

# Successful Transition after High School Graduation

## Definition

*Successful transition* is the number and percent of recent high school graduates enrolled in post-secondary education institutions or employment, including active military service, six months after high school graduation.

## Data in context

All young adults need preparation and supports from communities and schools to become independent adults. The efforts of schools, teachers, community-based programs, and parents to engage and educate youth ensures they develop the tools to be successful in college, on the job, or in the military.

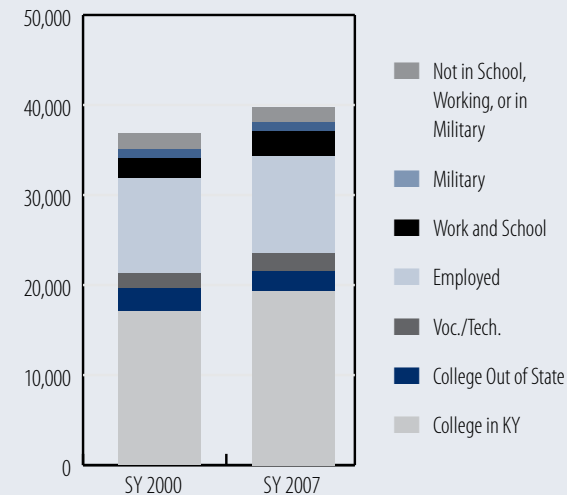
Educational attainment is important in predicting successful youth transition to adulthood. Projections through 2014 suggest that more new job openings will occur for occupations requiring a college degree than occupations requiring less education.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, real wages are decreasing for those with a high school degree alone, meaning people without further education will find it harder to make ends meet.<sup>2</sup>

In 2007, the labor force participation rate for youth without a high school degree was only 56 percent, as compared to 77 percent among youth who graduated high school and were not enrolled in college.<sup>3</sup> Increasingly, preparation for college or vocational training is important as job skill requirements increase.

Not all students, however, have access to schools and supports that challenge students and prepare them for college. Research indicates that students of color are less likely to have qualified, experienced teachers and are more likely to receive harsher school discipline than White students.<sup>4,5</sup> Students of color are also underrepresented in advanced placement courses that help prepare students for college.<sup>6</sup>

In Kentucky, 96 percent of high school graduates in 2007 successfully transitioned to work, school, or the military after graduation. Two out of three graduating students reported that they were attending college, vocational/technical school, or attending school and

**Work or Education among Kentucky High School Graduates Six Months after Graduation**



Source: Kentucky Department of Education.

working (66 percent).<sup>7</sup> More than one quarter (27 percent) were employed and not attending school, and 2 percent were in the military.<sup>8</sup>

Kentucky's rate of successful student transitions improved from 95 to 96 percent between the 2000 and 2007 school years, an increase of 2,919 students. Twenty-two districts reported that all students had a successful transition in SY 2007. Barbourville Independent and Jenkins Independent had the largest increases in the rate of successful transitions. However, in 16 school districts, more than one in ten students did not successfully transition into adulthood. Owsley County School District had the lowest rate (79 percent) and reported a decline of 12 percentage points over the seven-year period, while Gallatin County School District saw the largest decline with 14 percentage points.

Unemployed youth and those without education beyond high school are at risk for earning low wages, being imprisoned, and needing public assistance as adults.<sup>9</sup> Schools can build a solid foundation for transition from

high school by ensuring students have a rigorous and engaging high school experience.<sup>10</sup> Youth input must be sought in school and after-school programming to meet the developmental needs of this generation while providing them with safe places, caring adults, and relevant learning experiences in order to succeed.<sup>11</sup> Creating small learning environments also strengthens students' chances for a successful transition.<sup>12</sup>

**Data Source:** Kentucky Department of Education website.

**Data Note:** Independent school districts are listed after the school district in the county in which they are located.

**Rate Calculation:** (number of school year 2000 public high school graduates who were in post-secondary school, employed, in the military, or involved in any combination of these successful transitions six months after graduation \* 100) / (total number of public high school graduates in school year 2000)

(number of school year 2007 public high school graduates who were in post-secondary school, employed, in the military, or involved in any combination of these successful transitions six months after graduation \* 100) / (total number of public high school graduates in school year 2007)

- Crosby, O., and Moncarz, R. (2006). "The 2004-14 Job Outlook for College Graduates." *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 3. Available at <http://www.bls.gov>. Accessed September 2008.
- Education Trust (2001). "Youth at the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond." *Thinking K-16*, vol. 5, no. 1. Available at <http://www.edtrust.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- U.S. Department of Labor (2008). *College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2007 High School Graduates*. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hssec.nr0.htm>. Accessed August 2008.
- Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities in Education." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- Ibid.
- Applied Research Center (2000). *49 Years after Brown v. Board of Ed: Still Separate, Still Unequal*. Oakland, CA: Applied Research Center.
- Kentucky Department of Education (2008). *Briefing Packet. Nonacademic Data: Dropout, Retention, Transition to Adult Life, Attendance and Graduation Rates. 1993 to 2007 State Totals*. Available at <http://www.education.ky.gov>. Accessed September 2008.
- Ibid.
- Brown, B. (2001). *Teens, Jobs, and Welfare: Implications for Social Policy*. Child Trends Research Brief. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- Education Trust (2001). "Youth at the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond." *Thinking K-16*, vol. 5, no. 1. Available at <http://www.edtrust.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- America's Promise Alliance. (2008). *The Five Promises*. Available online at <http://www.americaspromise.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- Ibid.

