



# **Omaha Public School District 2022-23 Graduation and Dropout Report**

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## Executive Summary/Key Findings

- In the 2023 graduation cohort, 2,707 students obtained a regular diploma in four or fewer years, resulting in a district-wide graduation rate of 70.4%.
- Conversely, 1,139 (29.6%) students did not complete their coursework on time to graduate in four years. About half of non-graduates remained enrolled in the district while the other half were either not enrolled, have dropped out, or aged out by the end of the 2022-23 school year.
- The 4-year cohort graduation rate has decreased 6.3% over the last five years dropping from 76.7% in 2019 to 70.4% in 2023.
- The 4-year graduation rate at Benson (1.4%) and Burke (5.8%) increased from 2022 to 2023 while the other five high schools experienced a decrease (Bryan, Central, North, and Northwest) or no change (South).
- When analyzing individual schools over the last five years, we see variations in this trend. While Burke maintained high graduation rates, other schools such as North and South saw significant declines, with North's 4-year cohort graduation rate decreasing by 13.4% and South's decreasing by 8.0% over that time.
- Students who were not eligible for free or reduced lunch had consistently higher graduation rates than their eligible peers, reflecting a potential socioeconomic impact on graduation rates.
- Current English Learners (EL) have a significantly lower 4-year cohort graduation rate compared to non-EL students. The graduation rate for EL students is particularly affected by the delayed onset of required graduation coursework.
- Students who were previously ELs but exited the program prior to their last enrollment in the district, have a 4-year cohort graduation rate that is consistently higher than students who were never an EL.
- Students without an individualized education program (IEP) graduate at higher rates than those with an IEP.
- Female students consistently graduate at higher rates than male students.
- Asian and White students are graduating at a higher rate than Hispanic, Black or African American, and students of Two or More Races. The graduation rates for the combined American Indian or Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander group is particularly volatile, due to smaller cohort sizes.
- Students in the 2023 4-year graduation cohort who did not graduate on time were more likely to have first enrolled in the district after 9<sup>th</sup> grade, change schools or programs during high school, and be chronically absent in 9<sup>th</sup> grade compared to students who graduated in four years.
- The 4-year cohort dropout rate was 15.1% in 2023, a decrease of 0.2% from the previous year.
- All high schools had an increasing 4-year cohort dropout rate over the last five cohort years. However, five schools (Benson, Bryan, Burke, Central, and Northwest) have a decreasing or stable dropout rate between 2022 and 2023 while North and South experienced an increase.

## Introduction

There are many student data outcomes that are important indicators of success for school districts, schools, and the communities they serve. Public school districts are often measured by their ability to ensure students graduate from high school. Graduation from high school is largely a culminating metric that is impacted by almost every effort meant to support the progression of our students to the next grade, academic level, and ultimately graduation. For all our students in the Omaha Public School District (OPS), the completion of high school is a critical milestone that significantly impacts their prospects in college, career, and life. High school graduates are less likely to be unemployed and earn approximately \$8,000 more per year than those with less than a high school diploma (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Additionally, students who graduate are more likely to pursue higher education and secure better job opportunities, which leads to higher lifetime earnings. Conversely, high dropout rates can have a long-term impact on the community and local economy, as dropouts are more likely to experience unemployment, depend on public assistance, and have health issues (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

A regular review of data on graduation and dropout rates within our district allows us to identify trends and issues that can inform our support of high school graduation and long-term student well-being. Graduation rates are a key metric in evaluating the effectiveness of schools and districts and a valuable way of understanding the unique challenges within school communities. Examining dropout rates specifically provides information that can inform early identification and intervention strategies. Whether a student has academic struggles, chronic absenteeism, behavioral issues, or socioeconomic challenges, there are supports and resources available to help a student graduate. Developing an understanding of our graduation and dropout rates is a foundational step to enhance the quality of education, the efficacy of academic programs, and the success of intervention strategies.

The Council of Great City Schools' (CGCS) Academic Key Performance Indicators report for the 2021-22 school year highlighted a median graduation rate of 83.8% across member districts, with a notable median increase of 1.5 percentage points in 4-Year Cohort graduation rates from 2018-19 to 2021-22. Although OPS' current graduation rate falls below the CGCS median, it is essential to recognize the diverse conditions and resources among the CGCS member districts. However, this comparison offers a more relevant benchmark for OPS than national averages, as it reflects the complexities of urban education environments. Taken as a whole, comparability data provides insight that contributes to our ongoing efforts to address the unique needs of our students and enhance educational outcomes (Council of Great City Schools, 2023). To see information on the methodology/calculation of graduation and dropout rates, please see the reference list and Appendix A: National and District Comparison.

OPS consists of a diverse student body, with varying socioeconomic backgrounds, races/ethnicities, and educational needs. A total of 51,776 students were enrolled on October 1 of the 2022-23 school year and almost 4,000 additional students enrolled for

some period throughout the year. About 39.8% of all students are ethnically Hispanic or Latino while 22.4% identify as White, 25.1% as Black or African American, 6.3% as Asian, 5.5% as two or more races, 0.8% as Native American, and 0.1% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. About 13.5% of all students at the high school level are English Learners while 18.2% of students had an individualized education program (IEP). Additionally, 63.5% of high school students were eligible for educational benefits, a district metric that replaces free or reduced lunch eligibility as an economic indicator.

### Current Efforts to Improve Graduation Rates

Many factors impact graduation rates and the likelihood of a student completing high school or dropping out. Socio-economic challenges can significantly limit a student's access to essential resources and the stability that supports success in high school. Access to adequate healthcare and mental health support, financial stability, and reliable transportation can all play a role. Beyond these, a student's educational experience, including the special services they require, the availability of tutoring, and the nature of relationships with teachers and other students is crucial to their success. Some students spend portions of their high school career in alternative settings or in programs outside of OPS because of the services they require. English Learners can require substantial support to graduate in four years especially if they are entering the district late in their school career. Finally, absenteeism plays a significant role in student success and is most prominent at the high school level.

Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, as students enter their high school journey reinforced by the Nine for Nine Supports for Freshman. These supports include several focused initiatives that are intended to encourage a student's success in high school. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are assigned to a Freshman Academy team which creates a smaller learning community to assist transitioning to high school. Other supports include new tools and time to monitor a student's on-track for graduation status, encouraging student and family involvement in school activities, and the new Freshman Seminar course, where students explore interests, strengths, and pathway options within their school. Students are also enrolled in an advisement course where a caring adult can help them develop critical thinking skills, monitor academic progress, and build leadership skills.

During their freshman year, students will also select an academy or a pathway depending on the school they are enrolled in. Academies are a small learning community of students taking classes together with a career focus. Similarly, pathways are a series of four or more classes focused on a group of related careers, or cluster. Students in both academies and pathways continue to take their core classes (English, math, social studies, and science) along with career-focused classes and electives. The academies and pathways enrich a student's high school experience and allow them to gain skills that will be transferable to any career field while exploring career interests. These efforts are promising for increasing graduation rates over the long term, as they are designed to foster students' engagement by providing a stronger connection between learning and real-world applications.

In addition to these efforts within a regular high school setting, multiple alternative programs provide students further opportunities to obtain the 49 specific credits needed to graduate on time. Programs like Accelerate and Independent Studies allow students to obtain credits for graduation at a flexible and more efficient pace than are available at a traditional high school. Courses offered online through Edmentum provide opportunities to make up failed courses on a student's timeline. Finally, summer learning has been expanded through Next Level Learning (NLL) to give high school students another session to earn high school credits towards graduation. In the summer of 2022-23 NLL efforts led to a 6.9% increase in 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who were on track to graduate.

