

CONNECTING A DISJOINTED SYSTEM: A FIRST LOOK AT ALIGNING EDUCATION IN ALASKA

By G. Williamson McDiarmid and Alexandra Hill

We've heard it before, but it's still true: too many Alaska students don't have the skills they need to move on to the next stage of education or to get good jobs. Too many drop out of high school, and too few of those who graduate go on to college or other post-secondary education—and among those who do go on to post-secondary education, many don't graduate within four or even six years.

Employers report that young people entering the work world directly after they graduate from high school (or right after they drop out) don't have the reading, writing, and math skills necessary for many of today's jobs, even entry-level ones.

Alaska is not alone in these problems, but the high-school dropout rate is higher than the U.S. average and fewer graduates go to college. A third of Alaska's high-school students don't even graduate, and only about a third graduate and start college right away (Figure 1).

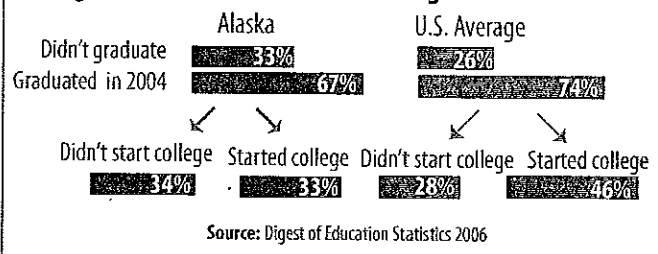
Many states have begun to address these problems by looking at education *alignment*—that is, coordinating the policies, programs, and mechanisms needed to support students as they move through the system from pre-school to elementary and high school and on to higher education or work.

Ideally, education levels would be coordinated so all students were prepared for the next step. In practice, many students—from kindergarten through college, vocational training, or work—enter without the knowledge and skills their teachers, professors, or employers expect. The students and their families are often frustrated that—despite indications to the contrary—they haven't been prepared for the next level. This frustration contributes significantly to the high dropout rates in both high school and college.

This publication summarizes a longer paper on the scope of alignment problems in Alaska and identifies areas where more research is needed or there are no data at all. It concludes with suggestions about steps the state should consider for improving alignment.

To move toward alignment, educators would synchronize their learning goals, curricula, and expectations. K-12 and early-childhood educators would agree on the skills children need entering kindergarten and first grade and how best to assess those skills. Likewise, businesses, higher education institutions, and schools would jointly determine the skills required for high-school graduates entering the workforce or college. To ensure that policies and resources supported such alignment, policymakers would need to collaborate in the process, working with educators from various education levels.

Figure 1. Students Who Started High School in 2000



TRANSITIONING TO SCHOOL: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

We'll talk first about early childhood education—that is, education children receive before entering kindergarten. This is important, because several longitudinal studies have shown that children who receive high-quality early education are less likely to need special education or drop out, and as adults earn more and are less likely to commit crimes and receive welfare.

Alaska is one of only 12 states with no state-funded early education. It has federally mandated special education pre-school and federally funded Head Start programs in many communities. These programs together enroll about 16% of Alaska's 3-year-olds and 22% of 4-year-olds. Many more students in urban areas are enrolled in private pre-schools.

Overall, about two-thirds of Alaska children attend some sort of pre-school, according to the 2007 State Preschool Yearbook. But there is little information on how well these various programs prepare students to enter school.

How Many Alaska Children Aren't Ready for School?

The main source of data on Alaska children's readiness for school is the Developmental Profile. Teachers administer this assessment when children enroll for the first time in public school, usually kindergarten but sometimes first grade. The profile includes information on many aspects of development—physical and social, language and literacy, and cognitive.

Teachers rate children as "routinely," "inconsistently," or "never" exhibiting 11 measures of school readiness.

Data from recent profiles show that fewer than 5% of children rate "no" in physical well-being and social development. But about 10% fail to demonstrate the requisite skills in each of the areas of language and literacy development and cognitive development. Between 20% and 50% demonstrate these behaviors "inconsistently."

These statewide results mask wide variations among districts. In many, more than one-third of entering students don't meet some of the readiness measures, and in a few 60% or more don't. Those districts lose valuable time trying to catch children up, and some children never catch up.

What are the Limits of the Data?

We don't know how effective Head Start programs are. Some school districts with communities served by Head Start have Developmental Profile results similar to the state average, while in others the majority of children are rated as deficient on one or more measures. Little research has been done on what approaches are most effective for preparing Alaska Native children for school. Also, we lack data on the extent to which Head Start grantees coordinate with local school districts or with each other.

