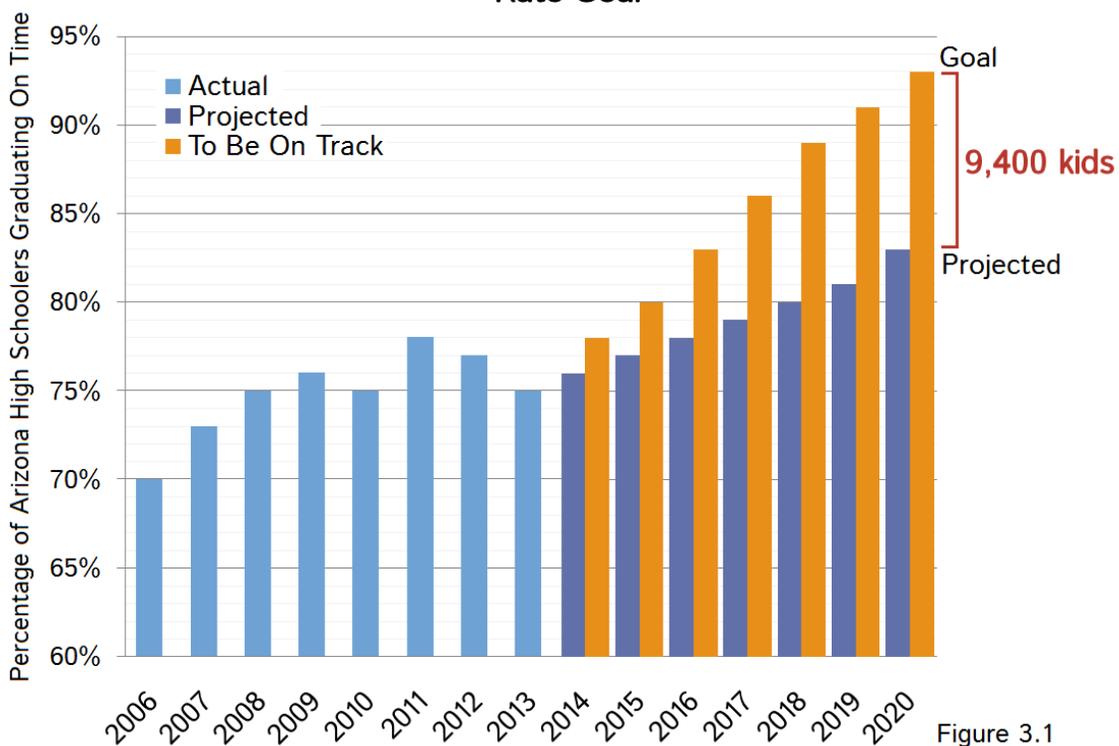


Earning a high school diploma is a crucial component to future academic success. It is estimated that students who drop out of high school earn nearly \$7,500 less per year, are more likely to report poor health outcomes later in life, and are more likely to be institutionalized than their peers who finish high school. Perhaps an even more compelling fact is that almost two-thirds of jobs will require some postsecondary education or training by 2018, making high school graduation a necessity.

Focused on creating a brighter future for our students, Arizona Ready has implemented measurable goals that hold our students, teachers, administrators, and schools accountable to higher standards in order to achieve improved results. As part of its education reform plan, Arizona has set a goal of achieving an on-time high school graduation rate of 93% by 2020.

STATEWIDE 4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE (FIGURE 3.1)

Arizona Progress Towards its High School Graduation Rate Goal



Statewide, there has been a five percentage point increase in the 4-year high school graduation rate from 2006 to 2013. In 2013, the statewide average graduation rate reached 75%, equating to 62,500 high school students graduating on time (within 4 years). If Arizona’s 4-year graduation rate continues on its current linear trend, 83% of Arizona’s high school students will graduate on-time by 2020. Increasing this number by ten percentage points to reach the state’s goal of a graduation rate of 93% would mean an additional 9,400 Arizona high school students graduating on time.

