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ABSTRACT

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) in Austin, Texas defines a dropout as a student who leaves AISD and for whom there is no evidence that he/she is pursuing an education in another district or institution offering a high school diploma. All students who withdraw from AISD are initially considered dropouts. When a request for a transcript is received from another school or district, that student is reclassified as a transfer. Estimated dropout results were examined for the 1983-1984 and 1984-1985 school years. The results showed an estimated increase in the dropout rate of 1 percentage point between the 2 years, representing an increase of 10%. Black students showed a 5% decrease in dropout rate while Hispanics showed an 11% increase and Whites/Others showed a 15% increase. The preliminary rates for both males and females increased. In proportion to the total, a higher percentage of Whites/Others than of Blacks or Hispanics dropped out during the summer months. Blacks and Hispanics were comparatively more likely to drop out during the school year. Junior high school dropout rates were estimated for the first time in 1984-1985. The results are preliminary and may overestimate the number of dropouts: according to these preliminary figures, the rate for males and females was the same and the percentage for Hispanics was more than double the percentage for Blacks. (NB)

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FEEDBACK

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Volume 9 Number 2

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Department of Management Information
Office of Research and Evaluation

AISD'S DROPOUT RATE: 1983-84 AND 1984-85

This issue of **Feedback** is to present AISD dropout results for 1983-84 and 1984-85. Dropout prevention has been established as a District priority in the new Accreditation Plan for 1985-86 through 1989-90.

Contents:

What is a dropout?.....2

How do we measure the dropout rate?.....2

What are the findings? How should they be interpreted?.....3

What has been the impact of House Bill 72?.....7



Drawing by Earl Hanley--Anderson High

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What is a dropout?

Dropouts are students who leave AISD and for whom there is no evidence they are pursuing their education in another district or institution offering a high school diploma.

How do we measure the dropout rate? What is the difference between the preliminary and updated rate?

All students who withdraw from AISD are initially considered dropouts. A student's classification is changed from "dropout" to "transfer" if a request for a transcript is received from another school or district. All students who withdraw during the school year and for whom transcript requests are not received by July 1 are classified as dropouts in the preliminary count.

These figures are then updated during the following July, one year later. During this count, a student who was considered a dropout in the preliminary count can become a transfer if a transcript request was received during the intervening year. These students are subtracted from the preliminary dropout count, as are students who leave during one year but re-enroll in AISD the following year. On the other hand, students who were still in school when the first school year ended but did not show up the following fall--that is, students who dropped out during the summer--are added to the dropout count.

What are the findings? How should they be interpreted?

Following are some of the important dropout results. Because they are estimates, one should probably attend more to year-to-year trends than to the absolute numbers in a given year. Accordingly, it is the comparison of the 1984-85 preliminary rates to the 1983-84 preliminary rates which is probably most important at this time. In the summer of 1986, we will be able to make a comparison between two years of updated results.

Group	Preliminary, 1983-84		Preliminary, 1984-85		Difference	Updated, 1983-84	
	Number	%	Number	%		Number	%
Black	329	11.0%	319	10.5%	-0.5%	277	9.2%
Hispanic	577	14.3%	600	15.9%	+1.6%	554	13.7%
Anglo/Other	798	8.0%	968	9.2%	+1.2%	850	8.5%
Male	922	10.6%	1,064	11.8%	+1.2%	923	10.6%
Female	782	9.4%	883	10.2%	+0.8%	758	9.1%
Total	1,704	10.0%	1,947	11.0%	+1.0%	1,681	9.8%

Figure 1: PRELIMINARY 1983-84, PRELIMINARY 1984-85, AND UPDATED 1983-84 HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES, BY ETHNICITY AND SEX.

The increase in the preliminary dropout rate of 1.0 percentage point (from 10.0% to 11.0%) represents a 10% increase from 1983-84 to 1984-85.

Note also that:

- Black students showed a decrease from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in both absolute number and rate of preliminary dropouts. Hispanic and Anglo/Other students showed increased rates;
- The preliminary rates for both males and females increased.

