



EDUCATION: FIXING THE SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM/DROPOUT RATES IN DETROIT

Anthony Duran Gutierrez, Andy Avalos, Francois Fleming



A brief history

- For class of 2006, the dropout rate was at a whopping 30% of students
- Dropout rates have been fluctuating over the years
- Pre-covid drop out rates were hovering around the 10% mark



Things to keep in mind:

- DPSCD came up with an initiative called the Newcomers Program initiative
- Students in the class of 2024 had a 16% dropout rate over a period of 4 years
- An estimated 47% of DPSCD students do not have school-provided transportation.



Factors Leading to Dropouts

- Lack of a proper school-provided transportation system
- Immigrant students and families afraid to attend school, or go out to take their children to school
- DPSCD students live between 2.5-4 miles away from their nearest school



The Problem

- Unreliable city buses, and a lack of available school buses
- Students who live far from school are discouraged from traveling the long distances
- DPSCD failure to communicate with Students and Families.

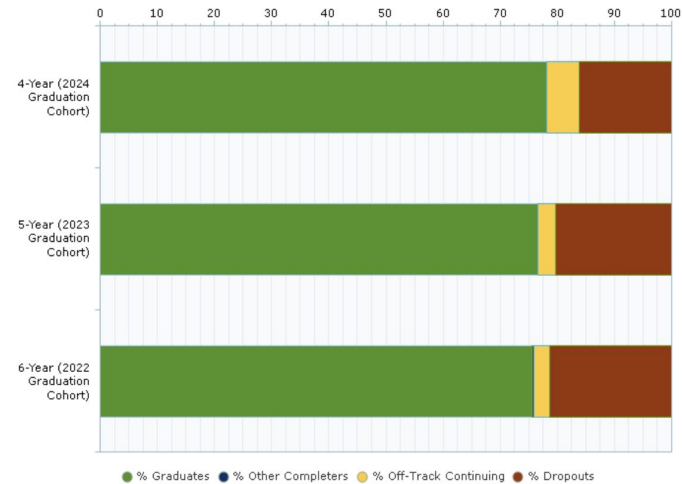
Infographics



MI School Data

08/20/2025

2023-24 Graduation Dropout Snapshot Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015): All Rate Years / All Students





Solution to transportation

- Launch app to track nearest bus, similar to the M-Bus app at UMich
- Add bus stops with the sole purpose of picking up students who need it most
- Have buses be consistent with the routes they take

Infographics Cont.

DETROIT
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
COMMUNITY DISTRICT

Schools & Student Facts

Number of Schools & Grades

108 schools serve grades pre-kindergarten through 12th

Student Enrollment

52,528 students

Free and/or Reduced Lunch

84.3% of students eligible for free and/or reduced lunch

English Language Learners

12% of students are English language learners

Advanced Placement

21 Courses, 1070 Students, 3376 Tests Taken

Partnerships

200+ business, civic, community, and clergy/faith-based





Solution to fear of Deportation

- Enforce a communication policy for DPSCD
- Have DPSCD held accountable of sharing every incident that happens involving a student or staff member.
- Make students feel safe



Works cited

<https://www.mischooldata.org/graddropout-rate/>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit/2023/3/22/23650149/detroit-students-transportation-bus-chronic-absenteeism-attendance/>

https://detroitpeer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Transportation_Attendance_WorkingPaper.pdf

<https://www.detroitk12.org/domain/6347>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit/2025/06/12/dpscd-school-board-adopts-budget/>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit/2025/06/06/detroit-students-fearful-and-angry-after-immigration-arrest-of-peer/>



Questions?



Thank You!

Fixing the school absenteeism/dropout rates in Detroit

Andy Avalos, Anthony Duran-Gutierrez, Francois Fleming

History of dropout rates in Detroit

Did You Know?

The dropout rates in the DPSCD have been fluctuating over the past 20 years, with a peak around 2006 with a dropout rate of 30% of students

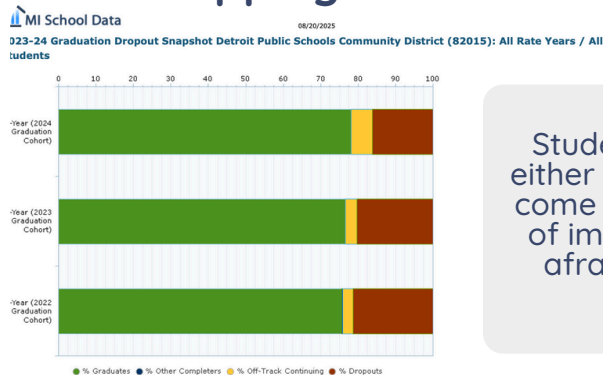
Did You Know?