STATEWIDE 5-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE (FIGURE 3.2)

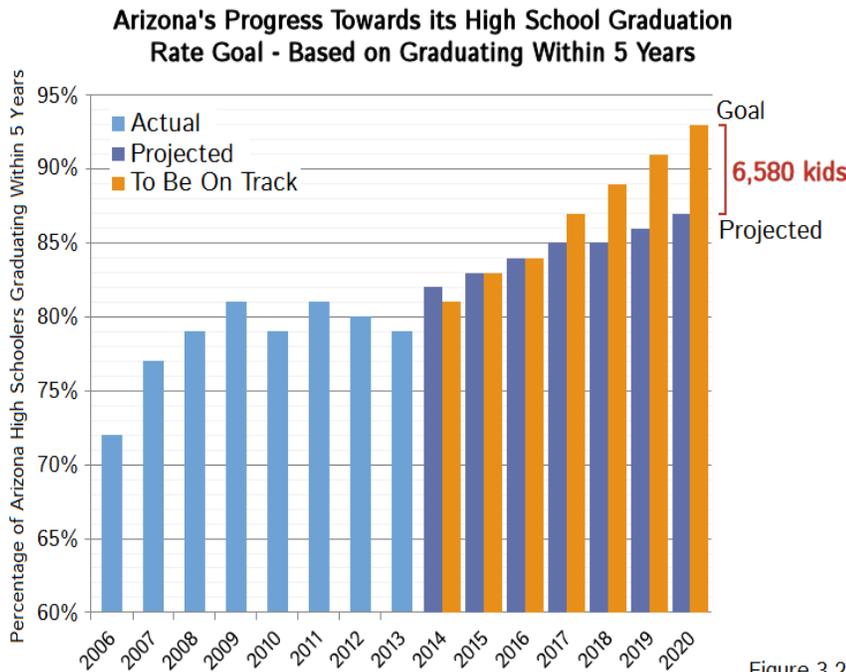


Figure 3.2

In addition to measuring the number of on-time high school graduates, the state also measures the number of high school students who graduate within five years. Statewide, there has been a seven percentage point increase in the 5-year high school graduation rate from 2006 to 2013. In 2013, the statewide average graduation rate reached 79%, equating to 65,800 high school students graduating within five years of starting high school. The 5-year graduation rate is currently four percentage points higher than the rate of students who graduate on time (within 4 years). Projections for the number of students graduating within five years are closer to the Arizona Ready goal of 93% due to significant improvement from 2006. However, since 2008, the 5-year graduation rate has not seen measurable improvement.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NOT GRADUATING BY COUNTY IN 2006 (FIGURE 3.3)

Breaking out results by county shows wide variations in high school graduation results. In 13 out of 15 Arizona counties, more than 25% of high school students in 2006 did not graduate on time. In Apache and Pinal counties, more than 40% of the 2006 cohort did not graduate on time. Maricopa County had the third lowest rate of non-graduates (27%), but due to its large student population, it had the highest number of students not graduating on time, at 12,343. In 2006, the rate of high school students not graduating on time was greater than 20% in all counties.

High School Students NOT Graduating On Time by County (2006 Cohort)

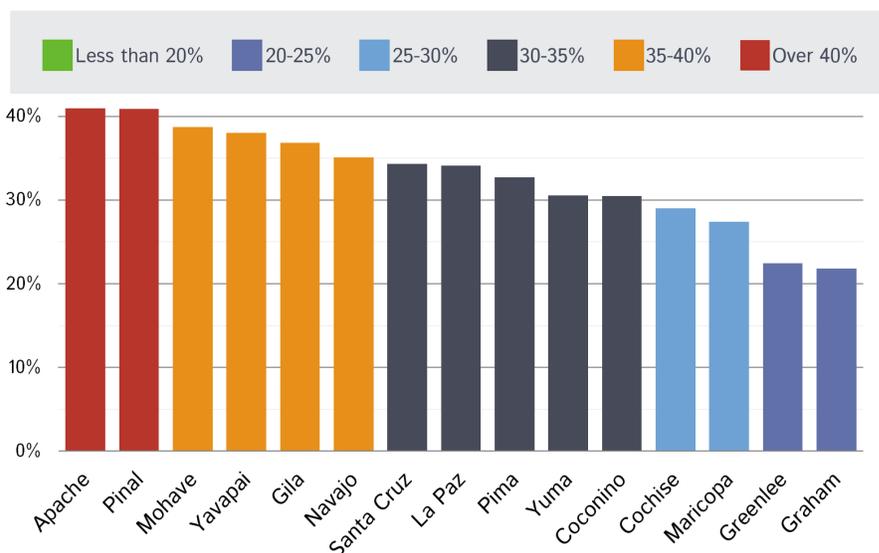


Figure 3.3

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NOT GRADUATING BY COUNTY IN 2013 (FIGURE 3.4)

By 2013, the percentage of Arizona high school students not graduating on time decreased by five percentage points. The number of students not graduating on time decreased in 14 out of 15 Arizona counties from 2006 to 2013. Only 6 of Arizona's 15 counties had more than 25% of high school students in the 2013 cohort who did not graduate on time. Five Arizona counties (Greenlee, Mohave, Navajo, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai) decreased the percentage of students who did not graduate on time by at least ten percentage points. Greenlee County and Santa Cruz County exhibited the lowest percentage of students not graduating on time, at 9% and 18% respectively.

