

Portland Schools Foundation

# FROM SCHOOL TO LIFE: Connecting Portland Youth to Successful Futures

*A preview of the forthcoming  
Connected by 25 report from the  
Portland Schools Foundation*

## CONNECTED BY 25

In 2007, the Portland Schools Foundation published new research that showed far fewer students were graduating from local high schools than previously thought, and that thousands of Portland youth were disconnected from school and work. The data also identified academic indicators to predict whether a student would disconnect, giving educators and advocates a roadmap to intervene at key moments. Ninth grade, in particular, was identified as a crucial transition period.

The research was released as part of the launch of Connected by 25, a broad campaign to engage community groups, schools, business leaders, and policy makers around the vision that all Portland youth would be connected with school, work, and the community by the age of 25. Connected by 25 partners committed to bring new focus and resources to the ninth grade transition and the early warning data. This included the launch of the Ninth Grade Counts initiative.

In spring 2010, the Portland Schools Foundation will release a new Connected by 25 report to highlight promising developments and underscore the importance of keeping all students on-track.

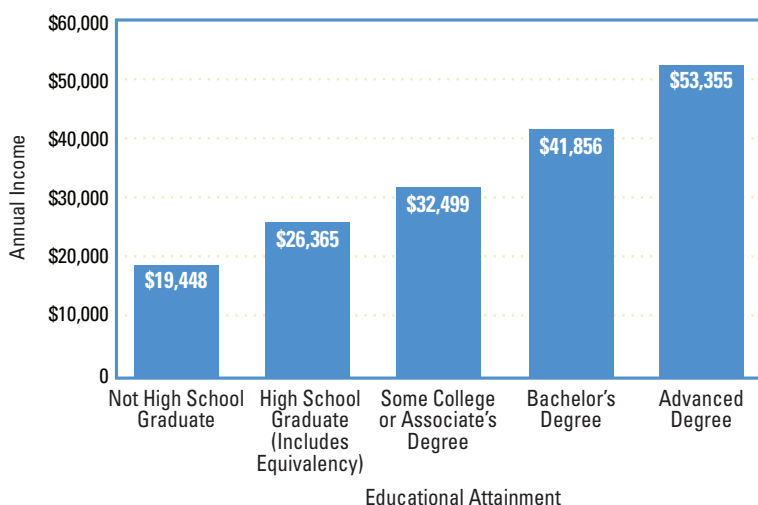
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If Portland-area schools were to cut the dropout rate in half, in an average year these “new graduates” would:

- Earn \$38 million in additional wages
- Contribute an additional \$4 million in state and local taxes

Source: Alliance for Excellent Education.

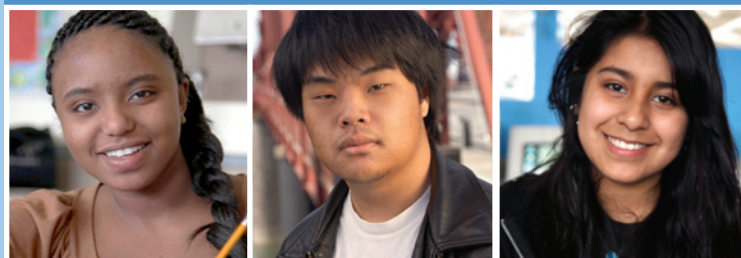
Median Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment (Multnomah County 2008)



Source: 2008 American Community Survey.

## KEY FINDINGS OF THE NEW CONNECTED BY 25 REPORT

- A student who drops out in Multnomah County will earn \$19,448 a year – less than half the income of someone with a bachelor’s degree; over a lifetime the difference in income is more than \$1 million.
- Nearly 30% of dropouts in Multnomah County live below the poverty level.
- In 2008, 42% of Multnomah County students failed to graduate with their peers.
- Youth of color will soon make up a majority of all students in the county, yet African American, Hispanic, and Native American youth consistently fare worse in school, with graduation rates as much as 23 percentage points lower than white students.
- On any given day, in the Portland community, there are roughly 3,000 high school-aged youth disconnected from school.
- Today’s young adults have less education than their parents’ generation, so as baby boomers retire, Portland’s workforce will become less educated.
- College or post-secondary training is increasingly necessary to make it as an adult; yet one in three local graduates do not continue their education after high school.
- Eighty-seven percent of local students who enroll at Portland Community College are unprepared for college-level math and require remediation.
- Among first-time, full-time students who enroll in local public colleges, only 42% graduate or transfer to another institution within 150% of normal time.



*Success for Every Young Portlander*



To learn more visit [www.connectedby25.org](http://www.connectedby25.org).