Districts report Developmental Profile results to the state without identifying individual children. Although the profile is a useful tool for teachers and parents, the lack of identifying information means the data cannot be disaggregated by student characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status. Therefore, the profiles are not useful for tracking efforts to improve Alaska children's school readiness or for exploring the effectiveness of different programs.

TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE OR WORK

What is the Issue?

Many Alaska high-school students graduate unprepared for post-secondary education or work. Alaska's colleges and universities find that many of their entering students—even those with good grades in high school—aren't ready for college-level work.

A 2006 national survey of 431 employers, published by Partnership for 21st Century Skills, reported that 42.4% of the respondents rated new entrants with high-school diplomas as "deficient" in their overall preparation for the entry-level jobs they typically fill, and 45.6% rated their preparation as "adequate." Almost no one (0.2%) rated their preparation as "excellent." Anecdotal information from Alaska employers suggests that Alaska's high-school graduates are no different from their counterparts Outside.

Available data also indicate that many of Alaska's high-school graduates are not prepared for college—but even within Alaska, what constitutes "prepared" can differ among institutions.

How Prepared Are Students for College?

The majority of Alaska students who enroll in college in the state go to one of the three University of Alaska campuses—Fairbanks (UAF), Anchorage (UAA), or Southeast (UAS). All three require students to demonstrate they're prepared for introductory level courses in English and math, through previous test scores (such as the SAT) or university placement tests.

Some requirements are similar across all campuses, but others are quite different. Table 1 shows (in abbreviated form) requirements to place into

TABLE 1. PREREQUISITES FOR ENGLISH 111 AT UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

CAMPUS	ACT	SAT	ACCUPLACER*	OTHER
UAF	17	430	Not mentioned	COMPASS (52) ASSET (45) HS GPA 3.0 or higher and permission
UAA	22	530	180 combined reading and sentence skills, including at ≥85 reading, >=95 sentence skills	
UAS	n/a	n/a	454 combined essay, reading, sentence skills, including >=92 in both reading and sentence skills	Not mentioned

*Accuplacer scoring is not a simple cut-off score, but rather a set of minimum total score and subtest scores, simplified here for comparison.

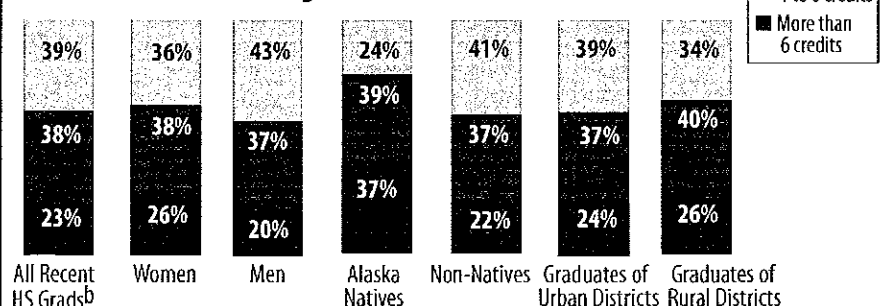
"freshman level" English. The information in the table raises two issues. First, it's neither easy to find nor to interpret. While academic advisors at the universities certainly know and can explain the requirements, prospective students, their parents, and teachers may be unable to get any clear sense of the actual skills and knowledge students need, or how they will demonstrate their proficiency. The other notable point is the difference in SAT/ACT scores required for entry into English 111 at UAA and UAF: SAT of 530 versus 430, ACT of 22 versus 17. That means students must score a bit above the mean (about 59th percentile) at UAA, but in the 20th to 30th percentile range at UAF.

Students assessed as unprepared are directed into "developmental" courses—which often don't count towards their degrees.

Data available at UAA allow us to see how many entering students had to take developmental courses. Among recent high school graduates enrolling at UAA for the first time, 60% take at least one developmental course. Almost one-quarter take more than 6 credits of developmental courses (Figure 2).

This analysis includes all students who enrolled at UAA for the first time in the fall semesters from 1998 through 2007. Further, we focused on "recent high-school graduates," defined as those who had graduated from high school either the same year as they enrolled at UAA or one year earlier. Thus, for example, students entering in fall semester 2007 were considered recent graduates if they had graduated in 2007 or 2006. Over the 10 fall semesters we examined, 15,713 recent high-school graduates enrolled.

