
EQUITY ALLIANCE AT ASU NEWS RELEASE

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ARIZONA'S FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE INDICATES LARGE BETWEEN-GROUP DIFFERENCES

TEMPE, AZ -- Recently released figures from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) show a slight improvement in Arizona's four-year graduation rate to 70.7% for the 2007-2008 school year for all groups (up from 70.5 in the [2005-2006](#) school year). Arizona's graduation rate is lower than the national average of 74.9%; however, examination of individual racial/ethnic groups shows some surprising variations. Arizona's Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Black students are graduating at higher rates than the national averages, while our White and American Indian/Alaska Native students are graduating at lower rates than national averages.

2007-2008 Freshman Four- Year Graduation Rate						
	All Groups	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	White
Arizona	70.7	56.3	98.5	66.7	76.9	73.6
National Average	74.9	64.2	91.4	63.5	61.5	81.0

In the current climate of high-stakes accountability and tension over group achievement disparities, what does this mean? [U.S. Census data](#) on student demographics shows that in 2000, 7% of Arizona students were identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, 2% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 33% as Hispanic, 5% as Black, and 54% as White. Our Asian/Pacific Islander and Black students are graduating at higher rates than the combined national average. What tools and strategies are we using with these students that are meeting their needs and contributing to their success? Our American Indian/Alaska Native and White students are graduating at rates lower than both the national averages for their individual groups and the average for all groups combined. Where are we falling short in meeting the needs of these students?

Most interestingly, our Hispanic students are graduating at lower rates than the national average for all groups combined, but higher than Hispanic students nationally. What is happening with this group? In the past ten years, this group has been the focus of many policy changes and debates in Arizona. Arizona has implemented an English-only policy, fought legal battles around providing sufficient funding for teaching English language learners, and engaged in a series of political battles over immigration and ethnic studies policies. If the average Arizona citizen has been following the news, s/he might conclude that Hispanic/Latino students, whether U.S.-born or immigrant, are "the problem" with Arizona schools, but the data tells a different story. Based on NCES data, it appears we have bigger problems to attend to if Arizona schools are to improve outcomes for all students.