

High School Completion & Drop Out Rates

ASBA Fall General Meeting
November 2008

Setting the Stage

- Finishing high school is an important step for students to create a positive future, allowing them entry into the labour force and post-secondary programs
- Efforts are being made at the department, jurisdiction and school levels to increase the number of students completing high school
- Improving high school completion rates is a priority of the Government of Alberta

High School Completion Rates

Credentialed Completers

- Students can achieve high school completion status through a variety of means
- Credentialed completers:
 - High school diploma
 - Equivalency diploma (GED)
 - K&E certificate
- The majority of students who enter Grade 10 in Alberta end up receiving one of these credentials

Non-Credentialed Completers

- Students who leave school without one of these credentials may still continue on to post-secondary or apprenticeship programs
- Non-credentialed completers include:
 - Transition to post-secondary (excluding upgrading)
 - Transition to apprenticeship (excluding RAP)
 - Academic standing

So... What About The Rest?

- Students who do not complete include:
 - Continuers - those remaining in the system, either in a K-12 school or engaging in academic upgrading at a post-secondary institution
 - Leavers - those who did not complete, and are not continuing in the system
- There are a variety of reasons why a student might leave the education system (e.g. dropped out, mortality, migration)

Measuring High School Completion

- Simply looking at the number of Grade 12 students completing in a given year ignores the fact that high school is a process that starts in Grade 10
- The measurement needs to capture the progress of students from Grade 10 to their eventual completion (or lack thereof)
- How long should progress be tracked?
 - 3 years: matches “on time” completion
 - 5 years: matches funding

Where It Begins... Grade 10 Cohort

- The “cohort” is the group of students entering Grade 10 in Alberta in a given year
- The following are not included in the cohort:
 - Students who registered after September 30
 - Adult students
 - Students with severe cognitive / multiple disabilities
 - Students attending Hutterite colony schools
 - Visiting / exchange students
 - Students under other authorities (e.g. federal, Lloydminster)

Pieces Of The Puzzle

- The cohort is tracked for 3, 4 and 5 years, and the completion status of each student obtained for each time period
- The loss of students due to out-migration and mortality, referred to as “attrition”, is estimated from department and Statistics Canada data

Bringing It All Together

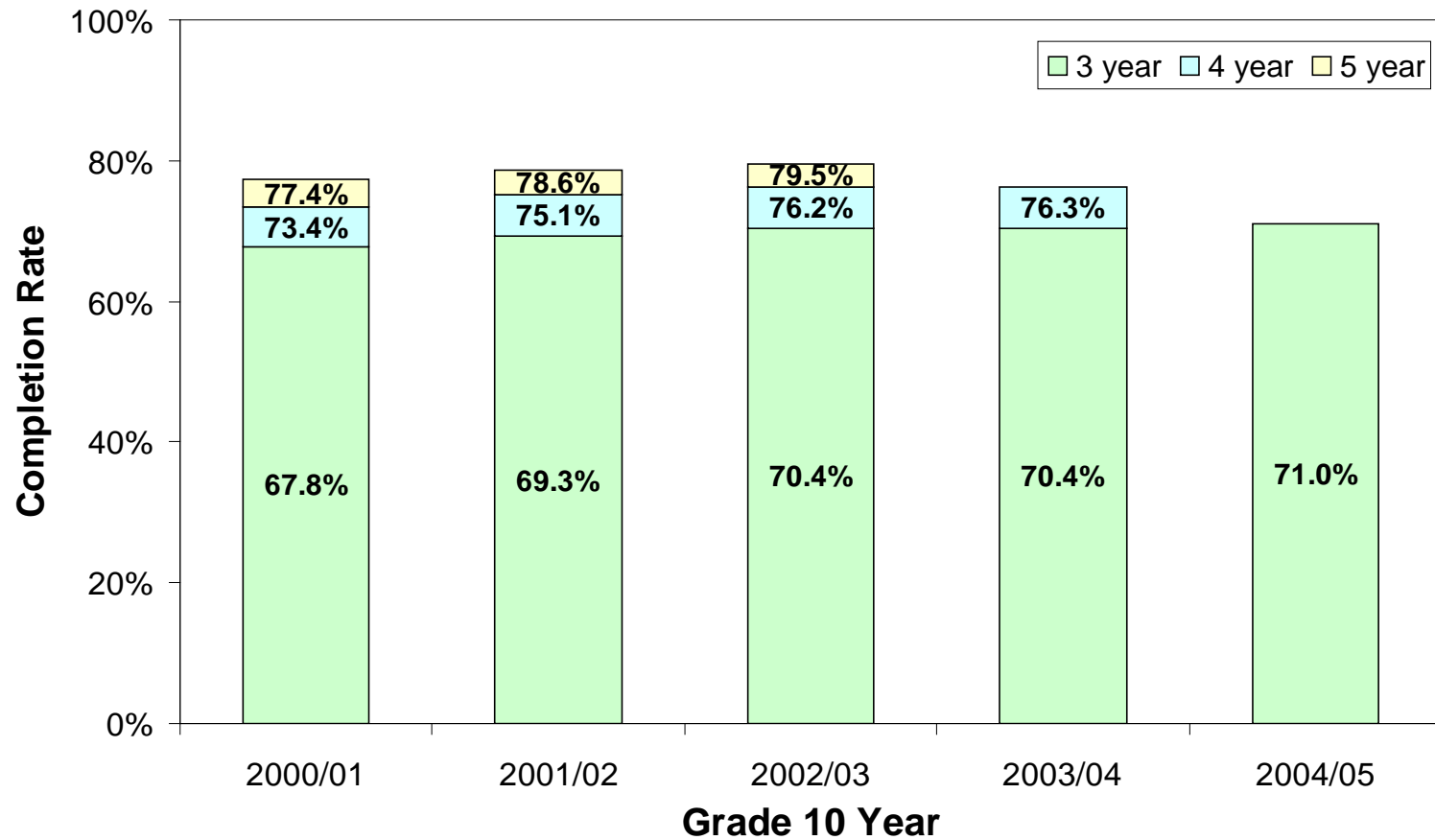
- The high school completion rate is calculated using the following equation:

$$\frac{\text{Number of completers} \\ \text{(credentialed and non-credentialed)}}{\text{Number of students in the cohort} \\ \text{(adjusted for attrition)}}$$

Jurisdiction Rates

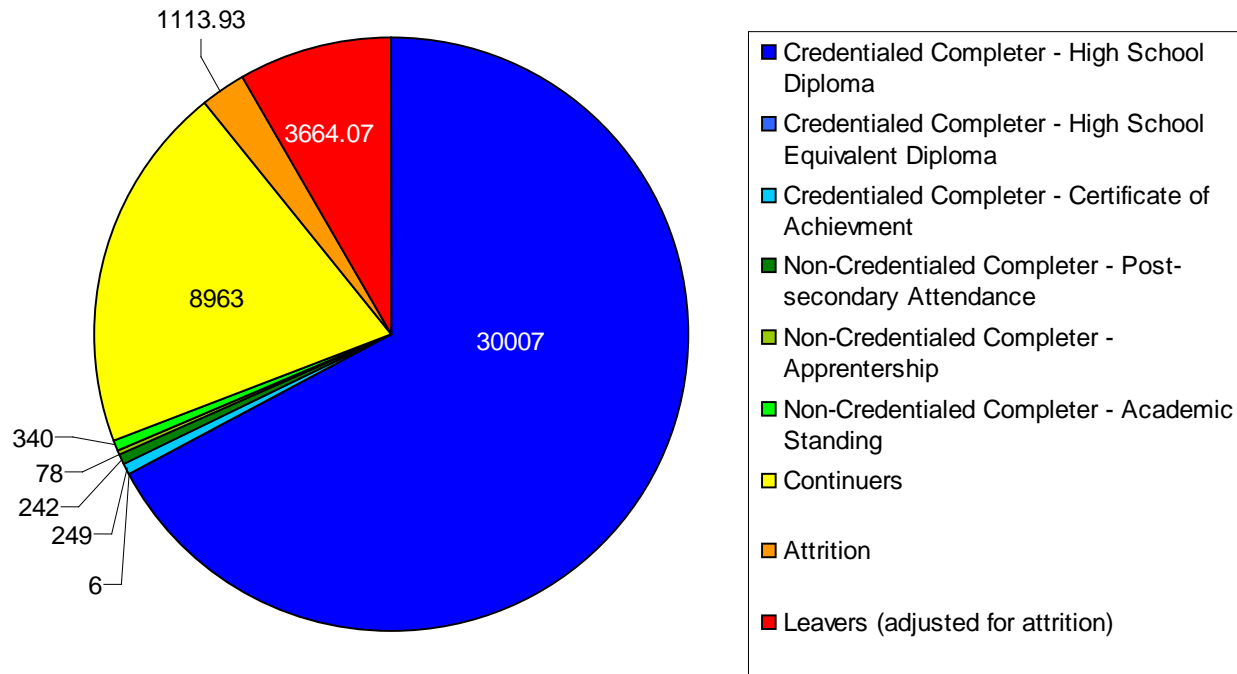
- Students are attributed to jurisdictions based on enrollment information and credits earned
 - This means the cohort for a jurisdiction can change a little over the tracking period (3, 4 and 5 years)
- Jurisdictions are provided detailed information on their completion rates
- Jurisdictions also receive completion rates for their schools and individual information for each student