Figure 2. Developmental Course Credits Taken by Recent High-School Graduates at UAA^a



^a Students who enrolled at UAA for the first time in fall semesters 1998 to 2007

^b Those who graduated from high school either the same year or one year before they enrolled at UAA

Source: UAA Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment

We disaggregated the data on recent high-school graduates to look at the numbers of Alaska Natives and non-Natives, men and women, and graduates of urban or rural Alaska high schools. Ethnicity was self-reported. Urban graduates are those who graduated from high schools in the Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Mat-Su or Kenai school districts; rural graduates are those from all the other districts. (About 15% of recent graduates were from other states or countries, or the location of their high school was unknown.)

It's worth emphasizing that all but one of these sub-groups averaged high-school grade point averages (GPAs) of 3.0 or better. Men's average GPA was 2.98. We looked at the number of developmental credits these students took, categorizing these as none, 1 to 6 credits, or more than 6 credits.

Figure 2 shows that men are somewhat less likely to take developmental courses than women and to take fewer credits if they do. This may mean that men score better on placement tests (despite their slightly lower GPAs), or that they disproportionately enroll in programs that don't require college-level English or math (e.g., certificate programs in vocational fields). It's also possible that they are more likely to find ways around enrolling in recommended developmental course work—such as getting the professor's permission to enter a college-level course.

Alaska Natives are about 30% more likely than non-Natives to take at least one developmental course, and about 70% more likely to take more than 6 developmental credits. Graduates of rural high schools are somewhat more likely (about 8%) than graduates of urban high schools to take developmental courses.

How do the thousands of UAA students who take developmental courses do? Unfortunately, they're not highly successful. Overall, recent high school graduates pass just over half the developmental courses they attempt (Figure 3). Women are more successful than men and non-Natives more successful than Alaska Natives. There is little difference between students from urban and rural high schools.

How Prepared are High-School Graduates for Work?

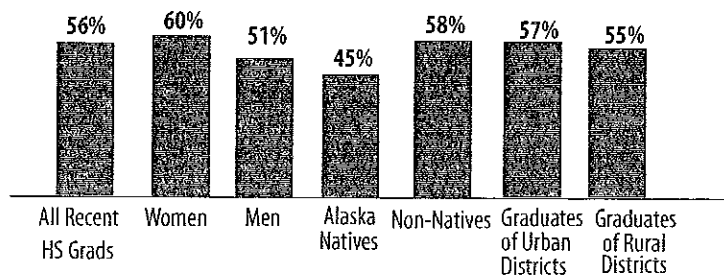
Alaska's students may graduate from high school unprepared for today's careers as well as for college. Although we lack comprehensive data for the state, we do know that employers often report they can't find qualified applicants for their openings. They also report that many of today's technical careers require as much mathematics or writing as entry-level college work.

A 2003 report on vocational education in Alaska noted that as accountability mandates and high-stakes testing were instituted between 1997 and 2003, the resources available for and participation in career and technical education in secondary schools declined. But no systematic data are available on how well prepared Alaska high-school graduates are to enter the workforce.

Do Current Requirements Prepare Students?

We've reported evidence that many of Alaska's students leave school unprepared for either college or work. But since many of these students did graduate from high school, does that imply that meeting the current graduation standards isn't enough to prepare students for college or work?

Figure 3. Percent of Recent Alaska High-School graduates Who Passed Developmental Courses They Took (By Course Type and Credit)



See Notes, Figure 2. Source: UAA Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment

Alaska's state standards in English and math stop at the 10th grade level; science standards include 11th grade. The High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE) is also the 10th grade level Standards-Based Assessment. Most districts require, in addition to the HSGQE, specific courses for graduation, without specifying the expectations of those courses. Others require students to demonstrate a particular level of proficiency in several areas.

The published high-school graduation requirements of the districts we reviewed (Anchorage, Bristol Bay, Aleutians East, Lake and Peninsula, Northwest Arctic, North Slope and Chugach) didn't make it clear whether those requirements went beyond the state's 10th grade standards. Although it was beyond the scope of this study to review all 53 districts in the state, we interviewed superintendents of four districts (Chugach, Aleutians East, Lake and Peninsula and Bristol Bay) and four principals in two of those districts. We asked them about their academic expectations for 11th and 12th graders, and whether they believed their graduation requirements ensured that graduates would be to be prepared for post-secondary education, job training, or work.

