

Introduction

This executive summary to the *Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators, 2004* provides statewide summary information on fifteen priority topics that are covered in substantially greater detail in the body of the main report. The main report also includes detail on all topics, by Alaska Native region, and is supplemented by an appendix with still further informational support and data. Where possible, data comparisons are made between the 2003-2004 school year and the 2002-2003 school year.

Population

Population estimates for 2003 indicate there were 648,818 people living in Alaska, an increase of 3.5 percent from Census 2000 figures. Most of the growth took place in the Cook Inlet region.

For the 2000 Census, 17.2 percent of the Alaska population identified themselves as Alaska Natives, alone or in combination with some other race. Compared to their proportion of the overall population, Alaska Natives represent a significantly higher percentage of Alaska's school age children (23 percent).

The Alaska Native community has a significant stake in the performance of Alaska's schools. Over one-third (34.3 percent) of Alaska Natives are of school age, compared to one-fourth (25.6 percent) of the overall Alaska population.

School Inventory and Enrollment

Including correspondence schools, there are 500 public schools in 53 school districts statewide, with 133,933 students enrolled for the 2003-2004 school year. Public school enrollment is greatest in the Cook Inlet, Doyon and Sealaska regions.

Table ES-1.
Number of Public Schools and Student Enrollment by Alaska Native Region 2003–2004 School Year

Alaska Native Region	Number of Schools	Total Enrollment
Ahtna	12	1,256
Aleut	14	878
Arctic Slope	10	2,065
Bering Straits	19	2,537
Bristol Bay	29	1,838
Calista	54	7,226
Chugach	9	1,565
Cook Inlet	172	73,739
Doyon	82	23,841
Koniag	14	2,697
NANA	13	2,214
Sealaska	70	13,297
Statewide Totals 2003-2004 School Year	500	133,933
Comparison to Previous Year		
Statewide Totals 2002-2003 School Year	502	134,364
Number Change	-2	-431
Percent Change	-0.4%	-0.3%

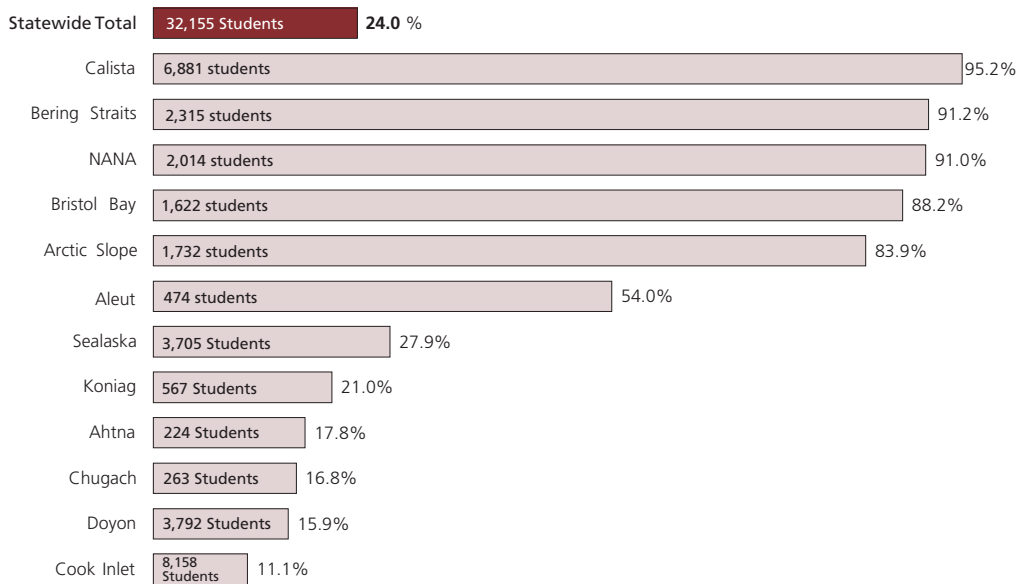
Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Statewide totals include students at the Alyeska Central School and Mt. Edgecumbe High School. These two schools are not shown in the geographic area totals.