Provincial Results



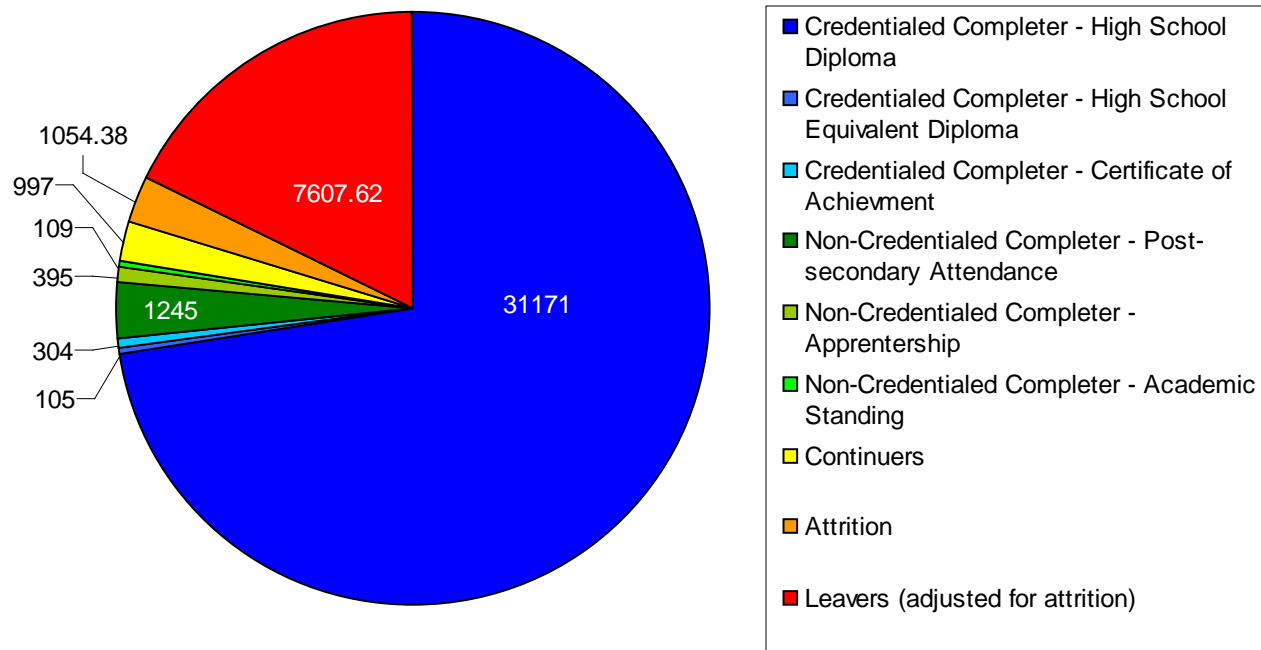
Provincial Results (cont.)

3-Year High School Completion Status Provincial Counts for 2006/07



Provincial Results (cont.)

**5-Year High School Completion Status
Provincial Counts for 2006/07**



Some Observations

- Overall trend
 - High school completion rates have been increasing over the past five years
- Urban/rural
 - High school completion rates are fairly comparable (perhaps even slightly higher for rural)
- Student mobility
 - High school completion rates for students who move between jurisdictions are generally lower than those for non-movers

Drop Out Rate

Definition

- A student who was in Alberta's education system is considered to have dropped out if:
 - There is no evidence of their participation in the education system the following school year (including post-secondary and apprenticeship programs)
 - They did not complete high school

Connection to High School Completion

- Clearly, there is a strong relationship between dropping out and high school completion
 - Pretty hard to complete if you are not participating in the education system
- However, dropping out can be a temporary status – a student could leave school for a year, then return and complete
 - Therefore the drop out rate is not the inverse of the high school completion rate

Measuring Drop Out Rates

- The “cohort” for the drop out rate is the group of students aged 14-18 in Alberta’s education system
- The following are not included in the cohort:
 - Students who registered after September 30
 - Students with severe cognitive / multiple disabilities
 - Students attending Hutterite colony schools
 - Visiting / exchange students
 - Students under other authorities (e.g. federal, Lloydminster)

Measuring Drop Out Rates (cont.)