High School Students NOT Graduating On Time by County (2013 Cohort)

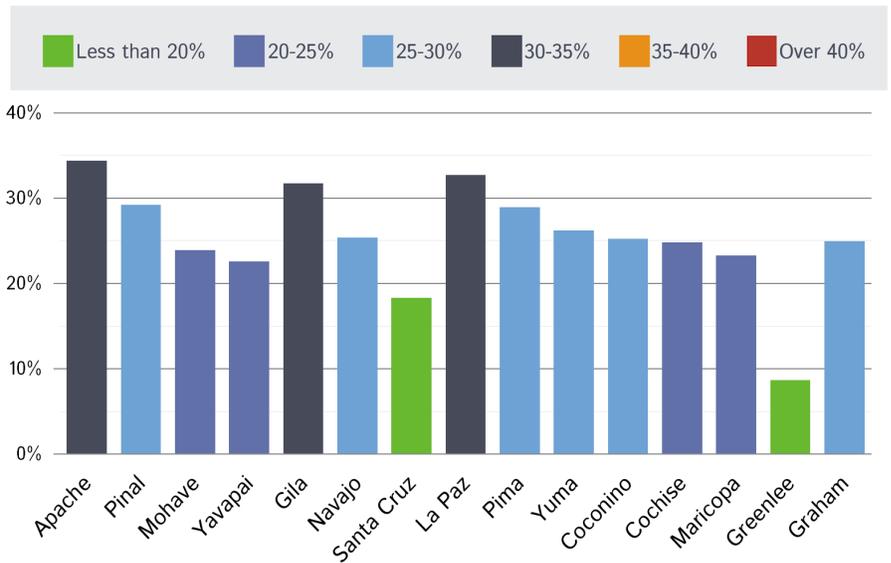


Figure 3.4

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES BY ETHNICITY (FIGURE 3.5)

Number of Arizona High School Students Graduating on Time by Ethnicity

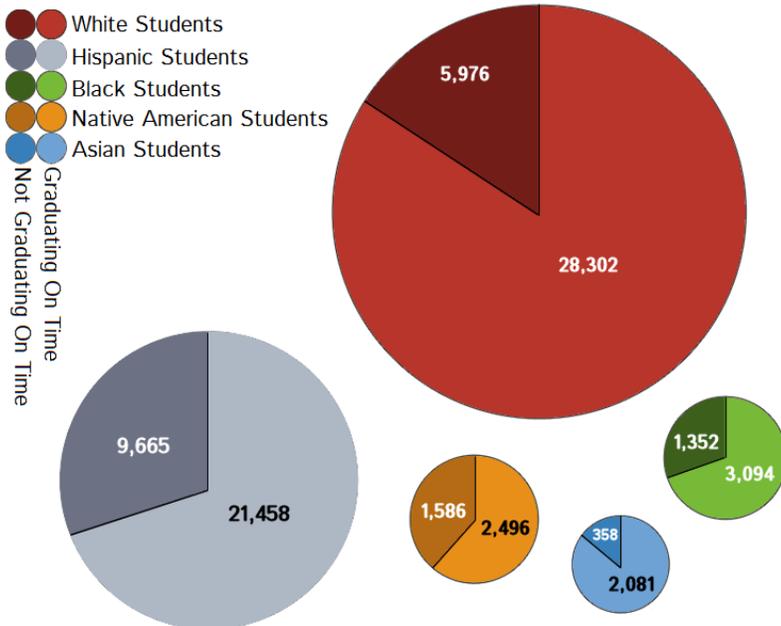


Figure 3.5

Roughly 85% of Arizona's student population identifies as either White or Hispanic. These groups accounted for 64% of the high school students graduating on time in Arizona in 2013. Students who identified as Asian exhibited the greatest percentage of on-time graduates among all ethnic groups, at 85%. Students identifying as either Hispanic or Native American had the lowest percentage of on-time graduates, at 69% and 61% respectively.