Statewide, public school enrollment dropped by 431 students from the 2002-2003 school year, and there were two fewer schools overall. However, the Alaska Native student population increased by 282 from the 2002-2003 school year, while the population of all other student ethnicities decreased by 713 students.

In 2003-2004, there were 32,155 Alaska Native students enrolled statewide, representing 24.0 percent of the total student population. This is an increase over the 2002-2003 school year, when Alaska Native students represented 23.7 percent of the total student population.

Schools located in the Arctic Slope, Bering Straits, Bristol Bay, Calista, and NANA geographic regions have Native student enrollment percentages of greater than 80 percent. The Aleut region also has a majority Native enrollment (54 percent). Schools located in the Cook Inlet region have the greatest number of Alaska Native students, (8,158 students) followed by the Calista region (6,881 students).

Figure ES-1.
Alaska Native Public School Enrollment By Alaska Native Region
2003 – 2004 School Year



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

Notes: Alaska Native students are displayed as a percent of total students.

Private schools are not required by law to report their enrollments to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. However, according to 53 private schools that volunteered this information, 4,749 students were enrolled. This enrollment figure is not a complete and accurate count of students enrolled in Alaska's private schools and does not include an ethnic breakout.

“Students with Disabilities” Enrollment

For the 2003-2004 school year, there were 18,193 students classified as having disabilities (or 13.6 percent of total enrollment) statewide. This is a slight increase of 64 students from the 2002-2003 school year.

Alaska Natives make up 30 percent (5,537 students) of all students classified as having disabilities. There are 104 more Alaska Native students classified as having disabilities since the 2002-2003 school year.

Alaska Natives classified with disabilities make up 17.0 percent of all Alaska Native students enrolled, whereas 12.4 percent of all non-Native students enrolled are classified as having disabilities.

Regions with the highest percentages of students classified as having disabilities were (in ascending order of magnitude, from 14.2 percent to 16.1 percent): Bristol Bay, Koniag, Sealaska, Cook Inlet, and Chugach.

Over 90 percent of students classified as having disabilities from the Calista, Bering Straits, Bristol Bay, NANA, and Arctic Slope regions were Alaska Native students. This high percentage is understandable, given that Alaska Natives represent over 83.9 percent of the total student body in these regions.

Average Daily Attendance Rates

The statewide average daily attendance rate for all students was 93.2 percent for the school year 2003-2004. This rate represented a slight increase (+0.4 percent) over the 2002-2003 school year. Chugach, Koniag, Ahtna, Doyon, and Cook Inlet regions had above average daily attendance rates. NANA, Bering Straits, Calista and Arctic Slope had average daily attendance rates of less than 90 percent.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development measures Alaska attendance rates by taking the sum of all days present for all students in a school for the year and dividing this by the sum of all days present and all days absent for all students in a school for the year. This allows the school to account for enrollments and drop-outs that occur during the school year. This information was not available by ethnicity.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development uses this indicator as part of the Annual Yearly Progress evaluation.

Educators

There are 53 school districts in the state, plus Mt. Edgecumbe High School. There were 55 superintendents, 368 principals, and 8,171 teachers for the 2003–2004 school year, including part-time and substitute teachers. Alaska Natives represent 4.9 percent of the total educators (superintendents, principals, and teachers) in Alaska (420 Alaska

Native). This compares to Alaska Native student enrollment of 24.0 percent of the state total.

Alaska Native representation includes 5.5 percent of superintendents (3 Alaska Native superintendents), 3.8 percent of principals (14 Alaska Native principals), and 4.9 percent of teachers (403 Alaska Native teachers).

Student/Teacher Ratios

The statewide average of the number of students, compared to the number of teachers, is 16.2 students to 1 teacher. (Correspondence and Cyber school students are not included in this average.) This is a slight increase over the 2002-2003 school year, which had a 15.4:1 student/teacher ratio. Student/teacher ratios are not to be confused with classroom size. This information may be used by school districts to decide staffing and funding allocations.