Other significant initiatives include expanded access to tutoring through a partnership with Paper. Paper tutoring includes one-on-one live chat sessions with experts, in both English and Spanish, in hundreds of subjects. Additionally, a recent shift to the high school, college, and career planning tool, SchoolLinks, offers a career interest inventory, course planning tools, financial aid information, resume tools, certification tracking, virtual reality campus tours, and a wide variety of career-related information (SchoolLinks, 2023). The first cohort of students to experience the Freshman Academy district wide and benefit from many of these initiatives will graduate in 2025. Thus, there is reason to be optimistic about the efforts our district is already making to improve our students' high school experience and prepare them for college, career, and life.

### Four Year Graduation Cohort Review

A graduation cohort is a group of students that enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the same time with the expectation of graduating in four years. Students that enter high school in our district in 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade are similarly entered into a graduation cohort that would have been four school years from their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. In our district, any student that enters 9<sup>th</sup> grade or transfers into the district during high school will be assigned to a high school cohort. Students enrolling in a regular high school are included in that school's cohort. Students with an initial enrollment in an OPS program and students with an initial enrollment in an interim or contracted location, are included in a regular high school's cohort based on the high school attendance area in which their home address is located. The overall district cohort and each school's cohort will continue to change each year based on changes in student enrollments, transfers out of the district, and transfers into the district. To see information on the methodology/calculation of graduation and dropout rates, please see Appendix B: Graduation and Dropout Rate Calculation Methodology.

The high school journey for individual students can vary significantly. Traditionally, a high school student enrolls in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, spends all four years enrolled at the same school, and then graduates. However, many high school students in OPS enroll after 9<sup>th</sup> grade, are enrolled in non-traditional programs, and have interrupted school experiences. These students are still considered part of a regular high school's graduation cohort and the district remains accountable for their graduation. This section is intended to review the experience of students in the 2023 graduation cohort as it

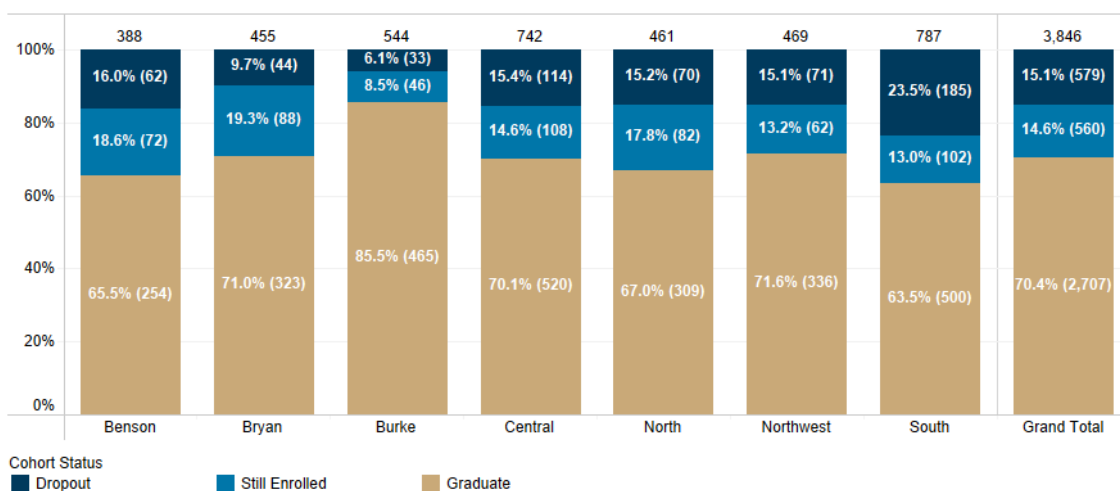


relates to their graduation status, changes in their school enrollments, and attendance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year.

The 2023 4-year graduation cohort includes 3,846 students that were expected to graduate at the end of the 2022-23 school year (Figure 1). Within this cohort, 2,707 students obtained a regular diploma in four or fewer years, resulting in a district-wide graduation rate of 70.4%. It is noteworthy that a vast majority (90.1%) were enrolled in OPS in 8<sup>th</sup> grade prior to high school, 80.9% were enrolled in their cohort school for all four years, and 94.9% graduated from their cohort school in 2022-23 or graduated early in 2021-22. Additionally, only 12.2% of graduates who were enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> grade were considered chronically absent in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. These rates remain consistent across the seven high schools included in the cohort. These experiential measurements suggest that most graduates in the cohort follow the traditional path to high school graduation.

Conversely, 1,139 (29.6%) students in the cohort did not complete the coursework required to earn a regular diploma in four years but remain accountable to OPS for their graduation (Figure 1). This population can be divided into two distinct groups that represent students who are still enrolled at a school or program at the end of the 2022-23 school year and students who were not enrolled at the end of the year or who have dropped out or aged out (would turn 22 within that school year) at some point over their high school experience. While this population did not graduate on time, they still have an opportunity to remain enrolled or to re-enroll and be included in the 5-, 6-, and 7-year cohorts and positively influence those graduation rates. In this review, a student who was not enrolled at the end of year or who dropped out or aged out at some point over their high school experience will be referred to as a “dropout”.

Figure 1. 4-Year Cohort Status by Cohort High School



*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.*

### *Still Enrolled*

About 560 students, roughly half of the students who did not graduate in four years were still enrolled in an OPS school or program or in an interim or contract setting at the end of the 2022-23 school year. This population makes up about 14.6% of the total cohort. About 75.9% (425) of these students were enrolled at a regular high school while 21.1% (118) were enrolled at an OPS program like Independent Studies, Accelerate, or Blackburn. Another 3.0% (17) of students were enrolled in an interim or contract setting like a juvenile justice center, or a program not run by the school district focused on providing behavioral or other special education services. These rates are similar across cohort high schools except for Northwest where only about 51.6% of the still-enrolled students were enrolled at the cohort school. This group of students are the most likely to remain enrolled and positively impact the 5-, 6-, and 7-year graduation rates.

Students still enrolled had a varied high school experience. Only about 41.4% of these students were enrolled at their cohort school for four school years compared to 80.9% of graduates. This suggests that these students had enrollment changes throughout their high school career or enrolled in the district after 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Only about 73.4% of students who were still enrolled have an 8<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment record in OPS compared to 90.1% for graduates. The remaining population recorded their first enrollment in 9<sup>th</sup> grade (5.9%), 10<sup>th</sup> grade (6.4%), 11<sup>th</sup> grade (6.3%), and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (8.0%). Overall, 20.7% of students who were still enrolled came to OPS after 9<sup>th</sup> grade compared to just 5.6% of graduates.

There are also differences in the student attendance rates in 9<sup>th</sup> grade between the still enrolled and graduate populations in the cohort. For the students who were enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 41.5% of the still enrolled population were chronically absent in 9<sup>th</sup> grade compared to just 12.2% for the graduate population. Additionally, only 32.0% of the still-enrolled population attended 95% or more of their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year compared to 68.2% of graduates. This group of students are more likely to be Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino, more than twice as likely to have an IEP, and three times as likely to be an EL student. To see additional tables examining this information for the 4-year cohort, please see Appendix C: 4-Year Cohort Review.

### *Dropout*

About 579 students, 15.1% of the total cohort, were not enrolled or had dropped out or aged out by the end of the 2022-23 school year. The students who are not enrolled at the end of the school year will likely transition to dropouts if they had not returned to our district or transferred out to another district by the fall of the following school year. Students who dropped out, aged out, or who were not enrolled at the end of the school year will be referred to as a “dropout” throughout the report.