The figure below illustrates the change in the dropout rate from 1983-84 to 1984-85 for each ethnic group and overall.

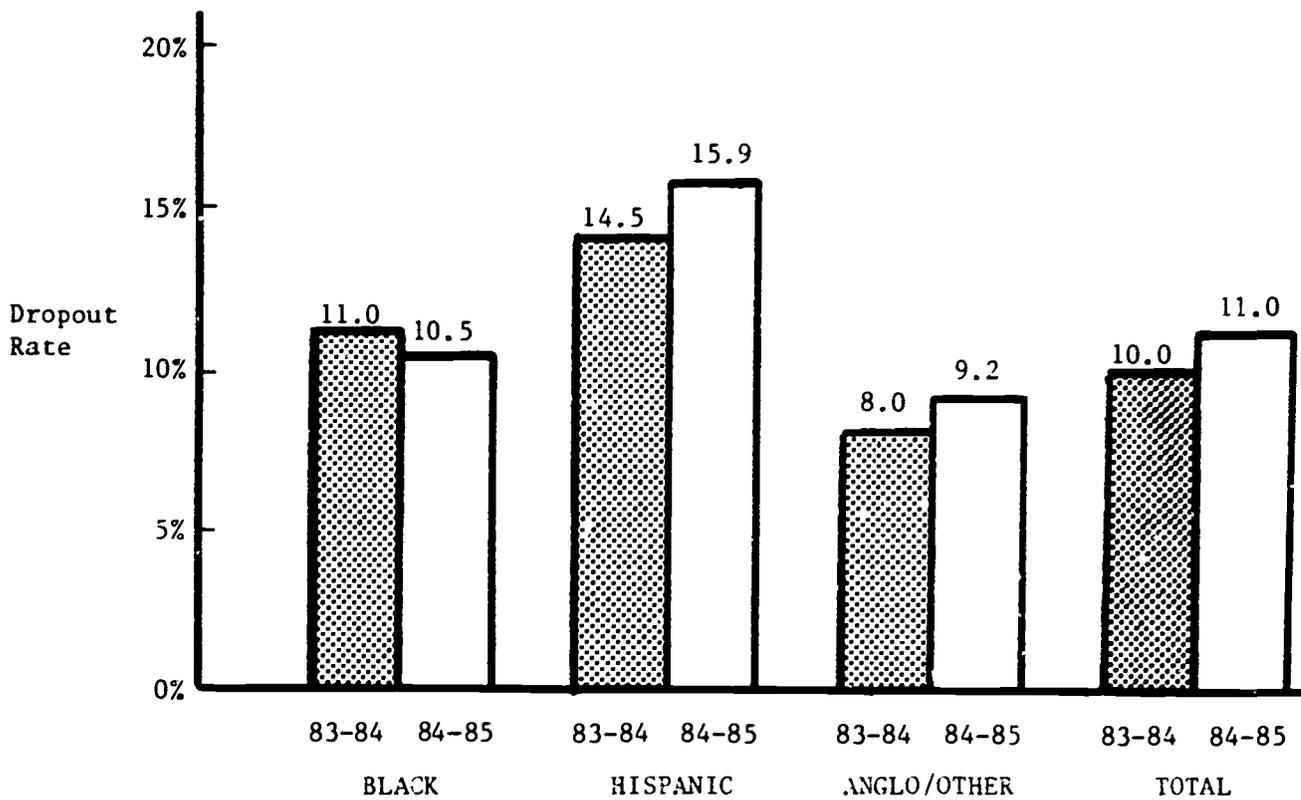


Figure 2: COMPARISON OF 1983-84 AND 1984-85 PRELIMINARY DROPOUT RATES, BY ETHNICITY.

The updated results for 1983-84 high school students can be categorized by time of dropping out. School-year dropouts leave during the academic year; summer, or "no show" dropouts complete the academic year then do not return the following fall. Following are the breakdowns for 1983-84 high school students.