Educator Turnover

For this report, "educator turnover" includes instances in which a superintendent, principal or teacher changes her or his job classification within the same school (for instance, a teacher becomes a principal) and/or leaves the school where he or she worked from the 2002-2003 school year to the 2003-2004 school year. Based on this definition, there was an average educator turnover of 16.6 percent in Alaska between the 2002-2003 and the 2003-2004 school years. When broken out, the combined turnover of superintendents and principals was 27 percent; and teacher turnover was 16 percent statewide.

Some Alaska Native regions experienced higher turnovers for superintendents/principals and for teachers. In order of descending magnitude, the highest superintendent/principal turnover was found in Bristol Bay (70 percent), Arctic Slope (42 percent), Bering Straits (37 percent), and Chugach (33 percent) regions. The highest teacher turnover was found in Bering Straits (46 percent), Arctic Slope (29 percent), Bristol Bay (27 percent), and NANA (27 percent) regions.

The lowest superintendent/principal turnover was found in the NANA region (15 percent). The lowest teacher turnover was in the Cook Inlet region (11 percent). Cook Inlet region also has the highest number of teachers (4,338 teachers).

Educational Attainment

Alaska Natives are gaining in educational attainment, as shown in a comparison by the University of Minnesota of 1990 and 2000 census information. In 2000, as compared with 1990, a higher percentage of Alaska Natives held college degrees (4 percent versus 3 percent), had attended some college (14 percent versus 12 percent), and had graduated from high school (42 percent versus 38 percent). Fewer Alaska Natives (8 percent versus 4 percent) had no schooling.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Holding schools accountable for the performance of all students is a cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind Act. Standardized test results, participation in the testing, and graduation rates form the basis for measuring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Test scores used for determining AYP are the Benchmark Exams for grades 3, 6, and 8; the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, which starts at grade 10; and the CAT-6 (TerraNova) tests in grades 4, 5, 7, and 9.

Schools not meeting AYP goals for the first time are called Level 1 schools. If a school fails to achieve AYP for the second time, it is a Level 2 school - and so on, to Level 6. Different consequences apply to different levels of schools that receive federal Title I funding.

For the 2003-2004 school year, 292 of the 500 public schools statewide met all the AYP targets, while 205 schools did not. There are three schools that were not evaluated for AYP in the 2003-2004 school year (Mt. Iliamna Elementary, Providence Heights, and Arviq School). Compared to the 2002-2003 AYP overall performance, 86 more schools in Alaska made AYP in the 2003-2004 school year.

While some schools clearly have improved their AYP performance over the 2002-2003 school year, changes in how AYP is measured by the Department of Education and Early Development in the 2003-2004 school year and the provision of "safe harbor" may reflect a statistical improvement but not necessarily an improvement in a school's performance.

Regions with the highest proportion of schools making the AYP list (in descending order of performance) are Ahtna, Aleut, Chugach, Koniag, Sealaska, Cook Inlet, and Bristol Bay. In all of these regions, at least one-half of all schools made the AYP list.

Regions with the lowest proportion of schools making the AYP list (also in descending order of performance) are Doyon, Bering Straits, NANA, Calista and Arctic Slope.