The superintendents and principals expect 11th and 12th graders to have passed the HSGQE and to be on track to graduate. They also expect those students to begin focusing on preparing themselves either for college or for work. They emphasized that students need to go beyond the graduation requirements to be fully prepared for college or work.

Some districts reported that teachers tell their students the minimum graduation level of work is equivalent to about 10th grade and will not prepare them for college-level coursework. And all the respondents said students have opportunities to learn far more than the minimum—and that too few students take advantage of those opportunities.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reviewing national research and available data on Alaska, we see that:

- Up to one-third of Alaska children enter the public schools with no pre-school experience.
- In some school districts, more than half the entering children don't demonstrate all dimensions of school readiness educators expect to see.

- Research predicts that these students are more likely to need special education services and to drop out of high school.
- In the small sample of districts we canvassed, just meeting the high-school graduation requirements does not guarantee graduates that they are prepared for college or for technical training.
- Many high-school graduates who do enroll in Alaska universities find they are not prepared for college-level work.
- Employers report that they find many recent high-school graduates unprepared to embark on careers.

To address these problems—especially lack of alignment—effectively will require coordinated efforts among parents, educators, policymakers, and researchers. One approach that many states (30 as of 2006) are using is formal councils established to address problems from pre-school through college. A review by the Education Commission of the state found that while the specific membership, funding structures, and goals differ, such organizations typically aim to:

- Expand access to early learning for children ages 3 to 5, and improve their readiness for kindergarten
- Smooth student transitions from one level of learning to the next
- Close the achievement gap between white and minority students
- Upgrade teacher education and professional development
- Strengthen relationships between families and schools
- Create a wider range of learning experiences and opportunities for students in the final two years of high school
- Improve college readiness and college success

The commission also reported several states' successes, including reducing achievement gaps, increasing success on advanced placement testing, and raising higher education enrollment.

To be effective, councils need to work within a shared vision of the total system and commit to long-term efforts and real change. Andrea Venezia, a noted education researcher, cautions that, "convening a commission and holding cross-system discussions may be helpful, but these steps alone will not create meaningful K-16 reform. To be lasting and effective, the deliberations must be anchored in policy and finance reform and must reflect each state's culture and history." Any effort that hopes to be successful will have to convene key stakeholders, determine what additional data and analyses are necessary, undertake those research efforts, identify potential solutions, and make recommendations for change.

In our discussion we've identified both problems in the education system and gaps in the Alaska data. What don't we know?

- We need better data on children who enter school unprepared: numbers, areas of unpreparedness, pre-school experience, and progress in elementary school. The new Developmental Profile assessment, aligned with the state's early learning standards, has the potential to provide some of this information, if the Department of Education and Early Development is authorized and funded to link profile information with later student data and analyze it.

- We need better information on dropouts: numbers, demographics, and subsequent educational experiences and GED completion.
- We need to understand what districts expect of their 11th and 12th graders, and how they convey those expectations to students and parents. Do students and parents realize that the minimum graduation requirements will leave graduates unprepared for most post-secondary education and training and for many jobs? Do teachers understand what students need to succeed in college level work?
- We need to consider how to collect data about the success of high school and college graduates. If we want to hold high schools and universities accountable for preparing their students, we must be able to measure how well they do so. The state is creating a data system for tracking students in the public schools, from entry through high school graduation. What's missing is the capability to link P-12 data with university data with workforce data. Legal safeguards on data use present a challenge, but it's not insurmountable.

Finally, we hazard a few recommendations.

1. Alaska should create publicly funded, high-quality early childhood education that would be available to all families but voluntary. That would expand enrollment and help ensure that all students are prepared for kindergarten and first grade. Investing in school readiness will save money in the K-12 system and beyond.
2. We need to ensure that our high-school graduates are prepared for college or careers. Whether this should be through more rigorous high-school graduation requirements, better counseling, increased investments in career and technical education, or some combination of these and other approaches is not clear. But too many of our high-school graduates are unprepared for life.
3. The University of Alaska must be involved. UAF, UAS and UAA should communicate, as a single entity, their academic expectations for entering students. Increases in the number and quality of distance-delivery courses mean that students anywhere in the state can take classes, especially at the introductory level, from any campus. They should be able to do so without discovering they are unprepared for beginning college-level work.
4. The state should support these efforts and muster the resources to overcome the inevitable difficulties. Because change across so many institutions and interests is required, leaders should be prepared to persist over the long haul. Establishing a council to coordinate education at all levels is a step in the right direction.
5. Alaska is ahead of many states in developing its longitudinal student data system. It needs to continue to develop that system and improve links with other data systems.

