



High School Persistence and Completion for Selected Ethnic Groups in the Hawai'i Public Schools

Background

Persistence and completion are among the perennial issues in the education of minority students. The purpose of this report is to discuss these issues with regard to students of Hawaiian ancestry compared to other students in the Hawai'i public school system.

The data used for this study come from the student information system of the Hawai'i State Department of Education. Data entry is completed at each school campus and uploaded to the central system's files. Students' ethnicity is based on the declaration of the adult who first registered the student with the public schools. No verification of ancestry is required.

To keep the interpretations of the results as straight forward as possible, only students present in grade 9 and born in 1982 were included in the analyses. This eliminated from the cohort any students from different cohorts who had been retained.

Students leave the public school system for a variety of reasons. The DOE presently has 25 unique exit codes. For the purposes of this study, these were combined with data on retention in grade to create five categories: left for other school system, dropped out, met graduation requirements, miscellaneous other exits, and retained in grade (leaving their cohort but not the public schools)¹. Some but not all students retained in grade eventually receive a high school diploma. However, tracking the outcomes for these students was beyond the scope of this study — once retained students were counted in the retained category unless they made up the deficiencies which resulted in their retention and graduated with their class.

Initially, the report was to include data about students' status at grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. However, the inconsistencies from one year's data to the next made this impractical. The results presented in this report are based on an updating of the grade 9 data with that from each successive year. It is hoped that this process eliminated most inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the data. The results presented here are as clean as possible without manual searches for students that would require going back to each of their schools for verification of their status at each data point. However, the reader will note that outcomes for four percent of the students are missing. This varies with the mobility of the student group and ranges from six percent for Hawaiian students to one percent for students of Japanese ancestry.

¹ See notes for the tables for details on how the 25 exit codes were combined to create these five categories.