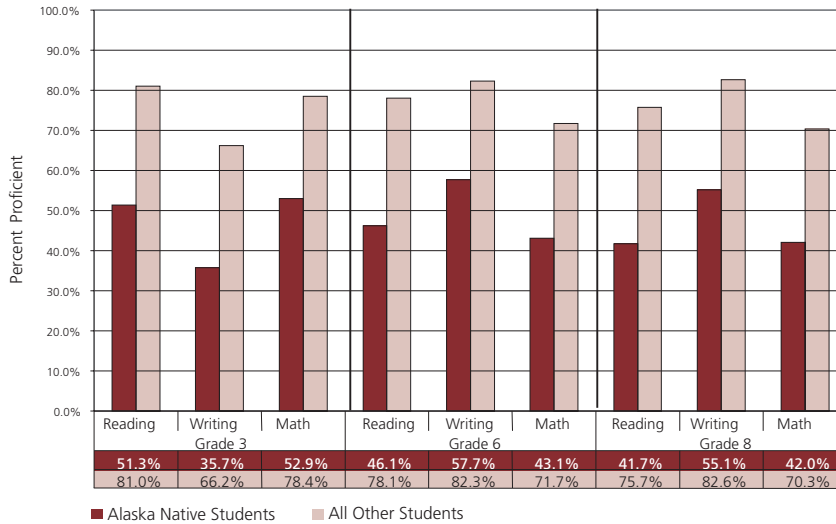
Benchmark Examinations

The Alaska Benchmark Examinations measure whether students are achieving statewide academic standards in reading, writing, and math. Students take the Alaska Benchmark Examinations in three different grades (Grade 3, 6, and 8) during their public school careers.

For the school year of 2003-2004, Alaska set a target point of 64.03 percent of students showing proficiency in the language arts: reading and writing. (The state is now combining students' scores on reading and writing tests to create one language arts score.) The 2003-2004 school year math target is 54.86 percent of students showing proficiency.

Statewide, significantly lower percentages of Alaska Native students were proficient in each of the three subjects and at each of the three grade levels, when compared to all other students.

Figure ES-2.
Statewide School Benchmark Examination Results 2003–2004 School Year



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

Comparisons of benchmark examination results between the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years for Alaska Native student performance are found in the table below. The two school years may not be directly comparable because some data were withheld if they might have revealed an individual student’s performance. Other variables may include opening and closing of schools within regions and varying student populations for Grades 3, 6, and 8.

Table ES-2.
Statewide School Benchmark Examination Results for Alaska Natives
2002–2003 and 2003–2004 School Years

School Year	Grade 3			Grade 6			Grade 8		
	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math
2003 - 2004	51.3%	35.7%	52.9%	46.1%	57.7%	43.1%	41.7%	55.1%	42.0%
2002 - 2003	49.4%	35.5%	50.7%	44.4%	55.1%	42.2%	56.7%	38.9%	19.9%
Change (%)	+1.9%	+0.2%	+2.2%	+1.8%	+2.6%	+0.9%	-15.0%	+16.2%	+22.1%

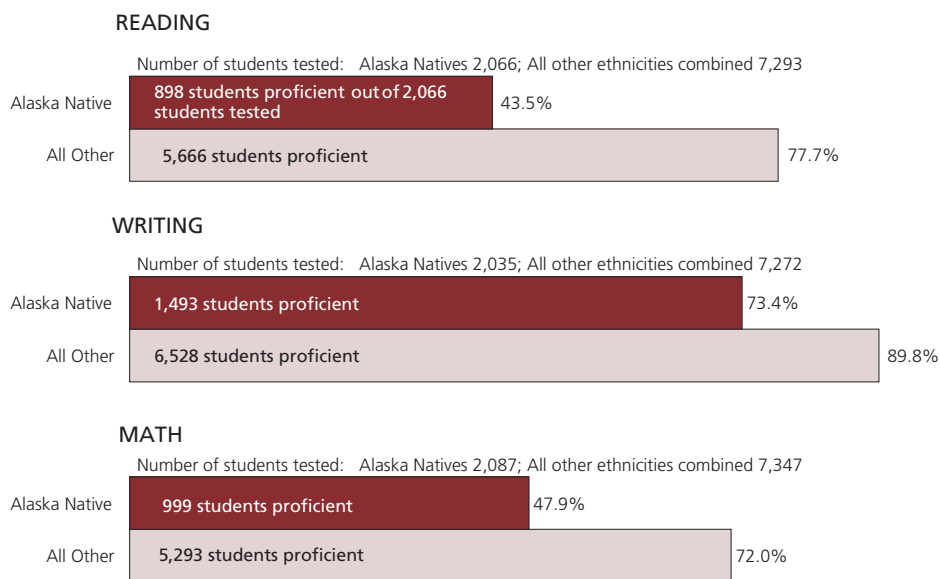
Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