- The cohort of students is tracked into the next year
- Based on the student information (registration, completion, etc), each student is assigned one of the following statuses:
 - Participating in the education system
 - Dropped out
- As with high school completion, an estimate of attrition (mortality and migration) is also calculated

Calculation

- The drop out rate is calculated using the following equation:

Number of students who dropped out
(adjusted for attrition)

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Number of students in the cohort
(adjusted for attrition)

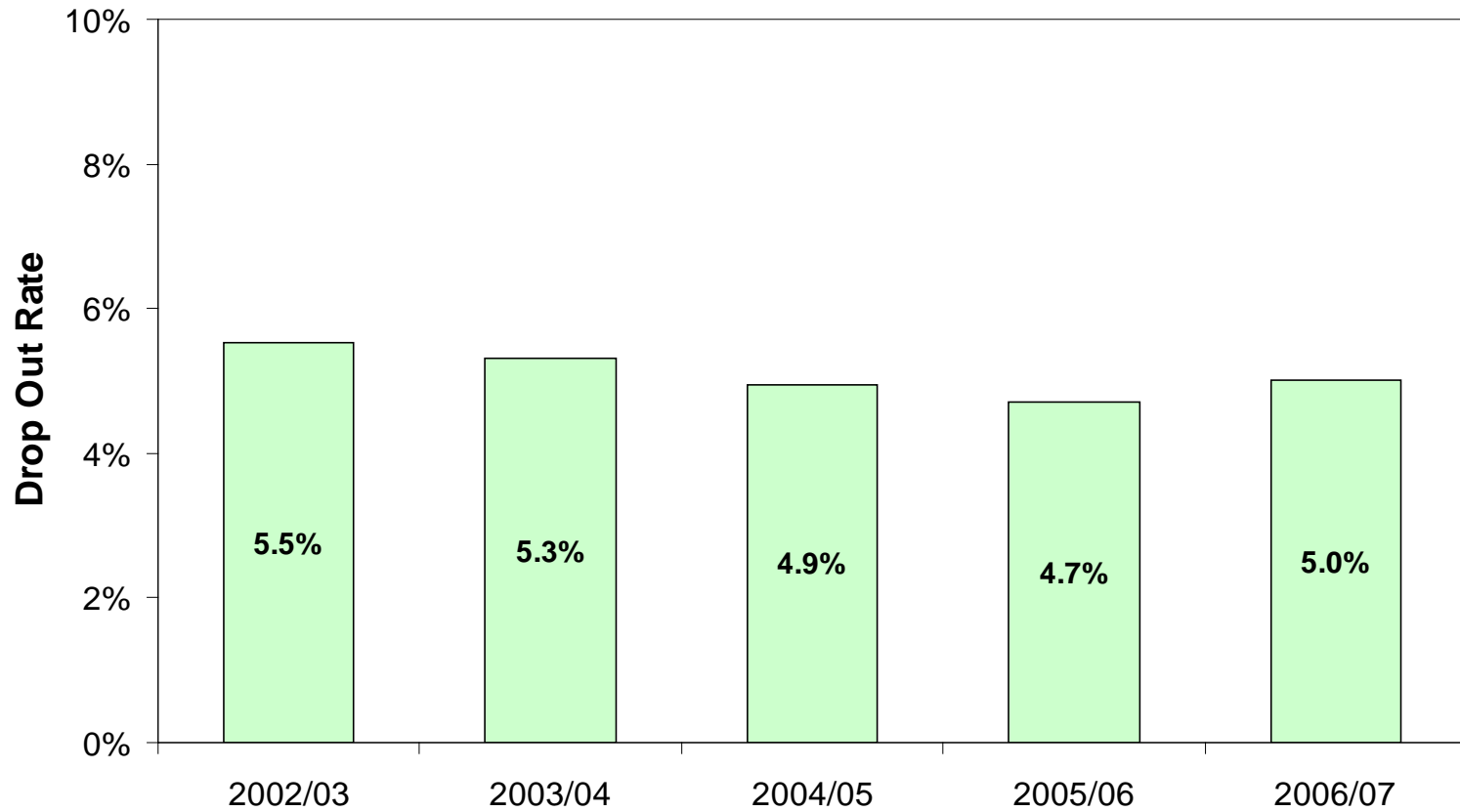
Returning Rates

- Students who have dropped out can be tracked a further year to see if they return to the education system
 - Around 22% of students who drop out return to school the following year
 - This rate has been relatively stable over the last five years

Jurisdiction Rates

- Students are attributed to the jurisdiction where they had their primary registration
- Jurisdiction rates are then calculated based on this group of students
- Jurisdictions receive drop out rates for their schools and individual information for each student

Provincial Results



Some Observations

- Overall trend
 - The provincial drop out rate rose recently after declining for a number of years
- Why junior high?
 - The drop out rate considers students in a certain age range (14-18), rather than specific grades
 - This means K-9 schools will often receive results for this measure
 - However, it is important to keep in mind that the result only applies to those students in the school that met the age requirements (“of the students aged 14-18...”)

Wrap Up

Accountability & Reporting

- High school completion and drop out rates are key performance measures for the education system, which is why they are part of the Accountability Pillar
- Results are used in the planning/reporting cycle at the school, jurisdiction and provincial levels
 - Alberta Education Business Plan and Annual Report
 - Jurisdiction 3-Year Education Plan and AERR
 - School 3-Year Education Plan and AERR

Questions?