83%	78%	85%
FY22	7,556	81%	77%	81%
FY21	7,533	81%	76%	80%
FY20	7,734	81%	75%	79%

* National Persistence Rate is from NSC <https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention/>

¹² Persistence rate is the percentage of fall college enrolled students who return to college at any institution for their second year.

Degree Completion

- Table 13 shows for both the FY18 and FY19 cohorts, 61% of students completed a degree or certificate within six years. These figures were identical to the National completion rate (61%) for those same years. While the completion rate for the FY20 cohort saw an increase to 63%, early data for the FY21 cohort shows a completion rate of 58%, which is expected to rise as more students finish their programs.
- The Bachelor's degree remains the most common highest degree completed (41% for FY18 and FY19). This trend continued upward with the FY20 cohort at 45%, while 40% of the FY21 cohort has already completed a Bachelor's degree to date.
- For FY20 cohort, by the end of year 2025, about 58% have completed AA or BA degree (Table 13).
- In total, for the FY18 and FY19 cohorts, within six years, 46% graduates received at least one bachelor's degree, and 24% completed at least one associate degree (Table 14). Notably, the percentage of graduates receiving a Bachelor's degree saw a further increase to 48% for the FY20 cohort.

Table 13. Count FY18 to FY21 for the District high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions and degree completion rate

Cohort Year	Count	Percent for MA, BA or AA Degree or Other	Percent for Highest Degree with Other	Percent for Highest Degree with AA	Percent for Highest Degree with BA	Percent for Highest Degree with MA and Above	National Degree Completion Rate for MA, BA or AA or Certificate
FY21	7,396	58%	1%	14%	40%	2%	
FY20	7,708	63%	2%	13%	45%	4%	NA
FY19	8,550	61%	2%	13%	41%	4%	61%
FY18	8,405	61%	2%	13%	41%	5%	61%

Note: NA denotes "not available". With any of the Degrees,

- Other - Received Certificate or other Diploma as the Highest Degree
- AA - Received Associate's Degree as the Highest Degree
- BA - Received Bachelor's Degree as the Highest Degree
- MA and Above - Received Master's Degree and above as the Highest Degree
- FY18 and FY19 are six - year degree completion; other are the completion by the end of 2025

Table 14. Count FY18 to FY21 for the District high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions and all degree completion rate

Cohort Year	Count	Percent for Completed Degree with Other	Percent for Completed Degree with AA	Percent for Completed Degree with BA	Percent for Highest Degree with MA and Above
FY21	7,396	5%	19%	41%	2%
FY20	7,708	7%	23%	48%	4%
FY19	8,550	6%	24%	46%	4%
FY18	8,405	6%	24%	46%	5%

Note: NA denotes “not available”. With any of the Degrees,

- Other - Received Certificate or other Diploma
- AA - Received Associate’s Degree
- BA - Received Bachelor’s Degree
- MA and Above - Received Master’s Degree and above
- FY18 and FY19 are six - year degree completion; other are the completion by the end of 2025

In summary, the percentage of District FY25 graduates who enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall after graduation is one percentage decreased from FY24 and FY23, and the same as FY21. The enrollment gaps between White and Black, and White and Hispanic students in FY25 increased compared to FY24 and FY23. The enrollment for higher-achieving students on the SAT or grade 8 FSA (grade 7 for FY24) in FY25 increased or remained similar to FY24, while the enrollment for lower-achieving students on the SAT decreased from FY24.

The FY24 persistence rate is slightly increased from previous years (FY20 to FY23). The persistence rates for District graduates enrolled in college was higher than the National persistence rate.

FY17 and FY18 graduates who completed a degree in six years was similar to the National completion rate.

NEXT STEPS

Overall, for FY25 District graduates, the postsecondary enrollment was one-percentage-point decrease from FY24 and FY23 (both are 58%), and the same as FY21. Despite the slight dip in the enrollment rate for FY25, the total number of graduates enrolled reached a five-year high of 7,975 students, driven by a significant increase in the total number of District graduates (14,010).

The District High School Graduates’ College Matriculation [Dashboard](#) provides summaries of college enrollment, persistence rates and degree completion by District high schools.¹³ Comparison to the District schools and National Benchmarks are also included. With this in mind and the information provided in the summary and dashboard, staff are urged to reflect on the following questions:

1. How does college enrollment compare to the prior year? The last five years? What trends do you see? How do they compare to the National Benchmarks?

¹³ Navigation to the dashboard from the District Webpage: The School District of Palm Beach County - > About Us - > Reports and Publications - > Tests/Survey Reports - > District Outcomes -> College Matriculation

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2. How does college persistent rate compare to the prior year? The last five years? What trends do you see? How do they compare to the National Benchmarks?
3. How does college completion rate compare to the District overall and National Benchmarks?
4. Do high school graduates meeting college readiness benchmarks enroll in college?
5. What are we doing to monitor students beginning in grade 9 and tracking them to college enrollment?

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