## RESULTS THAT MATTER

Despite the challenges, recent progress shows that the community is well-positioned and committed to helping more youth succeed.

**Targeting students early:** New research confirms earlier Connected by 25 findings that academic indicators are the most powerful tools to identify students who will drop out.



Such indicators give adults the tools needed to intervene early—and local school districts and their partners have put these indicators to work with promising results.

**Reconnecting more students:** In 2009, the PPS Transition Center was created to offer disconnected students a first point-of-entry for returning to school.

The center re-enrolled nearly 100 students in its first year, and the Multnomah Education Service District is now expanding the model throughout Multnomah County.

**Investing in youth:** In 2008, voters renewed the Portland Children’s Levy, providing \$12 million annually for youth programming; continued investments in the SUN System and a host of other public and privately-supported programs help students build the skills they need for school and life.

**Leading the way:** In 2009, Portland Mayor Sam Adams and former Multnomah County Chair Ted Wheeler placed high school graduation and college access at the top of their agendas, helping to align and launch a broad set of student success strategies.

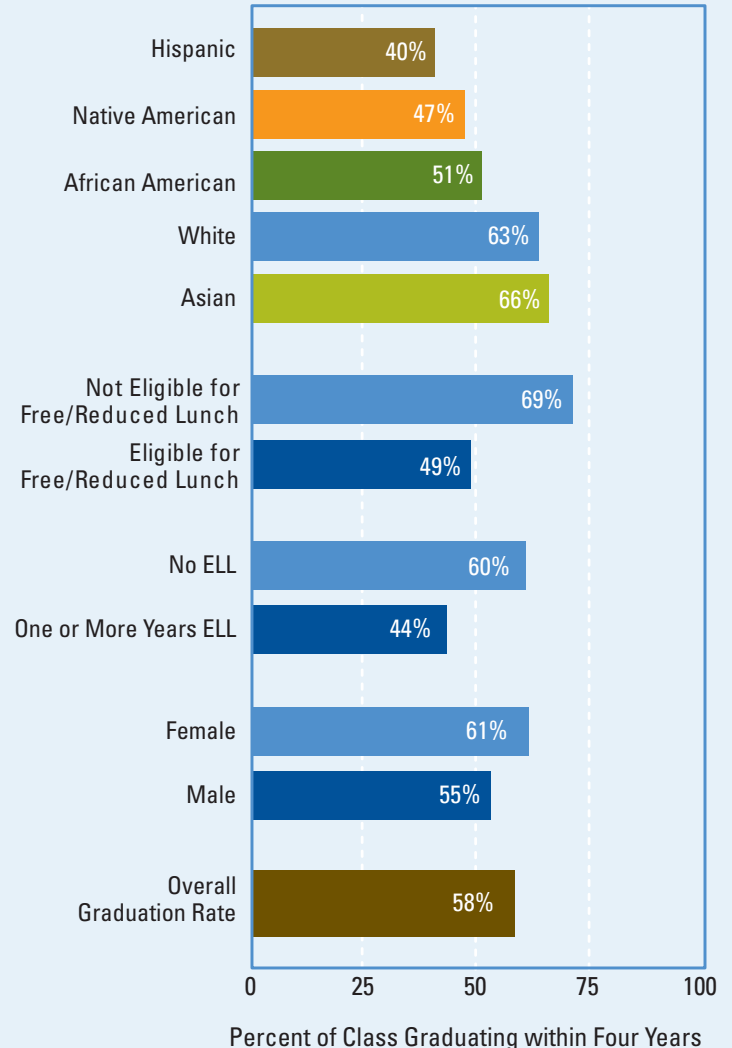


**Summer jobs:** In the summer of 2009, at a time of record youth unemployment, federal stimulus dollars helped hundreds of local employers put more than 800 low-income youth to work across Multnomah County (Worksystems Inc. is leading

an effort to sustain this initiative). The Mayor’s office led a related initiative in which dozens of businesses and colleges hosted site visits and job shadows for more than 400 at-risk incoming ninth graders.

**Empowering youth voices:** In 2009, the Multnomah Youth Commission, a diverse group of youth leaders, won support for a program to provide free access to public transportation for 13,000 PPS high school students as part of an effort to connect more of their peers with school, work, and the community.

PPS Class of 2007: 4-Year Graduation Rate by Demographic Characteristics



Source: Mary Beth Celio, Four- and Five-Year Graduation Rates for the Portland Public Schools Class of 2007.

A follow-up longitudinal study of the PPS class of 2007 shows an increase in on-time graduation rates – from 54% to 58% – between 2004 and 2007. This is good news for the community. Still, more than four in ten local students do not graduate on-time and stark disparities remain based on race, income, and other factors.