This summary is based on a longer working paper of the same title. It will be available on ISER's Web site, www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu, under Education Studies. That paper includes full references for research cited here.

The authors thank Gary Rice and Yuan-Fang Dong of UAA's Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment; Diane Erickson of UAA; and the public school superintendents and principals who gave us their time.

Knocking at the College Door

Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

ALASKA

At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates swelled by 35.7 percent. In 2008-09, however, our country will begin a protracted period during which its production of high school graduates is expected to stagnate, assuming existing patterns persist. The number of graduates nationally will dip slightly over the next several years before growth resumes at a slower pace around 2015. Ultimately, projections indicate that between 2004-05 (the last year of available actual data) and 2021-22, the number of high school graduates will grow by approximately 265,000, or 8.6 percent.

The national data obscure significant variations in this picture at the regional and state levels, however. Regionally, in the decade leading up to 2004-05, the number of high school graduates grew the fastest in the West at 34 percent, with the South growing by 23.5 percent, the Northeast by 20.7 percent, and the Midwest by 14.2 percent. But the regions face very different futures in the years to come. The South will see the most growth in its production of high school graduates, at about 9 percent by 2014-15; and the West's numbers will climb by 7.1 percent. But the number of graduates produced in the Northeast and the Midwest will decline – by 6.1 and 3 percent, respectively.

Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15

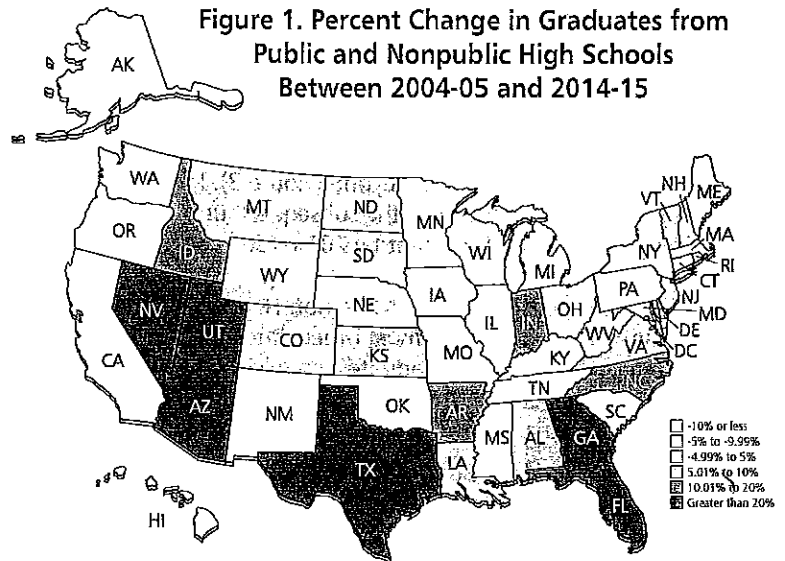
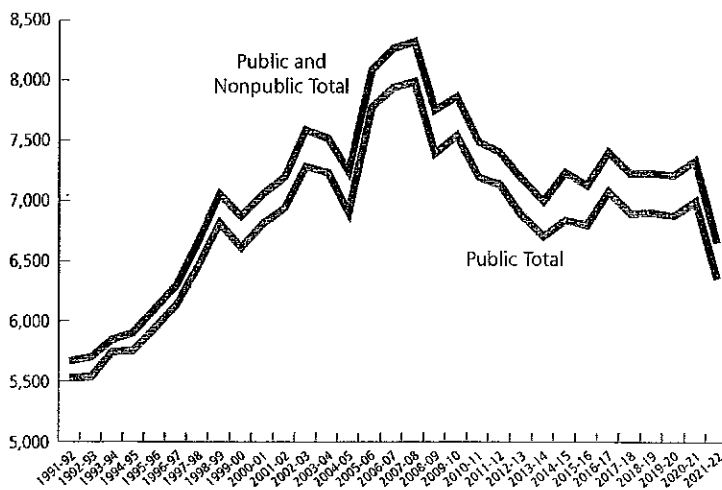


Figure 2. Alaska High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Alaska produced about 1,340 more graduates in 2004 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 22.7 percent, although the state experienced sporadic downturns in some years. Assuming that existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce about an equal number of high school graduates in 2014-15, although the intervening years will be somewhat unstable. The state's production of high school graduates will grow significantly through 2007-08, after which it will see general slippage punctuated by occasional increases over the subsequent six years.

