

EMBARGOED UNTIL JUNE 22

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ONE OUT OF FIVE PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FAILS TO GRADUATE EVERY YEAR

“Graduation Gap” Wide for Urban, Rural and Suburban Teens Alike
[Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children Releases First Fact Sheet on Youth in Transition](#)

(HARRISBURG, PA) – June 22 – Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC), a nonprofit organization that provides policy recommendations based on research and analysis of children’s issues, today released a fact sheet on the graduation gap in Pennsylvania. The report shows how many ninth graders in the 2000-01 school year did not graduate from high school in the same district four years later.

Of the 153,523 ninth graders who started high school in 2000-01, those not reaching graduation four years later (2003-04) totaled 33,349 or 21.7 percent – more than one in five students. While the data show that the graduation gap is wide in urban districts, it is clear also that this is a statewide issue.

The data, culled from annual school district enrollment and graduation reports submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, show that more than two in five urban ninth graders; one in eight suburban ninth graders and one in six rural ninth graders in 2000-01 did not graduate from high school in the same district four years later. For example, if a ninth grade homeroom in a rural district has 24 students, just 20 students from that classroom will graduate four years later. In a suburban homeroom of 24 students, only 21 will graduate from high school in the same district four years later.

The graduation gap shows how many students were “lost” on the path to graduation: while the statewide average is 21.7 percent, the gap is 44.8 percent in urban districts; 16.1 percent in rural districts and 12.5 percent in suburban districts.

“The problems youth have in graduating from high school and transitioning successfully to adulthood are multifaceted and cannot be blamed solely on a school district’s performance,” said Joan L. Benso, President and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. “There are children living in poverty, kids with emotional and physical disabilities, kids in foster care and kids with unique challenges all across Pennsylvania. This is a statewide issue that needs to be addressed by policymakers from across the state.”

(MORE)

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The graduation gap extends to urban, rural and suburban communities across Pennsylvania. Benso noted that 46 of the 498 districts with high schools lose three out of 10 students on the way to graduation. These include 20 urban, 15 rural and 11 suburban districts.

“Almost 350 school districts are losing one - or more - out of every ten kids,” Benso said. “That’s far too many.”

The greatest student losses occur in the first two years of high school – 7.9 percent between 9th and 10th grades and 7.3 percent between 10th and 11th grades. Only 4.3 percent fail to make it from their junior year to senior year, and only 4.2 percent of seniors fail to graduate.

Some of the districts cited as having wide graduation gaps are among those working to improve graduation rates. Educators and administrators in many of these districts are committed to making positive changes and are implementing new programs such as replacing large impersonal high schools with smaller learning communities, hiring career resource coaches to help students focus on their futures, and requiring a more rigorous core curriculum for high school students to boost graduation rates. Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children will profile some of these promising practices and discuss policy implications in a later report.

The graduation gap fact sheet is first in a series of three fact sheets to be released on Youth in Transition by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children this year. The project - funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the William Penn Foundation – focuses on young people moving from middle school to high school, high school to post secondary education or work and beyond. PPC will release a second fact sheet on youth employment in early August.

To view the Graduation Gap fact sheet, graduation gaps by county, or child well-being indicators by county, visit <http://www.papartnerships.org/dropouts/index.asp>

PLEASE CALL KATHY GELLER MYERS AT 717-236-5680 TO REQUEST A JPEG GRAPHIC OF THE GRADUATION GAP FOR MEDIA USE.

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