About 63.4% of these students had an enrollment in the 2022-23 school year. However, because dropouts are generally recorded in enrollment records the year after a student fails to return to school, most of these students likely withdrew in their 11<sup>th</sup> grade year



(2021-22). Another 23.8% of these students had a final enrollment in the 2021-22 school year suggesting that they withdrew in their 10<sup>th</sup> grade year (2020-21).

Regardless of when a student drops out, if they were less than 22 years of age within the school year, they can re-enroll to continue their education. Additionally, if a student dropped out in our district, they would remain in our cohort unless they enroll in another school district and that change is recorded in the student information system and transmitted to NDE.

About 77.6% (449) of these students had a final enrollment at regular high school while another 18.8% (109) were enrolled at an OPS program like Independent Studies, Accelerate, or Blackburn. Another 3.6% (21) of students were enrolled in an interim or contract setting like a juvenile justice center, or a program not run by the school district focused on providing behavioral or other special education services.

The population of dropouts also have a non-traditional high school experience when measured by looking at how long a student was enrolled at their cohort school and when they first enrolled in OPS. Only about 24.0% of the dropout students were enrolled at their cohort school for 4 school years compared to 80.9% for graduates (Appendix C, Table C4). Only 61.6% of the dropout students have an 8<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment record in OPS compared to about 90.1% for graduates. The remaining population recorded their first enrollment in 9<sup>th</sup> grade (17.6%), 10<sup>th</sup> grade (11.2%), 11<sup>th</sup> grade (5.5%), and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (4.0%). Overall, about 20.7% of these students came to OPS after 9<sup>th</sup> grade compared to just 5.6% of graduates.

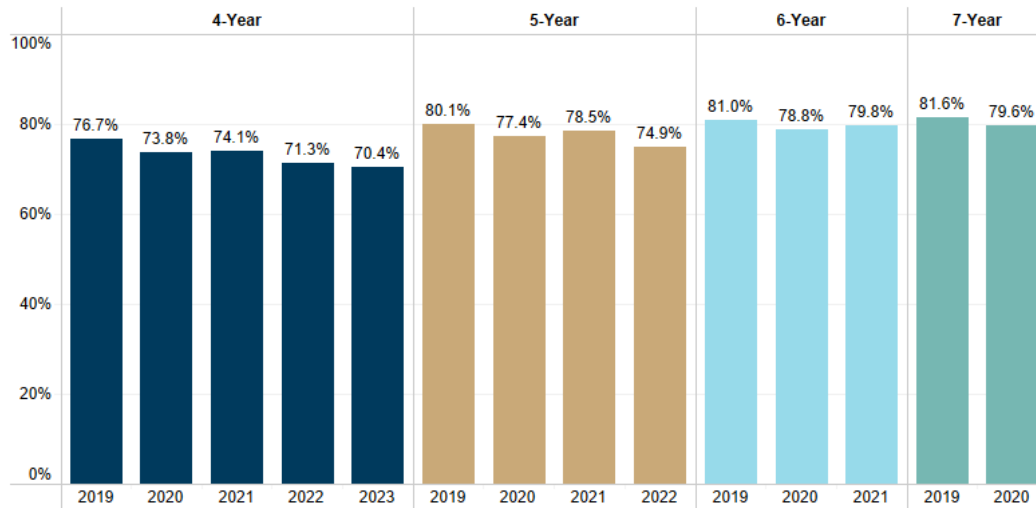
Again, we see differences in the student attendance rates in 9<sup>th</sup> grade when we compare the dropout to the graduate populations in the cohort. For students who were enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 55.1% of the dropout population were chronically absent in 9<sup>th</sup> grade compared to just 12.2% for the graduate population. Additionally, only 22.0% of the dropout population attended 95% or more of their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year compared to 68.2% of graduates. This population is more likely to be Hispanic or Latino, slightly more likely have an IEP, and more than five times as likely to be an EL student. Additionally, only 52.4% of graduates are counted as being eligible for free or reduced priced lunch compared to 75.7% for the dropout population. To see tables examining this information for the 4-year cohort, please see Appendix C: 4-Year Cohort Review.

## Graduation Rate Trends

The following section examines trends in graduation cohorts across the last five school years and several demographic groups. Figure 2 demonstrates the graduation rates for the 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7-year cohorts across five years, from 2019 to 2023. The highest graduation rate observed is the 7-year rate for the 2019 cohort, which was 81.6%. When viewed from a cohort perspective, all cohorts increased among the 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7-year measurements as more students still enrolled in our district successfully graduate. When viewed from a year-to-graduate perspective, the 4-year cohort graduation rate has been gradually decreasing over the last five years. The overall 4-year graduation rate decreased from 76.7% in 2019 to 70.4% in 2023, a decrease of

6.3%. A similar trend is noticeable for the 5-year cohort with the overall graduation rate dropping from 80.1% in 2019 to 74.9% in 2022.

Figure 2. Cohort Graduation Rates



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

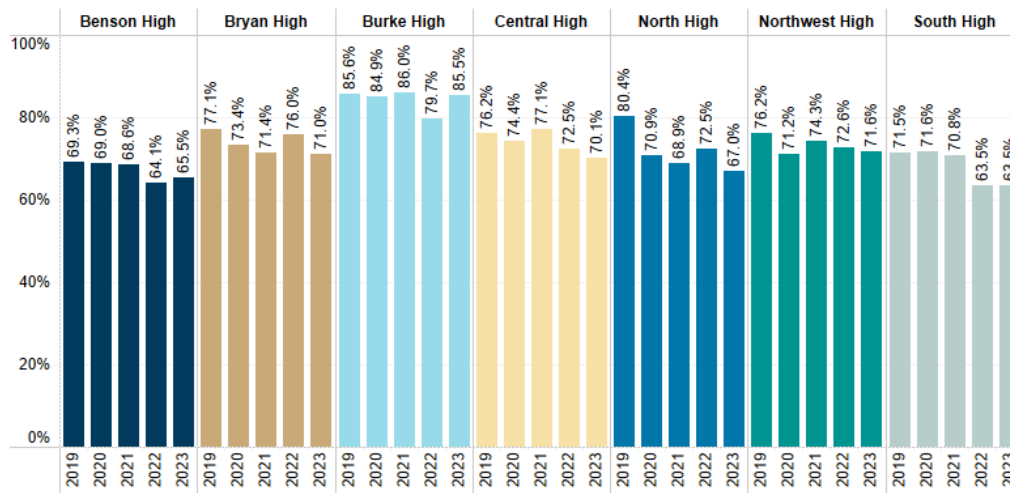
## Graduation Rates by High School

When the 4-year graduation rates are viewed from a cohort high school perspective, we see several differences between schools (Figure 3). It is important to note that while most students included in a school's cohort were enrolled there for all four years, student enrollment experiences are varied as discussed in the 2023 4-year cohort review. The 4-year graduation rate at Benson and Burke increased from 2022 to 2023 while the other five high schools experienced a decrease (Bryan, Central, North, and Northwest) or no change (South).

- Benson: The 4-year graduation rate increased by 1.4% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from a high of 69.3% in 2019 to 65.5% in 2023.
- Burke: The 4-year graduation rate increased by 5.8% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, graduation rates have consistently been the highest in the district starting at 85.6% in 2019 and ending at 85.5% in 2023.
- Bryan: The 4-year graduation rate declined by 4.0% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from a high of 77.1% in 2019 to 71.0% in 2023.
- Central: The 4-year graduation rate declined by 2.4% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from 76.2% in 2019 to 70.1% in 2023.
- North: The 4-year graduation rate declined by 5.5% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from 80.4% in 2019 to 67.0% in 2023, the largest overall decrease among schools.