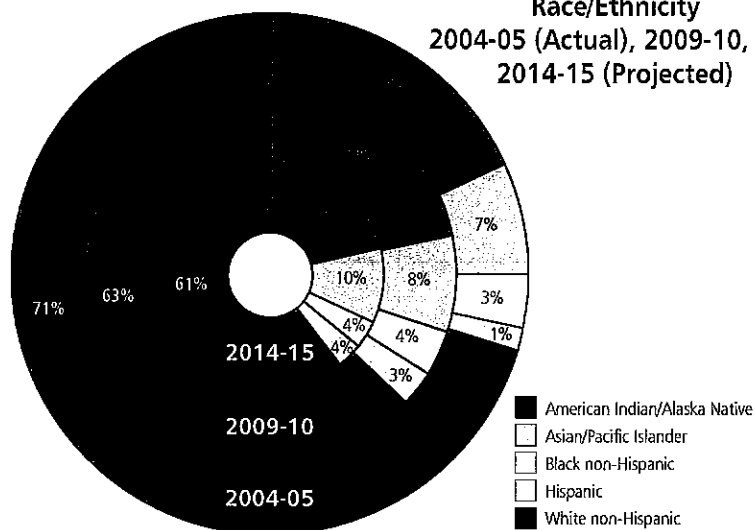
Alaska was among the states with rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data from public schools (Figure 2). In 2004-05, 6,909 students graduated from public high schools in Alaska, a number that included

1,374 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 24.8 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state

added an estimated 332 graduates in 2004-05, which itself was nearly two-and-a-half times more than graduated in 1991-92.

However, along with much of the rest of the nation, Alaska is poised to enter a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth in the production of high school graduates. After reaching a peak in 2007-08 at 8,327, Alaska will enter a period of diminishing numbers of high school graduates for most years through 2013-14, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the number of high school graduates is forecast to climb by 15 percent, but between then and 2013-14, it is projected to slide back by a roughly equal amount. Beyond that, the number of graduates will be relatively stable until 2021-22, the last year projected, when a big drop is anticipated. Alaska's nonpublic sector grew dramatically between 1991-92 and 2004-05 but still only accounts for less than 5 percent of the state's high school graduates.

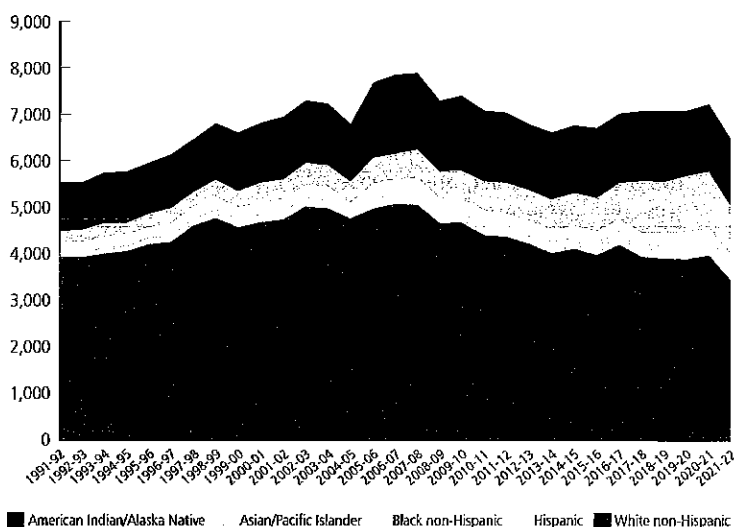
Figure 3. Composition of Alaska's Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 2004-05 (Actual), 2009-10, and 2014-15 (Projected)



The racial/ethnic composition of Alaska's public high school graduating classes will continue to show substantial diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 2004-05, White non-Hispanics accounted for 70 percent of the graduates from public high schools, but the subsequent decade in Alaska will see declines in their share of public high school graduates, reaching down to 60.8 percent by 2014-15.

The decreasing proportion of White non-Hispanic high school graduates is consistent with the experience of states all over the country. But whereas in most other states the sweeping changes are the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates, coupled with a shrinking number of White non-Hispanics in the educational pipeline, in Alaska the increase in the Hispanic population is not a significant factor. While the rate of Hispanics graduating from high school is rising sharply in Alaska, as elsewhere, their relatively low numbers are dwarfed by growth in the Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native populations. (Alaska's population has a larger proportion of those who identify as American Indians/Alaska Natives than does any other state in the nation.) Substantial declines in the number of White non-Hispanic high school graduates are also an important cause of the shifting racial/ethnic composition.