High School Graduation Qualifying Examinations

Students are required to pass the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Examination in order to receive high school diplomas. Students can begin taking the exam in their sophomore years and are eligible to retake the exam as juniors and seniors for any un-passed portions of the test. Students are offered retests in both the spring and fall of their junior and senior years. Those who do not pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination will be denied diplomas and will receive Certificates of Achievement instead. According to the Department of Education and Early Development, if these students would like diplomas, instead of Certificates of Achievement, they may continue to take the High School Graduation Qualifying Examinations after finishing school. There is no age limitation or limit on the number of times they may retake the tests.¹

As with Benchmark Exams, significantly lower statewide percentages of Alaska Native students were proficient in each of the three subjects, at each of the grade levels, when compared to all other students.

Figure ES-3.
Statewide High School Graduation Qualifying Exam Proficiency Results For Grade 10 Test-takers, by Ethnicity, 2003–2004 School Year



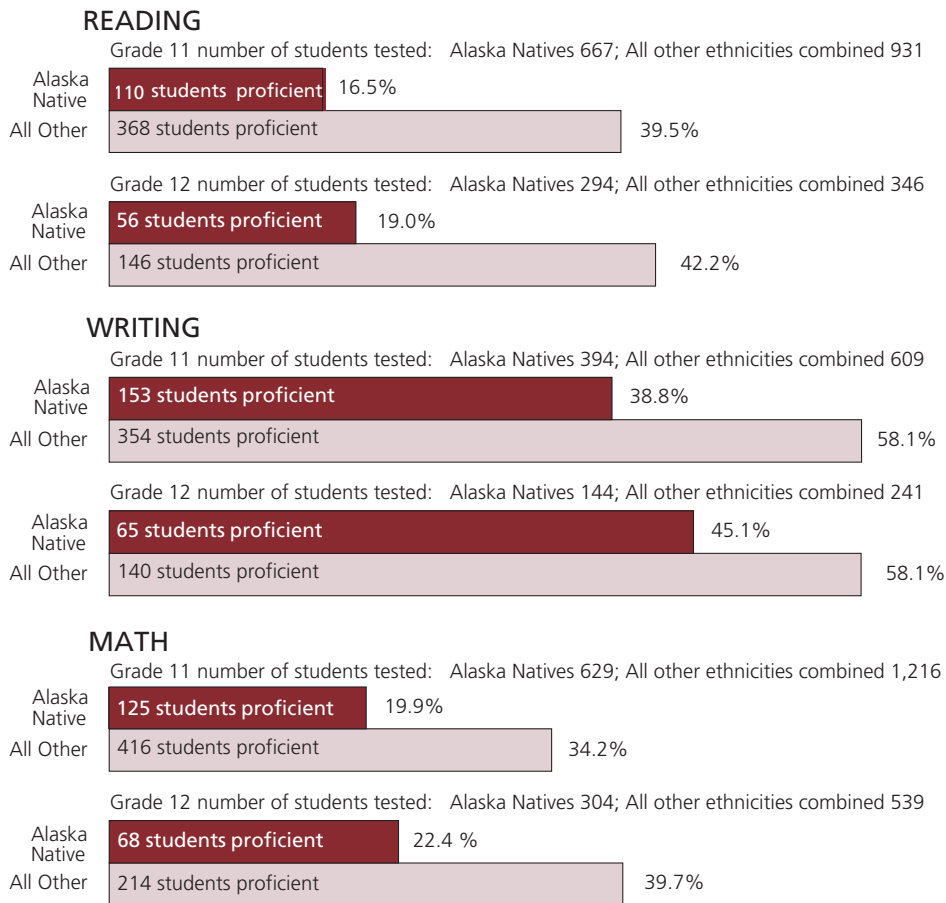
Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

Note: Proficiency is based on a percent of students who took the test and is not based on enrollment.

¹ See State regulations 4 AAC 06.755 and 4 AAC 06.771 for more information.