- Northwest: The 4-year graduation rate declined by 1.0% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from 76.2% in 2019 to 71.6% in 2023.
- South: The 4-year graduation rate remained the same from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, graduation rates have declined from 71.5% in 2019 to 63.5% in 2023.

Figure 3. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by High School



*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. Buena Vista and Westview high schools are excluded, as they opened in Fall 2022 with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Their first graduation class will be at the end of the 2024-25 school year.*

## Graduation Rates by Demographic Group

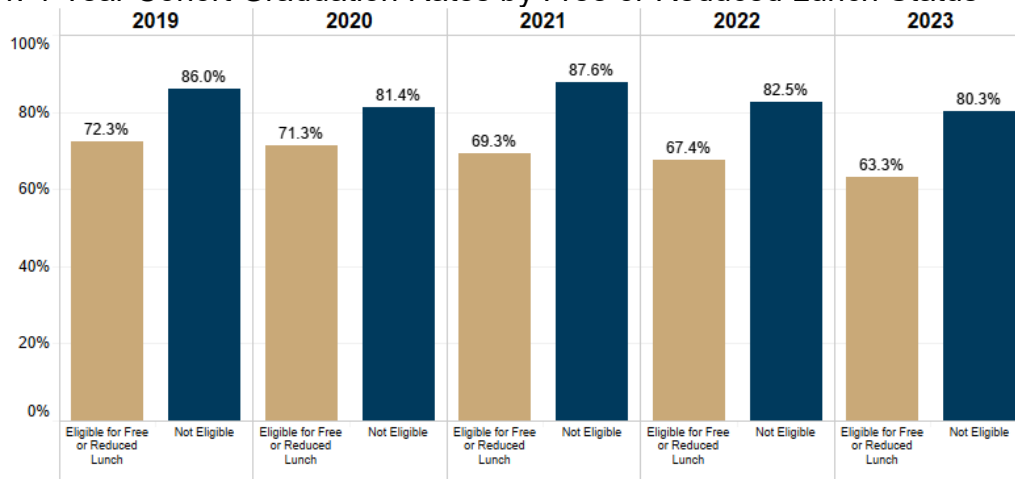
Over the last five years, students not eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch have consistently higher graduation rates compared to those who are eligible (Figure 4). The gap in graduation rates has widened over that time to a difference of 17.0% in 2023. However, OPS participated in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in the 2022-23 school year, eliminating the need for free or reduced lunch forms. Therefore, the Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) free and reduced lunch eligibility metric, used in this reporting, only includes students who are directly certified and at a higher level of poverty.

Female students have consistently higher graduation rates compared to male students over the past five years (Figure 5). The graduation rate for females was 75.5% in 2023 compared to 65.3% for male students, a gap of 10.2%, the smallest gap over the last five years.

The data highlights disparities in graduation rates among different racial/ethnic groups as well (Figure 6). As of 2023, 4-year cohort graduation rates are highest for Asian and White students and lowest for American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and Hispanic students. Across all racial/ethnic groups, there has been a general downward trend in graduation rates over the last five years.

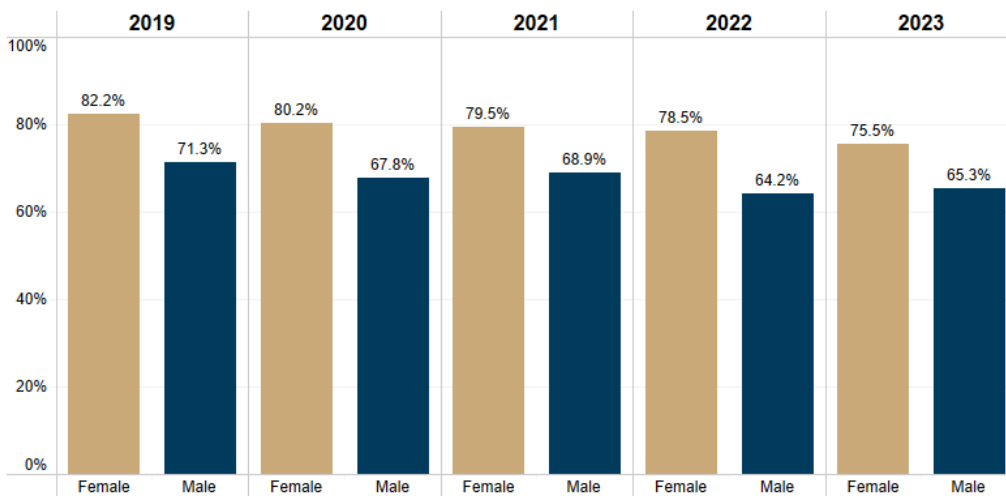
Percentages for the combined American Indian/Pacific Islander group show considerable volatility, largely due to the relatively small number of students in this group, compared to other groups. Additionally, there was a notable downward trend for students who are Hispanic or Latino or who identify as Two or More Races. However, there are more recent positive trends among some groups. Students that identify as Asian recorded a 12.1% increase in graduation rates from 2019 to 2022 until experiencing a decrease of 4.3% in 2023. Black or African American students have experienced small increases over the last three years growing from 70.7% in 2021 to 71.7% in 2023.

Figure 4. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Free or Reduced Lunch Status



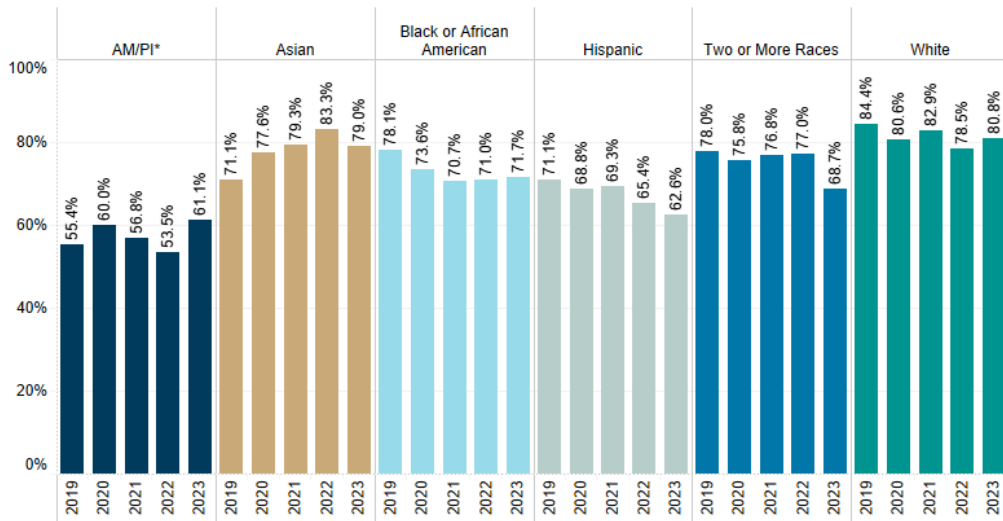
Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 5. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Gender



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 6. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. \*AM/PI = American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander have been grouped due to small group size.