Figure 4. Alaska High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)

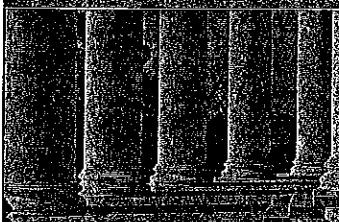


Asian/Pacific Islander graduates from public schools in Alaska numbered 477 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 706, an increase of 47.9 percent (Figure 4). In 2004-05, 1,233 American Indians/Alaska Natives graduated from public high schools in the state; that amount is projected to grow to 1,448 by 2014-15, a climb of 17.4 percent. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see their numbers fall, with projections showing a drop from 4,756 in 2004-05 to 4,110 in 2014-15, or a 13.6 percent decline.

For more information, contact: Dolores Mize, Vice President, Public Policy and Research, 303.541.0221, dmize@wiche.edu; or Brian Prescott, Senior Research Analyst, Public Policy and Research, 303.541.0255, bprescott@wiche.edu. To view the full publication or to place an order for a bound copy, visit our website at www.wiche.edu/policy.

MEASURING UP 2008

THE STATE REPORT CARD
ON HIGHER EDUCATION



What is Measuring Up?

The purpose of a state report card is to provide the general public and policymakers with information they can use to assess and improve postsecondary education in each state.

Measuring Up 2008 is the fifth in a series of biennial report cards.

The report card grades states in six overall performance categories: **Preparation:** How adequately does the state prepare students for education and training beyond high school? **Participation:** Do state residents have sufficient opportunities to enroll in education and training beyond high school? **Affordability:** How affordable is higher education for students and their families?

Completion: Do students make progress toward and complete their certificates or degrees in a timely manner? **Benefits:** What benefits does the state receive from having a highly educated population? **Learning:** What is known about student learning as a result of education and training beyond high school?

Grades compare the current performance of each state with the best-performing states, but do not compare with past performance. Key indicators (back page) allow states to compare current performance with past performance.



THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY AND
HIGHER EDUCATION

Alaska



PREPARATION

C+



2008 Grade Change Over Time

Alaska's fairly low performance in educating its young population could limit the state's access to a competitive workforce and weaken its economy.

- Eighth graders perform fairly poorly in math, science, and reading.
- There is a 13% gap between whites and all minorities in the percentage of young adults with a high school credential.

PARTICIPATION

F



2008 Grade Change Over Time

College opportunities for young and working-age adults are very poor.

- The percentage of working-age adults enrolled in higher education has declined by 39% since the early 1990s.
- Among young adults, 11% of Alaska Natives are enrolled in college, compared with 33% of whites.

AFFORDABILITY

F



2008 Grade Change Over Time

Higher education has become less affordable for students and their families.

- Poor and working-class families must devote 37% of their income, even after aid, to pay for costs at public four-year colleges.
- Financial aid to low-income students is low. For every dollar in Pell Grant aid to students, the state spends only six cents.

COMPLETION

F



2008 Grade Change Over Time

Despite some improvement, Alaska is one of the lowest-performing states in awarding certificates and degrees relative to the number of students enrolled.

- Twenty-two percent of college students complete a bachelor's degree within six years.
- Ten percent of Alaska Natives graduate within six years, compared with 25% of whites.

REPORT CARD

Preparation	C+
Participation	F
Affordability	F
Completion	F
Benefits	C+
Learning	I

WHAT DO THE ARROWS MEAN?



State has increased or remained stable on the key indicator in the category.



State has declined on the key indicator in the category.

See back page for key indicator by category.

BENEFITS

C+



2008 Grade Change Over Time

Only a fair proportion of residents have a bachelor's degree, and this weakens the state economy.

- Eight percent of Alaska Natives have a bachelor's degree, compared with 32% of whites.
- If all racial/ethnic groups had the same educational attainment and earnings as whites, total annual personal income in the state would be about \$2 billion higher.

LEARNING

I

2008 Grade

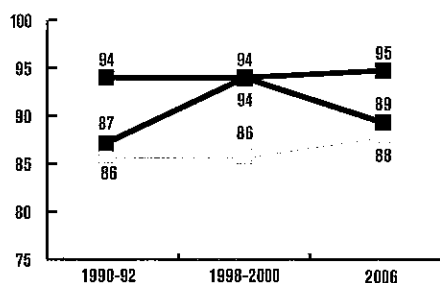
Like all states, Alaska receives an "Incomplete" in Learning because there is not sufficient data to allow meaningful state-by-state comparisons.