The table below shows the numbers of students tested and the percentages that were proficient in the reading, writing, and math examinations in grades 11 and 12. Similar to the results found in Grade 10, Alaska Natives under-perform in High School Graduation Qualifying Examinations, compared to all other students combined.

Figure ES-4.
Statewide High School Graduation Qualifying Exam Proficiency Results for Grade 11 and 12 Re-Testers, by Ethnicity, 2003–2004 School Year



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

Note: Proficiency is based on a percent of students who took the test and is not based on enrollment.

High School Graduation Rates

In the 2003-2004 school year, the statewide graduation rate for all students was 62.9 percent. Alaska Native students graduated at a rate of 47.5 percent, compared to 67.3 percent for all other ethnicities combined. Across all regions, Alaska Natives consistently have lower graduation rates than all other ethnicities combined.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to adopt a cohort method for determining high school graduation rates. Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, the Department switched to a new cohort method to measure the relative percent of students that graduate from high school in four years. For the 2003-2004 school-year graduation rate indicator, the cohort includes all students starting high school (Grade 9) in the 2000-2001 school year through their scheduled graduation four years later (in the 2003-2004 school year).

The graduation rate formula used by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{Number of Graduates (2003-2004)} \\
 \hline
 \text{Number of Graduates (2003-2004)} \\
 + \text{ Number of Continuing 12th Grade Students (2003-2004)} \\
 + \text{ Number of 12th Grade Drop-outs (2003-2004)} \\
 + \text{ Number of 11th Grade Drop-outs (2002-2003)} \\
 + \text{ Number of 10th Grade Drop-outs (2001-2002)} \\
 + \text{ Number of 9th Grade Drop-outs (2000-2001)}
 \end{array}$$

It is important to note that there are some limitations with this new methodology. For instance, a student who graduates in five years, rather than four, would be counted in the next cohort of students. A student who graduates in three years, instead of four, would be counted in the prior cohort. Additionally, in the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years, student-level information was submitted with anonymous information that could not be linked directly to specific students. Therefore, the Department had no way to check for duplication or to see that the ethnic codes are valid for those two school years.

Table ES-3.
High School Graduation Rates by Alaska Native Region and Ethnicity, Cohort of 2000-2001 through 2003-2004 School Years

Alaska Native Region	Alaska Natives				All Other Ethnicities			
	Number of Graduates	Continuing Students*	Drop-Outs 2001-2004**	Graduation Rate***	Number of Graduates	Continuing Students*	Drop-Outs 2001-2004**	Graduation Rate***
Ahtna	6	-	8	42.9%	51	5	8	79.7%
Aleut	27	-	7	79.4	19	-	2	90.5
Arctic Slope	70	17	56	49.0	19	2	3	79.2
Bering Straits	80	24	62	48.2	10	-	2	83.3
Bristol Bay	62	17	24	60.2	14	-	8	63.6
Calista	210	75	271	37.8	22	2	24	45.8
Chugach	13	4	1	72.2	97	8	9	85.1
Cook Inlet	282		292	41.0	3,966	643	1,237	67.8
Doyon	160	44	104	51.9	1,039	118	461	64.2
Koniag	28	8	18	51.9	123	37	23	67.2
NANA	71	11	61	49.7	9	2	-	81.8
Sealaska	168	39	99	54.9	625	79	193	69.7
Statewide	1,237	359	1,010	47.5%	6,033	931	1,997	67.3%

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Statewide totals include students enrolled in Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Alyeska Central School.

Notes: *Continuing 12th Grade students include students who did not graduate in the 12th year but remained enrolled in school to complete course work toward graduations in the following year(s).

** Includes a sum of total student drop-outs from the 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004 school years.

*** Graduation rates are calculated using the following formula: Number of Graduates ÷ (Number of Graduates + Number of Continuing Students + Number of Drop-outs (2000/2001 to 2003/2004)).

Drop-Out Rates

A drop-out is defined by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development as a student who was enrolled in the district at some time during the school year and whose enrollment terminated.