### Graduation Rates by English Learner and IEP Status

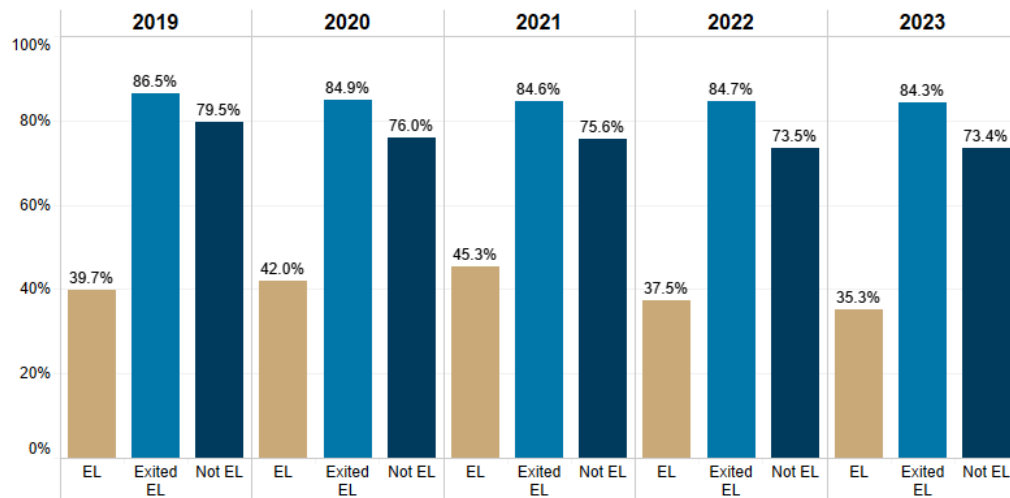
Over the last five years, students that have exited the English Learner (EL) program prior to high school, or in high school, have consistently higher graduation rates than students who were never ELs or who are in the EL program. The average graduation rate of Exited EL over the last five years was about 84.6%, the highest of any student group analyzed (Figure 7). Notably, graduation rates for ELs rose to 45.3% in 2021 but dropped over the last two years.

English Learner (EL) students that remain ELs in high school often face a longer journey to graduation as they develop proficiency in English before fully engaging with the standard curriculum. For example, some ELs must take sheltered EL courses before they take English 1-2 to get English credits like most ninth-grade students. Further, some ELs may enter the district as an older student in 9<sup>th</sup> grade or later after coming to the United States from other countries. Consequently, these challenges can extend the time required for ELs to fulfill all graduation requirements, compared to their native English-speaking peers or those who gained proficiency in English through district English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum. However, all EL students have an opportunity to graduate in four years by following their individual graduation plan that may include summer learning and additional credit accrual opportunities.

Students without an IEP consistently have higher graduation rates than their peers with an IEP (Figure 8). The gap between the two groups remains substantial throughout the last five years from 2019 to 2023, with an average gap of 21.5%. The graduation rates for students with an IEP have decreased by 6.2% over the last five years but remained stable at an average of 53.4% over the last three. The special education needs that

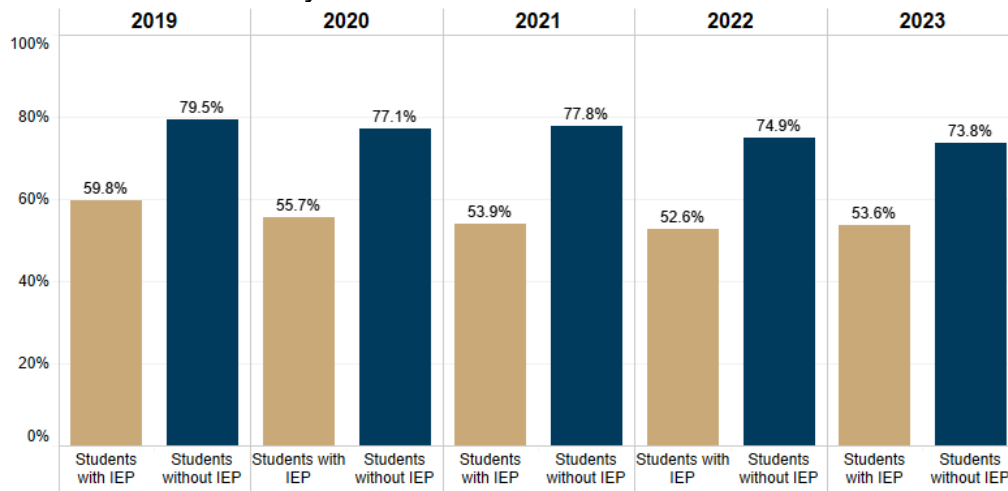
students require can vary from enrollment in a separate school to intermittent speech services within a regular high school. Like students who are learning English, the need for special education services can extend the time required for students to fulfill all graduation requirements.

Figure 7. Graduation Rates by English Language Learner Status



*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. English Learner Status for Exited EL students had been adjusted using the last enrollment in OPS. The Exited EL and Not EL rates will not match the Nebraska Education Profile because students are not disaggregated in this way.*

Figure 8. Graduation Rates by IEP Status



*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.*

## Dropout Rate Trends

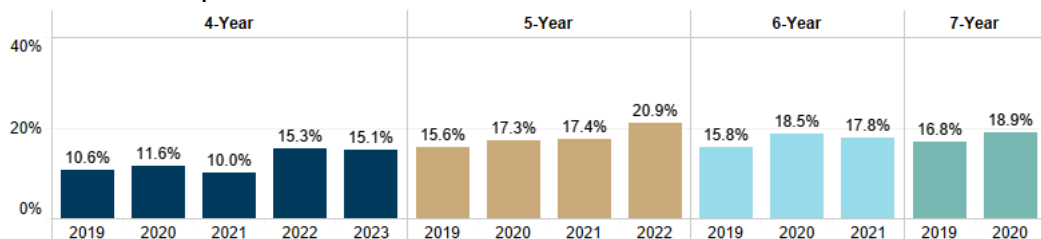
The NDE collects and reports dropout rates each year for students in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Unlike graduation rates, which are based on a graduation cohort, dropouts are reported on a yearly basis as a proportion of the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade population.



These rates are not directly related to cohort graduation rates but provide the percentage of students that are disengaging from education across the population because they have aged out, dropped out, or are otherwise not enrolled in a school by the following school year. In 2022-23, NDE reported that 3.2% of OPS 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students dropped out. This is a decrease from the previous year where 4.4% of students were reported to have dropped out. In the state of Nebraska overall, 1.4% of 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students dropped out in 2022-23. To see information on the methodology/calculation of dropout rates, please see Appendix B: Graduation and Dropout Rate Calculation Methodology.

Alternatively, one can view dropout rates from a cohort perspective as we have in the analysis below. The rates discussed below include students who dropped out, aged out, or who were not enrolled at the end of the school year and the term “dropout” will be used to describe all these groups. The dropout rates below are calculated as a proportion of the cohort and not all students in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Figure 9). The dropout rate is not a direct reciprocal with graduation rates because some students remain enrolled in school even though they have not graduated or dropped out. For all cohorts, the dropout rate has been increasing since 2019. Notably, the 4-year cohort dropout rate increased from 10.0% in 2021 to 15.3% in 2022 and decreased slightly in 2023. The 5-year cohort experienced a noticeable increase as well going from 17.4% in 2021 to 20.9% in 2022. The 6-year and 7-year cohort also experienced an increase in dropout rates with the 6-year cohort going from 17.8% in 2021 to 18.5% in 2022 and the 7-year cohort going from 16.8% in 2019 to 18.9% in 2020.