Drawing by Dee Campman--Crockett High

Group	School Year		Summer		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Black	210	7.0%	67	2.2%	277	9.2%
Hispanic	418	10.3%	136	3.4%	554	13.7%
Anglo/Other	596	5.9%	254	2.5%	850	8.5%
Male	665	7.6%	258	3.0%	923	10.6%
Female	559	6.7%	199	2.4%	758	9.1%
Total	1,224	7.2%	457	2.7%	1,681	9.8%

Figure 3: UPDATED DROPOUT RATES FOR 1983-84 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BY ETHNICITY, SEX, AND TIME OF DROPPING OUT.

As the figure shows, school-year dropouts were about 73% of the total, while summer dropouts were 27%. This proportion is fairly consistent across ethnic group and gender, although Anglo/Other students were slightly more likely to drop out during the summer (30%) than Blacks and Hispanics (24% and 25%, respectively).

Junior high dropout rates were estimated for the first time in 1984-85. They are, of course, preliminary and will be updated next summer to account for re-enrollments, transfers, and summer dropouts.

These numbers are probably overestimates; junior high schools are not as diligent as senior highs about requesting transcripts. Following are the preliminary figures:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Black	42	2.2%
Hispanic	162	5.8%
Anglo/Other	173	3.3%
Male	191	3.8%
Female	186	3.8%
Total	377	3.8%

Note that the rate for males and females was the same and that the percentage for Hispanic students is more than double the percentage for Black student .





Drawing by
Greg Foliender
Austin High

What has been the impact of House Bill 72?

It has been feared that certain provisions of House Bill 72--the five-absence limit and the "no pass, no play" rule--will worsen the dropout problem by reducing marginal students' motivation to remain in school. At this time the impact of the reforms cannot be determined. The 1.0-percentage point increase in the preliminary dropout rate may largely have been caused by the reforms; on the other hand, it may also be that the rate would have been even higher if not for the District's dropout reduction efforts. In the absence of comparable data from other districts, it is impossible to say.

A better estimate of the true impact of the first year of House Bill 72, and of the District's efforts, must await the updating of the preliminary numbers next summer. It seems reasonable that the strict attendance policy and "no pass, no play" might affect the school-year dropout rate more than the summer dropout rate, and that a certain group of school-year dropouts--that group who left because of excessive absences, or because they could not participate in extracurricular activities--might return to school in larger numbers than did school-year dropouts from previous years.

Readers who would like more information about the AISD dropout picture are referred to ORE's earlier dropout study Mother Got Tired of Taking Care of My Baby (ORE Pub. No. 82.44). Those familiar with that study will remember that the four-year dropout rate was estimated to be 24% and will wonder how that figure accords with 10% rate for 1983-84 or 11% for 1984-85.

The figures are not comparable. The earlier study followed all AISD students who were 14 years old on September 1, 1978, until January, 1983, added no new students to the group during that period, and answered the question "What is the probability that a 14 year old in AISD will drop out within four and a half years?" The current results include all students who were enrolled in grades 9-12 (or 7-8 for junior high) at any time during one year and answers the questions "What percentage of students who are in AISD in grades 9-12 (or 7-8) at any time during a school year drop out before the end of the school year?" and "How many drop out the following summer?" It is clear that no matter how one chooses to frame the dropout question, AISD's dropout rate is high.

To recapitulate the findings presented in this issue of **Feedback**:

- Based on a comparison of 1984-85's preliminary results with 1983-84, the dropout percentage increased from 10.0 to 11.0, a 10% increase.
- The dropout rate increased 15% for Anglo/Others and 11% for Hispanics, but decreased 5% for Blacks.
- In proportion to the total, a higher percentage of Anglos/Others than of Blacks or Hispanics drops out during the summer. Blacks and Hispanics are comparatively more likely to drop out during the school year.
- It has been feared that House Bill 72--specifically the five-absence limit and "no pass, no play"--will substantially worsen the dropout problem. In the absence of comparable data from other districts, this question cannot definitively be answered.