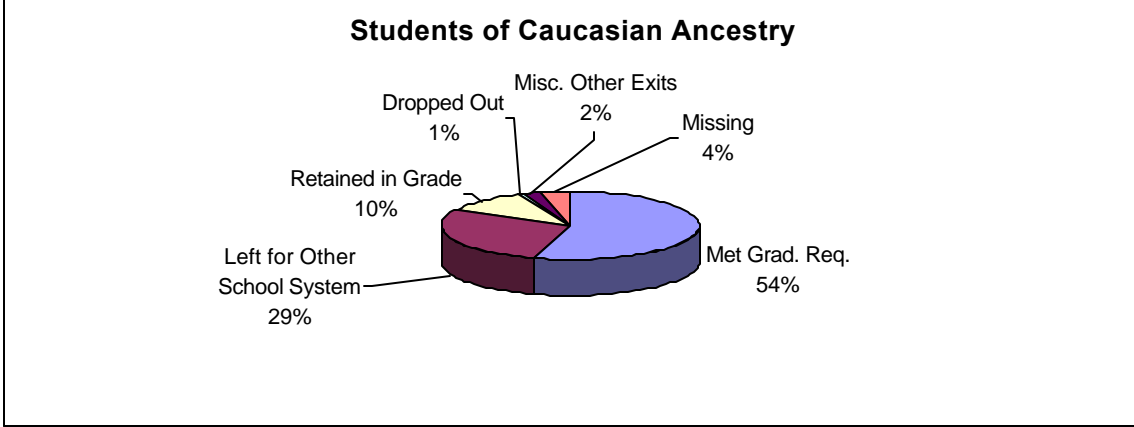
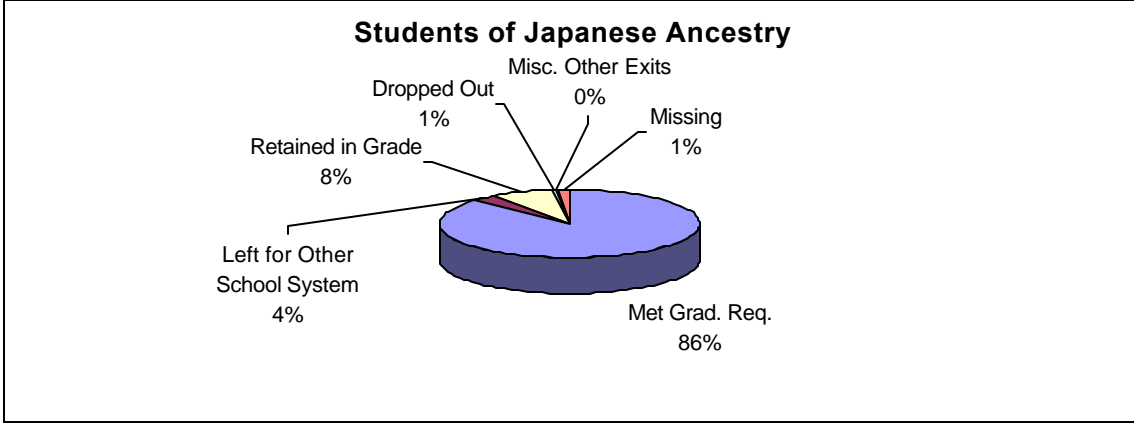
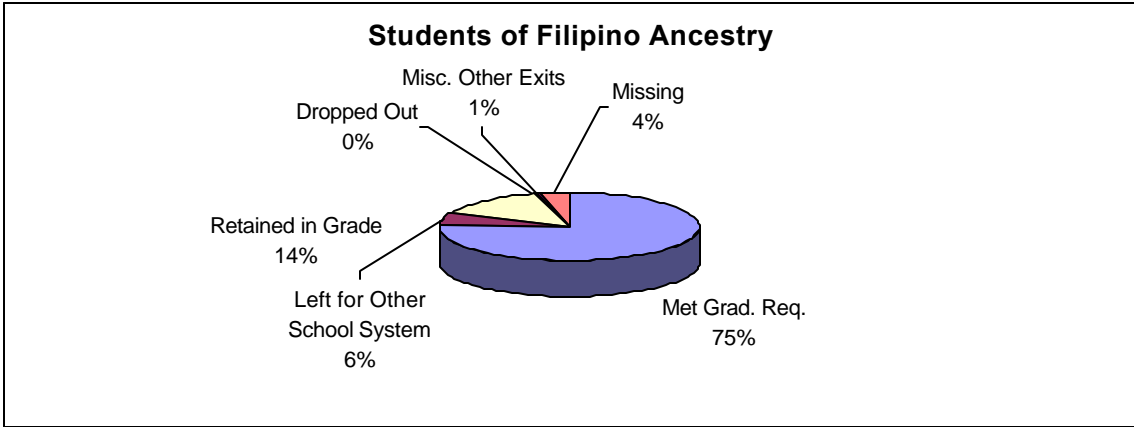
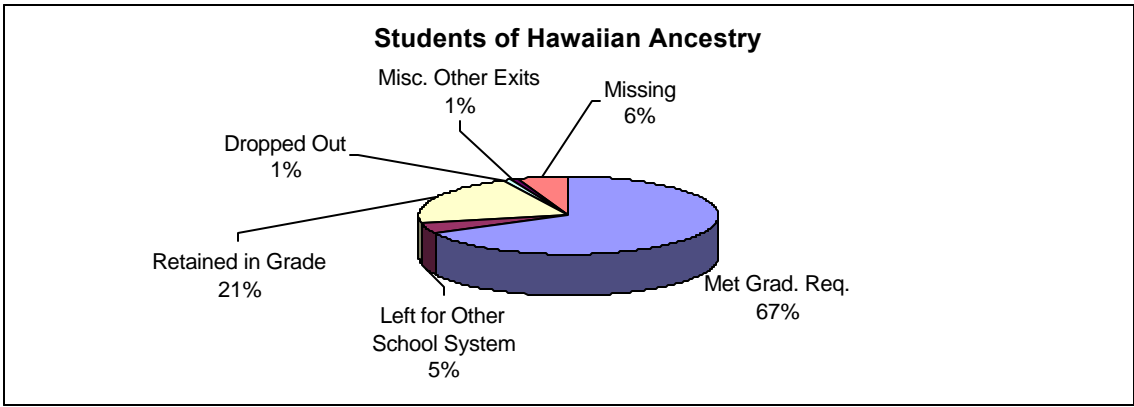


Figure 1. Outcomes for DOE High School Students for the Four Major Ethnic Groups, Class of 2000.

Findings

Overall, 69 percent of the students in the class of 2000 who were enrolled in public schools in the fall of the year they were in grade 9 graduated or received a certificate of completion from the DOE within four years. Fifteen percent were retained, eleven percent left for another school system, and one percent dropped out. Four percent were unaccounted for in the student information system at the end of grade 12. (See Figure 1 and Table 1 for more detailed results.)

Hawaiian completion statistics are surprisingly similar: 67 percent received diplomas or certificates of completion. However, the direction and magnitude of differences between Hawaiians and students of other ancestries are masked by the unique statistics for Caucasians, many of whom are military dependents and whose experiences are also significantly different from those of other ethnic groups. Twenty-nine percent of Caucasian students leave the DOE, typically to a school in another state or country, and only 54 percent graduate from a Hawai'i public school with their class.