Figure 9. Cohort Dropout Rates



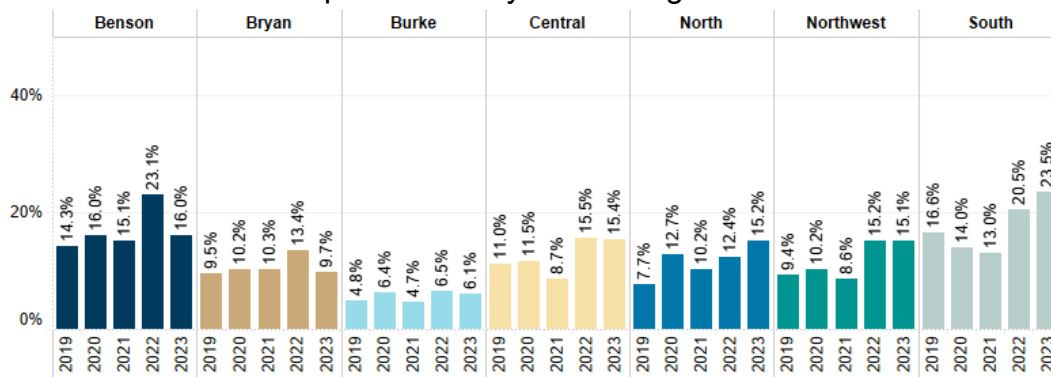
Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

## Dropout Rates by High School

When the 4-year dropout rates are viewed from a cohort perspective, we see several differences between schools (Figure 10). It is important to note that students counted at a cohort school could have aged out or dropped out directly from that high school, from an OPS or non-OPS program, or were not enrolled by the fall of the following school year. All high schools have experienced an increasing dropout rate over the last five cohort years. However, five schools (Benson, Bryan, Burke, Central, and Northwest) have experienced a decreasing or stable dropout rate between 2022 and 2023 while North and South experienced an increase.

- Benson: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 7.1% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, dropout rates have been stable at about 15% except for a spike in 2022.
- Bryan: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 3.1% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, dropout rates have been stable at about 10% except for a spike in 2022.
- Burke: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 0.4% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, dropout rates have been stable at about 6%, the lowest of all high schools.
- Central: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 0.1% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, dropout rates generally increased, peaking at 15.5% in 2022.
- Northwest: The 4-year dropout rate decreased by 0.1% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, dropout rates generally increased, peaking at 15.2% in 2022.
- North: The 4-year dropout rate increased by 2.8% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, dropout rates have generally increased, peaking at 15.2% in 2023.
- South: The 4-year dropout rate increased by 3.0% from 2022 to 2023. Over the last five years, dropout rates generally increased, peaking at 23.5% in 2023.

Figure 10. 4 Year Cohort Dropout Rates by Cohort High School



*Note: Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. Buena Vista and Westview high schools are excluded, as they opened in Fall 2022 with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Their first graduation class will be at the end of the 2024-25 school year.*

## Dropout Rates by Demographic Group

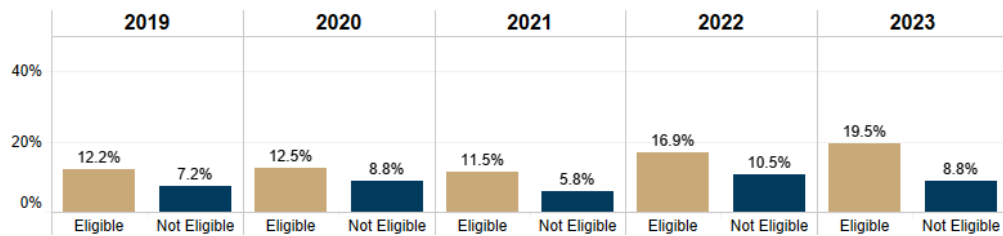
Over the last five years, the dropout rate for students eligible for free or reduced lunch increased from 12.2% to 19.5% (Figure 11). Students who were not eligible have a relatively stable dropout rate over that time increasing from 7.2% to 8.8% with a noticeable spike to 10.5% in 2022.

Generally, male students experienced higher dropout rate compared to their female peers (Figure 12). The rates for females were 12.3% in 2023 compared to 17.8% for male students, a gap of 5.5%.

The data highlights disparities in dropout rates among different racial/ethnic groups (Figure 13). As of 2023, 4-year cohort dropout rates are lowest for Asian and White

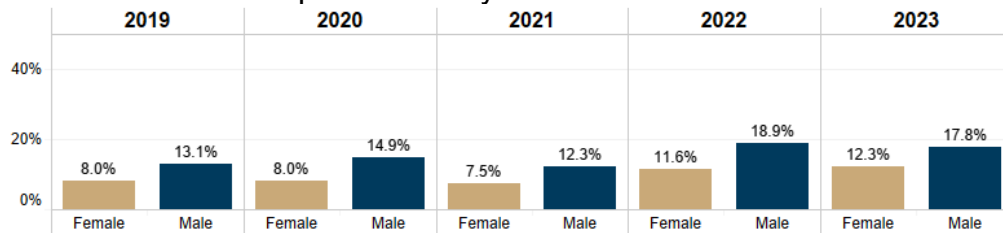
students and highest for American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and Hispanic students. Percentages for the combined American Indian/Pacific Islander group show considerable volatility, largely due to the relatively small number of students in this group, compared to other groups. Black or African American students have experienced a 1.2% decrease in dropout rates over the last two years going from 12.8% in 2022 to 10.2% in 2023. Students who identify as Asian and White also experienced a 2.7% and 2.9% decrease respectively over the last two years.

Figure 11. 4 Year Cohort Dropout Rates by Free or Reduced Lunch



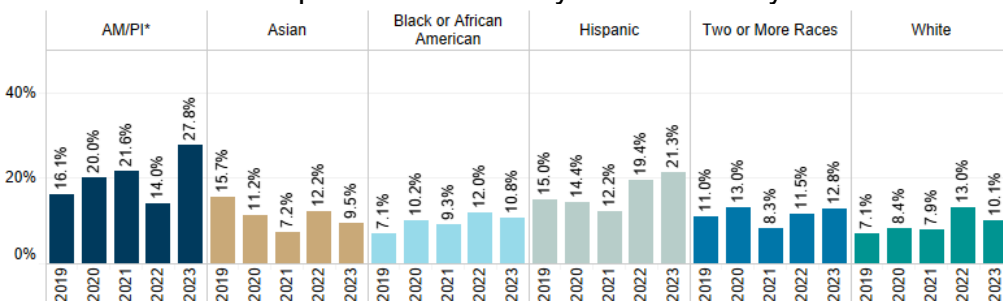
Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 12. 4 Year Cohort Dropout Rates by Gender



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.

Figure 13. 4 Year Cohort Dropout Rate Trend by Race/Ethnicity



Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. \*AM/PI = American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander have been grouped due to small group size.

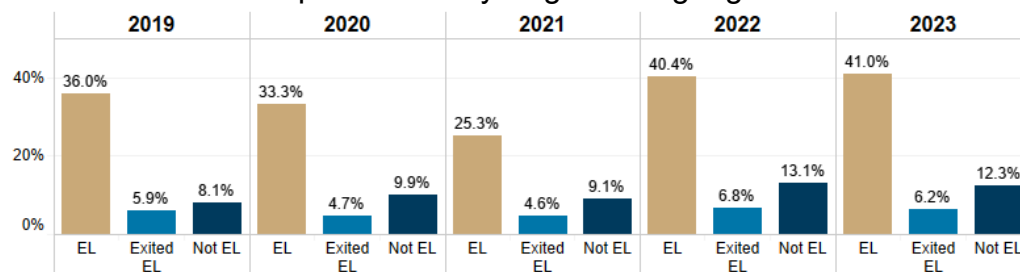
## Dropout Rates by English Learner and IEP Status

Students that have exited the EL program prior to high school, or in high school, have consistently lower dropout rates than students who were never ELs or who are currently

in the EL program over the last five years (Figure 14). The average dropout rate of Exited ELs over the last five years was about 5.6%, the lowest of any student group analyzed. Notably, dropout rates for ELs decreased to 25.3% in 2021 but increased to over 40% in the last two years. The dropout rate for students who were never ELs increase from 8.1% in 2019 to 12.3% in 2023. Notably, the population of EL students who have dropped out included students who aged out of school, a group that is almost nonexistent in the exited EL and students that were never ELs dropout population. The fact that some high school ELs enter the district as an older student or after 9<sup>th</sup> grade after coming to the United States from other countries, likely impacts the EL dropout rate.