Drop-out rates do not directly correspond to high school graduation rates because graduation rates use a cohort method of calculation (over the past four years), rather than a single-year event, and do not include 7th and 8th grades. Reporting, calculating and interpreting drop-out rates are subject to error and should be viewed with some caution, when reported at the regional and school district levels.

Students are considered drop-outs if they leave school, whether or not they pursue GEDs. Because school districts do not issue GEDs, there is no way for the districts to verify if a student has obtained a GED. The GED program is currently administered by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. If the districts were allowed to issue GEDs, the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education, would allow GED recipients to be counted as high school graduates, if they left regular school to enroll in, and were issued, GEDs in a district-run GED program.

A district may issue an administrative drop for a student who has a minimum of ten consecutive unexcused absences. This student is considered a drop-out in this situation, unless he or she re-enrolls in another public or private school in the same school year.

Table ES-4.
Drop-out Rates for Grades 7 through 12 by Alaska Native Region and Ethnicity
2001-2002 and 2003-2004 School Year

Alaska Native Region	AK Native Student Dropouts		All Other Student Dropouts		Total Student Dropouts	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Ahtna	11	9.4%	4	0.9%	15	2.6%
Aleut	10	5.0	2	1.3	12	3.4
Arctic Slope	54	7.2	2	1.4	56	6.2
Bering Straits	72	7.3	1	1.0	73	6.7
Bristol Bay	51	7.1	1	1.1	52	6.4
Calista	189	7.0	2	1.2	191	6.7
Chugach	8	6.4	11	1.8	19	2.6
Cook Inlet	394	11.1	1,270	4.1	1,664	4.8
Doyon	157	8.4	441	4.9	598	5.5
Koniag	21	7.6	21	2.0	42	3.2
NANA	55	6.7	0	0.0	55	5.9
Sealaska	84	4.9	119	2.5	203	3.2
Statewide	1,106	7.8%	1,874	3.9%	2,980	4.8%
Comparison to 2001-2002 School Year						
Statewide Totals 2001-2002 School Year	1,178	8.8%	2,246	4.7%	3,424	5.6%
Number Change	-72		-372		-444	
Percent Change	-6.1%		-16.6%		-13.0%	

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Statewide totals include students enrolled in Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Alyeska Central School.

The statewide drop-out rate, a combined rate for all students enrolled in the 7th through 12th grades for the 2003-2004 school year, was 4.8 percent. There were 62,117 students of all ethnicities enrolled in grades 7 through 12, and 2,980 of them dropped out. Alaska Natives have a higher drop-out rate than all other students as a group: 7.8 percent, compared to 3.9 percent. There were 14,151 Alaska Native students enrolled in grades 7 through 12, and 1,106 of them dropped out. For all other ethnicities, there were 47,966 students enrolled in grades 7 through 12, and 1,874 of them dropped out.

Alaska Natives comprise 23 percent of the enrollment in grades 7 through 12, yet they represent 37 percent of the students who drop out of school during this time. Drop-out rates are highest in the Cook Inlet, Ahtna, and Doyon regions and lowest in the Sealaska, Aleut, and Chugach regions.

When compared to 2001-2002 school year drop-out figures, it appears that drop-outs have declined.

GED Diploma Attainment

Alaska Natives are more likely to take the General Education Development (GED) test than the overall population but are slightly less likely to pass the exam, when compared to the overall population.

Between September 1, 2003 and August 31, 2004, 2,875 people took the GED test in Alaska. Alaska Natives represented 28.3 percent of all test-takers. Sixty percent of all test-takers passed, while fifty-two percent of the Alaska Native test-takers passed.

Seventy-eight percent of the Alaska Native test-takers were under the age of 25. Fifty-seven percent of these Alaska Natives passed the GED test. When compared to non-Native test-takers, this same age group represented 77.1 percent of non-Native test-takers; yet 67.4 percent passed the GED test.

The GED test is offered in 19 Alaska communities. The top three communities where Alaska Natives took the test were Anchorage, including Eagle River and Ft. Richardson, (31.8 percent Native); Juneau (13.9 percent Native); and Bethel (13.4 percent Native).