Students and Families are supposed to be protected and welcomed in the Newcomers initiative, but they couldn't shield a student from being arrested.

Did You Know?

Dropout rates right before the COVID-19 pandemic have been drastically decreasing, with a dropout rate of 11% of students!

Factors that lead to students dropping out



Lack of a proper method of transportation. DPSCD offers free city bus passes, but even that can be unreliable sometimes

Students who are either immigrants or come from a family of immigrants are afraid to attend school

Things to keep in mind

- An estimated 47% of DPSCD students are not eligible for school-provided transportation
- Many students in Detroit from k-12 live approximately between 2.5 and 4 miles away from their nearest schools
- Most students from predominately Hispanic school, such as Western International, stopped attending school out of fear ICE, according to chalkbeat
- Even with the Newcomers Program, Colombian student Maykol Bogoya Duarte was arrested and eventually deported while on his way to a school field trip

THE PROBLEM

Transportation

DPSCD students require an improved bus system so that they do not have to struggle to be able to get to classes on time. Although the DPSCD does offer free city bus passes, even those buses can become unreliable, especially during the colder seasons. Students who live farther distances from their school are discouraged from traveling those long distances, either by having to walk, bike, or catch an Uber if their parents don't have a car to take them in.

Immigration

Schools are like a community, and as such it is necessary to have communication. That is within a school, and with other schools. Unfortunately, DPSCD did not have this necessary communication with its students and families when it came to the case of protecting a student. DPSCD failed to inform students and families about the arrest and deportation of Western International student, Maykol Bogoya-Duarte, who was detained on May 20, 2025. Students were only aware of this altercation by word of mouth from peers. This brought fear to many students from all across DPSCD causing them to not attend school, as they knew that DPSCD wouldn't share important information with them. They couldn't risk their safety on a district that keeps secrets.

Past initiatives/Future solutions

Transportation

Our main solution regarding the Improvement of the school bus system is to first focus on a smaller scale by implementing our ideas at 1 school first. Deeply inspired by the Ann Arbor Public

Schools (AAPS) bus system, we decided to implement similar policies where students who live 1.5 miles away or further from the schools are eligible to take the bus. We plan to start with a school with a big student population and a higher level of funding than most other schools in the district, such as Cass Technical High School, and based on how successful this initiative is, implement it in more schools and eventually in every school in DPSCD

The idea is to implement more bus routes within a 5-10 mile radius from the school, while also adding more bus stops in areas with a higher concentration of students, especially during the harsh winter months. An app would also be created in order for students to track when the next bus will arrive at their stop. In order to be able to access this amenity, the student's parents will have to fill out an application. Funding for this program would come from both the school's fund and a slight increase in state taxes, in order to give students the best way to be at school on time and work towards bettering Detroit

Immigration

A solution is to place a communication policy within the DPSCD district which will require DPSCD board members to communicate and share all information with students and families.

The policy will require of DPSCD to be crystal clear about any altercations with any students or staff and not sugarcoat anything. With this trust build between DPSCD and their families, students will feel safer in their respective schools and will be more prone to going to school, which will decrease chronic absenteeism. This in turn will allow students to receive the education they desire without the fear of legal trouble. Immigrant students will be able to develop their English language. Enforcing these policies would help improve chronic absenteeism and decrease dropout rates, leading to an increase in students being properly educated.

Resources

<https://www.mischooldata.org/graddropout-rate/>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit/2023/3/22/23650149/detroit-students-transportation-bus-chronic-absenteeism-attendance/>

https://detroitpeer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Transportation_Attendance_WorkingPaper.pdf

<https://www.detroitk12.org/domain/6347>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit/2025/06/12/dpscd-school-board-adopts-budget/>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit/2025/06/06/detroit-students-fearful-and-angry-after-immigration-arrest-of-peer/>