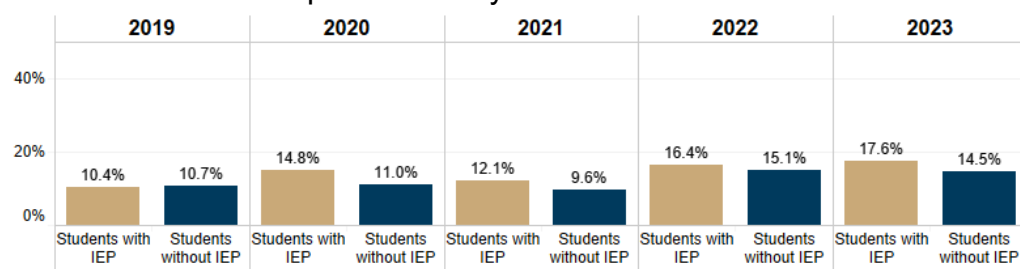
Students with an IEP generally have higher dropout rates than their peers without an IEP (Figure 15). However, the gap between the two groups is minimal over the five years, with an average gap of 2.7%. Both groups experienced their largest dropout rate over the last five years in 2023.

Figure 14. 4 Year Cohort Dropout Rates by English Language Learner Status



*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER. English Learner Status for Exited EL students had been adjusted using the last enrollment in OPS.*

Figure 15. 4 Year Cohort Dropout Rates by IEP Status



*Note: All data are from the Cohort Detail Report from ADVISER.*

## Conclusion

As we look to the future, there will be additional opportunities to dive deeper into the data in this report. Within the next two years we should be able to disaggregate the information by a student's academy or pathway to begin to understand the impact that this initiative might have. Additional disaggregation of this information by cohort school may also highlight successful strategies or best practices they utilize that would be beneficial for district-wide implementation. Additionally, we should consider the efforts

undertaken by other school districts that have found success in improving graduation rates for specific groups of students and for the overall population. A further evaluation of the record keeping practices in the district's student information system could also benefit our understanding and measurement of these important metrics.

The journey toward improved graduation and dropout rates in OPS is ongoing. It will demand resilience, innovation, and a steadfast dedication to equity and excellence. As we move forward, we will continue to rely on data-driven strategies, engagement with our community partners, and most importantly, listening to and learning from our students. Their voices and experiences are the most critical guides for our work, helping us to build an educational community where every student is valued, supported, and empowered to achieve their fullest potential.

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## Appendix A: National and District Comparison

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2019-2020 academic year, the average adjusted cohort graduation rate for public high school students in the United States reached a high of 87% since its initial measurement in 2010-2011 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). However, this figure does not necessarily reflect the graduation rates in urban districts, where there's considerable fluctuation due to a variety of factors such as socioeconomic conditions.

U.S. News reports that for the 2021-2022 school year, the average graduation rate across 49 states plus Washington, D.C. (excluding Oklahoma due to unavailable recent data) rose to 79%, which is a 2% increase from the previous year. The state-reported graduation rates varied widely, with the lowest average at nearly 73% and the highest at 92%, as per each state's education department data (U.S. News, 2023).

To enhance graduation rates, school districts can utilize a multifaceted strategy that addresses both academic and broader life circumstances of students. For instance, employing graduation coaches to closely monitor and support students' academic journeys and offering personalized class schedules, such as night classes, can significantly accommodate students' needs, especially for students balancing work or internships. Building strong relationships between staff and students also plays a crucial role. Efforts to engage families in the educational process, through methods such as in-person home visits and/or virtual meetings (when most convenient for families), further support student success by involving them in crucial planning stages, including credit recovery programs (Breunlin, 2024).

For example, Harrison School District 2 saw an increase in its graduation rates, from 80.0% for the class of 2022 to 82.3% for the class of 2023, which has been attributed to such comprehensive strategies. This district, similar to Omaha Public Schools, faces challenges with lower graduation rates among specific student groups, highlighting the need for tailored approaches to meet diverse needs.

Denver Public Schools represents another case where aligning coursework with students' interests through vocational training, internships, and career and technical education classes contributed to an increase in its four-year graduation rate, from 76.5% in 2022 to 79% in 2023 (Breunlin, 2024). This strategy emphasizes helping students find relevance and purpose in their education, to help them discover what they most want to pursue and see the practical steps they need to take to achieve their dreams.

## Appendix B: Graduation and Dropout Rate Calculation Methodology

### ***Graduation Cohort Determination***

When a student enrolls in 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time in Nebraska, they are assigned to a 4-year graduation cohort that is expected to graduate in 4 school years. Students that enter high school in 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade are similarly entered into a graduation cohort that would have been 4 school years from their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. School districts upload enrollment and expected graduation year information to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) through the ADVISER system. Ultimately, the NDE keeps the final record of which students are in a cohort based on the information submitted by school districts. The school and district that a student is enrolled in when they first enter high school becomes their cohort. A student's membership in a cohort year does not generally change throughout high school but the school or district that they are assigned to can change.

In our district, any student that enters 9<sup>th</sup> grade or transfers into the district during high school will be assigned to a high school cohort. Students enrolling in a regular high school are included in that school's cohort. Students with an initial enrollment in an OPS program such as JP Lord, Omaha Virtual High School, or the ESL Teen Literacy Center, and students with an initial enrollment in an interim or contracted location, are included in a regular high school's cohort based on the high school attendance area in which their home address is located. The overall district cohort and each school's cohort will continue to change each year based on changes in student enrollments, transfers out of the district, and transfers into the district. These changes are predicated on the enrollment end status and the school of assignment field on a student's enrollment in the student information system. The following situations described below can cause a student's cohort to change or, in some cases, remain the same.

- If a student moved to a different regular high school within our district, they would move to that school's cohort. **(Transfer Out of a School)**
- If a student moved to an OPS program (including interim and contracted locations), from a regular high school, they would remain in their previous school's cohort. **(No Change)**
- If a student moved to another district, state, or country, they would be removed from both the school's and the district's cohort if they had the correct end status in the student information system. **(Transfer Out of the District)**
- If a student moved into OPS and enrolls at a regular high school or lived in the home attendance area of that high school but enrolled at an OPS program (including interim and contracted locations), they would be added to the school's and district's cohort. **(Transfer In)**
- If a student dropped out or aged out from a regular high school, or an OPS program (including interim and contracted locations), they would remain the school's and district's cohort. **(No Change)**

- If a student passed away, they would be removed from the school's and district's cohort. **(Transfer Out)**

The cohort determinations produce the denominator in the graduation rate calculations while the number of graduates produces the numerator. Graduation rates are calculated at the end of the cohort's 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> year in high school with the 4<sup>th</sup> year being the cohort's expected on-time graduation year. The NDE calculates 4-year graduation rates in November following each school year using the following formula. The 5-, 6-, and 7-year cohorts are also calculated at that time using similar formulas.

$$\frac{\text{\# of Graduates (4 year only)}}{\text{\# of True Freshman + Transfers In – Transfers Out}}$$

### ***New Cohort Dropout Determination***

This new method of calculating dropout rates takes the same approach as the cohort graduation rates described above as it measures the percentage of the cohort students who have dropped out, aged out, or who are not enrolled. These three groups of students have been grouped together throughout this report as “dropouts” for simplicity. The cohort dropout rate is calculated as a proportion of the cohort, determined in the same way as the graduation cohort described above, and not all students in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade as calculated by NDE. The dropout rate is not a direct reciprocal with graduation rates because some students remain enrolled in school even though they have not graduated or dropped out. Students are considered a dropout if they:

1. Was no longer enrolled but was eligible to return (enrollment code 205).
2. Completed the Withdrawn from Mandatory Attendance process (enrollment code 209).
3. Aged out - A student over the age of twenty-one to which the district/system is no longer required to provide a free, public education (enrollment code 208).
4. Drop out - A student completed the formal dropout process (enrollment code 202).