This page reflects Alaska's performance and progress since the early 1990s on several key indicators.

PREPARATION

The percentage of young adults in Alaska who earn a high school diploma has increased slightly since the early 1990s. High school completion is slightly above the U.S. average but below the top-performing states.

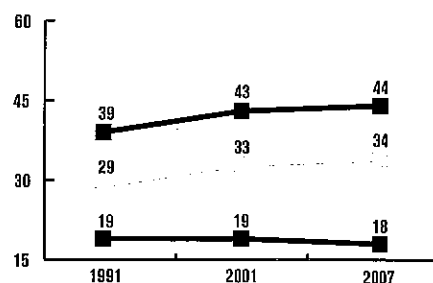
Percentage of 18-24 Year-Olds with a High School Credential*



PARTICIPATION

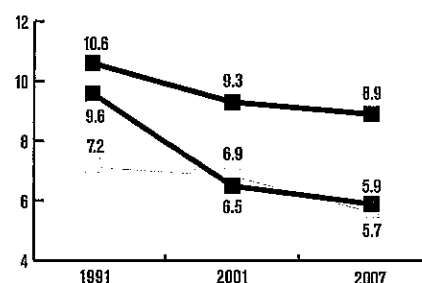
College enrollment of young adults in Alaska has declined slightly since the early 1990s. Compared with the national average and the top states, substantially fewer young adults are enrolled in Alaska (in percentages).

Percentage of 18-24 Year-Olds Enrolled in College*



The enrollment of working-age adults, relative to the number of residents without a bachelor's degree, has declined in Alaska—as it has nationally and in the best-performing states. The percentage attending college in Alaska is slightly higher than the U.S. average but below the top states.

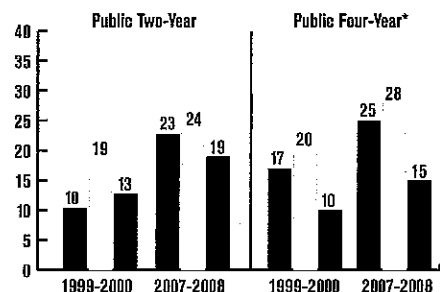
Percentage of 25-49 Year-Olds Without a Bachelor's Degree Enrolled in College



AFFORDABILITY

The share of family income, even after financial aid, needed to pay for college has risen substantially. To attend public two- and four-year colleges in Alaska, students and families pay less than the U.S. average but more than those in the best-performing states.

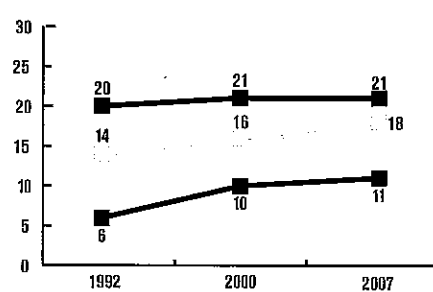
Percentage of Income Needed to Pay for Public Two- and Four-Year Colleges



COMPLETION

The number of undergraduate credentials and degrees awarded in Alaska, relative to the number of students enrolled, has increased since the early 1990s. However, Alaska is considerably below the U.S. average and the top states on this measure.

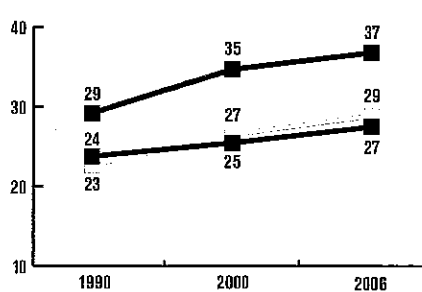
All Degree Completions per 100 Students*



BENEFITS

The percentage of residents who have a bachelor's degree has increased slightly in Alaska, but is below the U.S. average and the top states.

Percentage of 25-64 Year-Olds with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher*



*Key indicator for the category.

LEGEND:

- & ■ = Alaska
- & ● = United States
- & ■ = Median of Top Five States



152 North Third Street, Suite 705
 San Jose, California 95112
 Telephone: 408.271.2699
 Fax: 408.271.2697
center@highereducation.org
www.highereducation.org