Within the DOE, students in the four largest ethnic groups in the public schools, Hawaiian/part-Hawaiian, Filipino, Japanese, and Caucasian, comprise almost 75 percent of the total enrollment. Historically, Japanese and Caucasian students have the best academic outcomes and Filipino and Hawaiian students have the poorest. This same pattern is observed in the high school persistence and completion statistics.

A total of 90 percent of Japanese students, 83 percent of Caucasian students, and 82 percent of Filipino students either graduated with their class or left for another school system. However, only 72 percent of Hawaiian students fall into these two categories. The single largest area of difference is in retention in grade: 21 percent of Hawaiian students compared to 12 percent of all non-Hawaiian students are retained in grade and do not later catch up with their class to graduate within four years. Hawaiian students are also more likely to drop out, exit for miscellaneous reasons, or not be accounted for in the DOE student database. A total of 8 percent of Hawaiian students fall into these three categories, as compared to 7 percent of Caucasian students, 5 percent of Filipino students, and 2 percent of Japanese students.²

Summary

Clearly, Hawaiian students are not flourishing in the public high schools. Numerous PEP reports have documented Hawaiian students' low test scores, high rates of absenteeism, high rates of special education placement, and low rates of enrollment in post-secondary education³. This report adds to that body of knowledge the findings that Hawaiian students are much less likely to complete high school within four years of entry to grade nine. The study also suggests that much of this is related to their high rates of retention in grade relative to non-Hawaiian students in general and members of the other three large ethnic groups in particular.

² All comparisons between Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian students are statistically significant at the level of $p < .001$ using chi sq. to test the differences. Effect size calculations are not possible since the outcome variables are categorical.

³ For the most recent statistics see *Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment 1999* (PEP Report 99-00:09)

Table 1. Grade 12 Outcomes – Hawai'i DOE Class of 2000
 (Tracking Students Who Entered in DOE Schools in Fall Grade 9 and Progressed with Their Cohort)

Students of All Ancestries

	Grade 9 Enrollment	Met Grad. Req. ¹	Left for Other School System ²	Retained in Grade ³	Dropped Out ⁴	Misc. Other Exits ⁵	Missing ⁶
N	10,852	7,507	1,179	1,574	70	87	435
%		69	11	15	1	1	4

Students of Hawaiian Ancestry

	Grade 9 Enrollment	Met Grad. Req. ¹	Left for Other School System ²	Retained in Grade ³	Dropped Out ⁴	Misc. Other Exits ⁵	Missing ⁶
N	2,785	1,872	136	576	25	22	154
%		67	5	21	1	1	6

Students of Filipino Ancestry

	Grade 9 Enrollment	Met Grad. Req. ¹	Left for Other School System ²	Retained in Grade ³	Dropped Out ⁴	Misc. Other Exits ⁵	Missing ⁶
N	2,023	1,539	118	278	2	11	75
%		76	6	14	0	1	4

Students of Japanese Ancestry

	Grade 9 Enrollment	Met Grad. Req. ¹	Left for Other School System ²	Retained in Grade ³	Dropped Out ⁴	Misc. Other Exits ⁵	Missing ⁶
N	1,655	1,437	58	125	9	5	21
%		87	4	8	1	0	1

Students of Caucasian Ancestry

	Grade 9 Enrollment	Met Grad. Req. ¹	Left for Other School System ²	Retained in Grade ³	Dropped Out ⁴	Misc. Other Exits ⁵	Missing ⁶
N	1,594	868	458	162	15	27	64
%		54	29	10	1	2	4

Note: This analysis includes only those students in the DOE database for grade 9 in the 1996-97 school year and born in 1982, to eliminate from the cohort-based analysis those students who had been retained from other cohorts.

- 1 Met graduation requirements includes students who receive diplomas or certificates.
- 2 Left for Other School System includes students exiting to private schools, other states, other countries, alternative educational programs, home school, tutorial programs, and those with alternative education plans.
- 3 Retained in grade includes only those students who did not make up any deficiencies over the summer and rejoin their class in the fall.
- 4 Dropped out includes students exiting due to employment, marriage, family court rulings, entering the armed forces, choosing to leave at age 18, and no shows, or otherwise withdrawn by their parents.
- 5 Misc. includes students who were physically or mentally unable to continue, were expelled for the school year, failed the HSTEC, were released from Olomana, deceased, left for unspecified reasons, or do not appear in the MAC Schools database.
- 6 "Missing" students are those for whom no other outcome was found in the database.

All differences in outcomes for Hawaiians vs. non-Hawaiian students are significant at the .001 level.

Data Source: Hawai'i State Department of Education