The cohort determinations produce the denominator in the dropout rate calculations while the number of dropouts, age out and not enrolled students produces the numerator. While this rate has no equivalent measurement from NDE, it provides an understanding of the population of students who have disengaged from their education prior to graduation.

$$\frac{\text{\# of Dropouts + Age Outs + and Not Enrolled (4 year only)}}{\text{\# of True Freshman + Transfers In – Transfers Out}}$$

### ***NDE Dropout Determination***

NDE collects and reports dropout rates based each year for students in grades 7 through 12. Unlike graduation rates which are based on a graduation cohort, dropouts

are reported on a yearly basis. Students are considered a dropout based on the following conditions:

1. Was enrolled in school but withdrew at some time during the school year; and
  - a. Was not enrolled on or before October 1 of the following school year; or completed the Withdrawn from Mandatory Attendance process as per 79-202. This form with appropriate approvals should be on file at the district. The students that complete this process should be recorded with an Exit Withdraw Type (Enrollment Code) 209.
2. Was enrolled on the last day of school; and
  - a. Was not re-enrolled the following school year; and
  - b. Was not enrolled on or before October 1 of the subsequent school year (i.e., was not reported as a dropout the year before).
3. Aged out - A student over the age of twenty-one to which the district/system is no longer required to provide a free, public education. The aged out enrollment status is used for this student. (Exit Enrollment Code 208.)

Similar to graduation cohort determination, the following considerations will indicate that a student is not considered a dropout.

- If they were a completer with a regular diploma.
- Transferred to another public district, special purpose school, nonpublic system, exempt (homeschool) or district-approved educational program and known to be receiving services. **(Transferred Out)**
- If the student died, they are removed from the calculation.

The following shows the calculation used to determine district dropout rates according to NDE and is meant to answer the question, "Of those students who were enrolled at official fall membership, how many dropped out?"

$$\frac{\text{\# of Dropouts (7-12th grade)}}{\text{\# of Students (7-12th grade) at Official Fall Membership}}$$

## Appendix C: 4-Year Cohort Review

These tables were produced using the 2023 4-year graduation cohort file from the Cohort Detail Report in ADVISER and student enrollment and attendance information from Infinite Campus. This analysis was conducted to help describe this cohort's high school experience. Students who have dropped out, aged out, or who are not enrolled have been grouped together as "dropouts" for simplicity.

Table C1 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2022-23 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or who dropped out by cohort high school.

*Table C1. 2023 4-Year Cohort Status by Cohort High School*

Cohort School	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Total Count
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
Benson	254	65.5%	72	18.6%	62	16.0%	<b>388</b>
Bryan	323	71.0%	88	19.3%	44	9.7%	<b>455</b>
Burke	465	85.5%	46	8.5%	33	6.1%	<b>544</b>
Central	520	70.1%	108	14.6%	114	15.4%	<b>742</b>
North	309	67.0%	82	17.8%	70	15.2%	<b>461</b>
Northwest	336	71.6%	62	13.2%	71	15.1%	<b>469</b>
South	500	63.5%	102	13.0%	185	23.5%	<b>787</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,707</b>	<b>70.4%</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>3,846</b>

Table C2 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2022-23 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by the first recorded enrollment in the Omaha Public Schools.

*Table C2. 2023 4-Year Cohort Status by First Recorded Enrollment in 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

First Enrollment Record 8th-12th Grade	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
8th Grade	2440	90.1%	411	73.4%	357	61.7%	3208	83.4%
9th Grade	115	4.2%	33	5.9%	102	17.6%	250	6.5%
10th Grade	55	2.0%	36	6.4%	65	11.2%	156	4.1%
11th Grade	56	2.1%	35	6.3%	32	5.5%	123	3.2%
12th Grade	41	1.5%	45	8.0%	23	4.0%	109	2.8%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2707</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3846</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table C3 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2022-23 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their final enrollment location.

*Table C3. 2023 4-Year Cohort Status by Final Enrollment Location*

Final Enrollment Location	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Cohort High School	2569	94.9%	425	75.9%	449	77.5%	3443	89.5%
OPS Program	127	4.7%	118	21.1%	109	18.8%	354	9.2%
Non-OPS Program	11	0.4%	17	3.0%	21	3.6%	49	1.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2707</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3846</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table C4 describes the proportion of students within the 2022-23 4-year cohort who were enrolled in the same cohort school for four years by their cohort status and their cohort school. All 3,846 cohort students are included in this table and 66.6% (2,560) of all cohort students were in the same cohort school for four years. Graduates were much more likely to be enrolled in the same cohort school for four years compared to the still enrolled students and students who dropped out.

*Table C4. Percent of 2023 4-Year Cohort Enrolled at the Same Cohort School for 4 Years (Using Final Enrollment in Each Year) by Cohort Status*

Cohort School	Graduate	Still Enrolled	Dropout	Total % Enrolled in Same School for 4 Years
Benson	71.3%	43.1%	21.0%	58.0%
Bryan	80.8%	35.2%	29.5%	67.0%
Burke	82.8%	37.0%	15.2%	74.8%
Central	78.8%	38.0%	21.9%	64.2%
North	82.8%	45.1%	18.6%	66.4%
Northwest	74.4%	27.4%	23.9%	60.6%
South	89.2%	56.9%	28.6%	70.8%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>80.9%</b>	<b>41.4%</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>66.6%</b>



Table C5 describes the proportion of students that graduated, were still enrolled, and who dropped out within the 2022-23 4-year cohort who were enrolled in the same cohort school for four years by their cohort school. This table only includes 2,560 students who were enrolled in the same cohort school for four years out of the 3,846 students in the cohort. More than 85% of students enrolled in the same cohort school for four years graduated on time.

*Table C5. Percent of Students who Graduated, were Still Enrolled, or Dropped Out in the 2023 4-Year Cohort who were Enrolled at Cohort School for 4 Years (Using Final Enrollment in Each Year)*

Cohort School	Graduate	Still Enrolled	Dropout	Total Percent
Benson	80.4%	13.8%	5.8%	100.0%
Bryan	85.6%	10.2%	4.3%	100.0%
Burke	94.6%	4.2%	1.2%	100.0%
Central	86.1%	8.6%	5.3%	100.0%
North	83.7%	12.1%	4.2%	100.0%
Northwest	88.0%	6.0%	6.0%	100.0%
South	80.1%	10.4%	9.5%	100.0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table C6 describes the number and proportion of students within the 2022-23 4-year cohort who graduated, were still enrolled, or dropped out by their attendance rate in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

*Table C6. 2023 4-Year Cohort 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Attendance Rate by Cohort Status (Only Students Enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade)*

9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Attendance Rate	Graduate		Still Enrolled		Dropout		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Not Chronic ≥ 95%	1710	68.2%	139	32.0%	103	22.0%	1952	57.2%
At Risk <95%-<90%	493	19.6%	115	26.5%	107	22.9%	715	21.0%
Chronically Absent ≤ 90%	306	12.2%	180	41.5%	258	55.1%	744	21.8%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3411</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Appendix D: Additional Charts

Figure D1. 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

