

Virginia's High School Dropout Rates Calculated by UVa

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The UVa Cooper Center Report Explains New Method for Calculating Soon To Be Released High School Dropout Rates for Virginia Public Schools

A forthcoming release of dropout rates from Virginia's public schools, to be issued this month by the Virginia Department of Education, will likely raise questions, according to researchers from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service demographics and workforce group.

The new way of calculating the dropout rate, when compared with results of the prior approach, will make the rate appear more than four times higher in 2008 than in years past. However, that is not the case, explains UVa Demographer Michael Spar.

Spar has written a paper, "Counting Virginia's High School Dropouts: Understanding the New Methods & the Bigger Numbers: <http://www.coopercenter.org/demographics/PUBLICATIONS> published by the Cooper Center this month, to explain the differences in results and the reasons for changing the methods.

"By using this new method, the Virginia Department of Education will be reporting dropout statistics in a way that makes sense to most people — that is, they will answer the question: 'How many students who entered high school in 2004 graduated in 2008?'" Spar said. "The new method also matches those used for calculating the other side of the coin, cohort high school graduation rates, which VDOE released last fall."

The previous method for calculating rates, the single-year method, reported the number of dropouts in one year among the students enrolled in all four high school grades. The cohort method, in contrast, follows one class of students for the four years they are in high school and reports how many drop out (and do not return) over those four years.

Both methods report data accurately, but they report different aspects of the dropout scenario, Spar said, adding that all states now use cohort methods to calculate on time graduation rates. Using the same method to calculate dropout rates makes the data comparable.

US Attorney General's Office Announces COPS Funds

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US DEPT. OF JUSTICE MAKES AVAILABLE \$1 BILLION IN RECOVERY ACT FUNDS FOR COPS PROGRAM

US Attorney General Eric Holder announced today that the Department of Justice is now accepting applications for \$1 billion in Recovery Act Funds for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program. Approximately 5,500 law enforcement officer jobs will be created or saved in law enforcement agencies across the country through funding provided by the Department of Justice.

“This investment of Recovery Act funds will pump new resources into our communities through a program with a proven track record,” said US Attorney General Holder. “We will not just create and preserve jobs, but also increase community policing capacity and crime-prevention efforts.”

Funds awarded to law enforcement agencies by the COPS Office provide 100 percent of entry level salary and benefits for each officer for three years. All jurisdictions that receive funding must plan to retain COPS-funded officer positions for at least one year after the grant ends.

The COPS Office is a federal agency responsible for advancing community policing nationwide. Since 1995, COPS has awarded more than \$10 billion to advance community policing, including grants awarded to more than 13,300 state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to fund the hiring and redeployment of nearly 117,000 officers. In addition to funding law enforcement positions, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services has been the catalyst for innovations in community policing, and the broad implementation of this effective law enforcement strategy. Currently, departments that employ community policing serve 87 percent of American communities.