HIGH SCHOOL THROUGH POST-SECONDARY OUTCOMES (FIGURE 3.6)

High School to Post-Secondary Achievement

Out of **100** students who started High School in 2002...

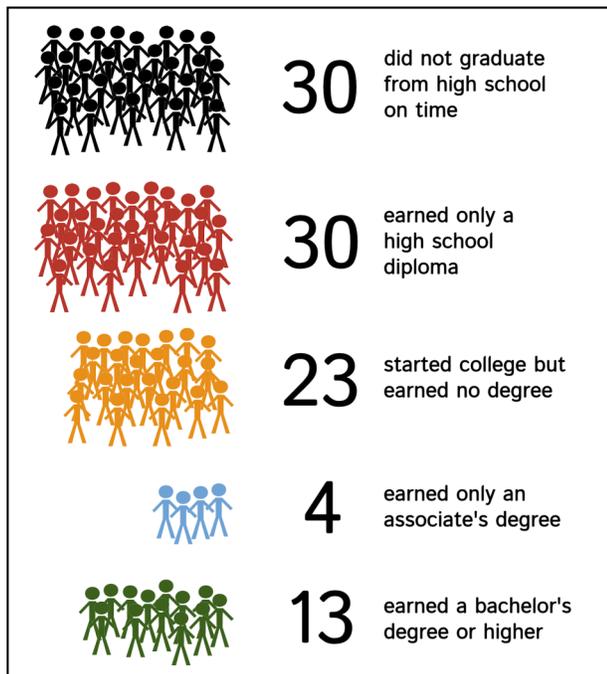


Figure 3.6

To get a sense of the proportion of Arizona’s high school students moving on to educational success, it is helpful to look at a cohort of high school students over time. A decade after entering high school, only 17% of the 2002 high school freshman class in Arizona had earned a post-secondary degree by 2012 — 13% earned a bachelor’s degree or higher and 4% earned an associate’s degree. Thirty percent of students who entered high school in 2002 did not graduate on-time and 30% earned a high school diploma but did not seek any post-secondary education. Twenty-three percent went on to post-secondary education but did not earn a degree.

ACTIONS AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS

In order to ensure that Arizona children are prepared to succeed in high school and beyond, the Arizona State Board of Education adopted Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards in 2010 in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Mastery of these new standards will be measured by a more rigorous state assessment that will replace AIMS, beginning in the 2014-2015 school year.

In addition, data on student academic progress is now included in the reformed evaluation system for school leaders and teachers. These reforms are adding accountability into Arizona’s education system, which will hold our students, teachers, administrators, and schools accountable to higher standards in order to foster student growth and future success.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

Stakeholders can focus on ways to improve the relevancy of instruction in high school and middle school which will help to improve high school graduation rates in Arizona. At a local level, school districts and charter schools can increase access to relevant, integrated pathway programs by expanding the use of dual-credit, concurrent enrollment, and industry credential programs. Forming strategic partnerships with local businesses can help to identify growing career sectors and key areas of student interest, as well as provide meaningful work-like experiences for students. Schools can also look at providing flexibility in the awarding of course credits. In addition, school districts and charter schools can fully implement Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPs), install early-warning data systems that identify at-risk students, and provide information on growing career fields to students and parents.

At a state level, Arizona policy-makers can work to expand the number of state-approved CTE programs that award core academic credit and provide incentives to expand effective drop-out prevention and recovery programs. The state can also assess its school financing structures to remove barriers that prevent more schools from providing early college and workforce training opportunities at little or no cost to students.

In addition, research shows that effective teachers and leaders are the largest in-school contributors to student learning and achievement. It is clear that no education reform initiative will be successful without highly effective teachers and school leaders. Therefore, the state should consider ways to attract and retain top-quality talent in Arizona's education system.

Sourcing

Figure 3.1: Arizona Department of Education - Graduation Rate (2006-2013)

Figure 3.2: Arizona Department of Education - Graduation Rate (2006-2013)

Figure 3.3: Arizona Department of Education - Graduation Rate (2006)

Figure 3.4: Arizona Department of Education - Graduation Rate (2013)

Figure 3.5: Arizona Department of Education - Graduation Rate (2014)

Figure 3.6: Arizona Department of Education - 4 Year Graduation Rate (2006); and
Arizona Board of Regents - Post-Secondary Outcomes after 6 Years (2005, 2006)