

Our P-20 Kids: Who Are We Serving?

The children in Colorado's public education system are increasing in numbers and diversity, a trend that is expected to continue into the next decade. This issue brief introduces Colorado's P-20 Council to some of the demographic challenges to attaining the education goals in Governor Ritter's Colorado Promise.

Our "P" Students

The programs and experiences children have before they enter school (pre-school) are crucial, given the expansion of research on brain development and an increased understanding that achievement gaps exist before children begin kindergarten. Pre-school programs can be operated by public or private schools, for-profit or non-profit child care centers, or in family child care homes. They include such programs as the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program and Head Start. Programs vary widely in cost and quality. Colorado kindergarten teachers report that 1/3 of children come to school unprepared to learn and national research shows that kids who start school behind their peers tend to stay behind. Full-day kindergarten is not universally available in Colorado.

Colorado's largest investment in a pre-school program is the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP), which funds 16,360 slots for eligible children who are at risk of being unprepared for school. Beginning in the 2006-07 school year, 15 percent of these slots (2,454) were reserved for full-day kindergarten services, and 5 percent (610) of the pre-kindergarten slots were reserved to extend a child's day to a full day of services. Almost 95 percent of Colorado school districts (169 out of 178) participate in CPKP; 52 school districts provide CPKP full-day kindergarten slots. Program eligibility is determined by criteria established by the state legislature and local district councils.¹ Despite expansion over the years, policymakers estimate that over 7,000 eligible children will not be served, and that number is growing.²



Population Projections for Children Under Age 5 in Colorado

Yr	Age						Total 4&5	Total Under 6
	0	1	2	3	4	5		
2000	61,159	60,394	58,589	59,127	59,863	60,051	119,914	359,183
2005	69,139	69,358	69,942	69,477	69,229	64,644	133,873	411,789
2010	75,208	74,349	74,235	74,315	74,434	74,213	148,647	446,754
2015	82,474	81,598	81,287	81,049	80,733	80,439	161,172	487,580
2020	89,798	88,973	88,694	88,428	88,038	87,666	175,704	531,597

Source: State Demographer's Projections, accessed 3-20-07.

¹ Colorado Department of Education. (2007). Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program 2007 Legislative Report - http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/download/pdf/2007_legislative_report.pdf

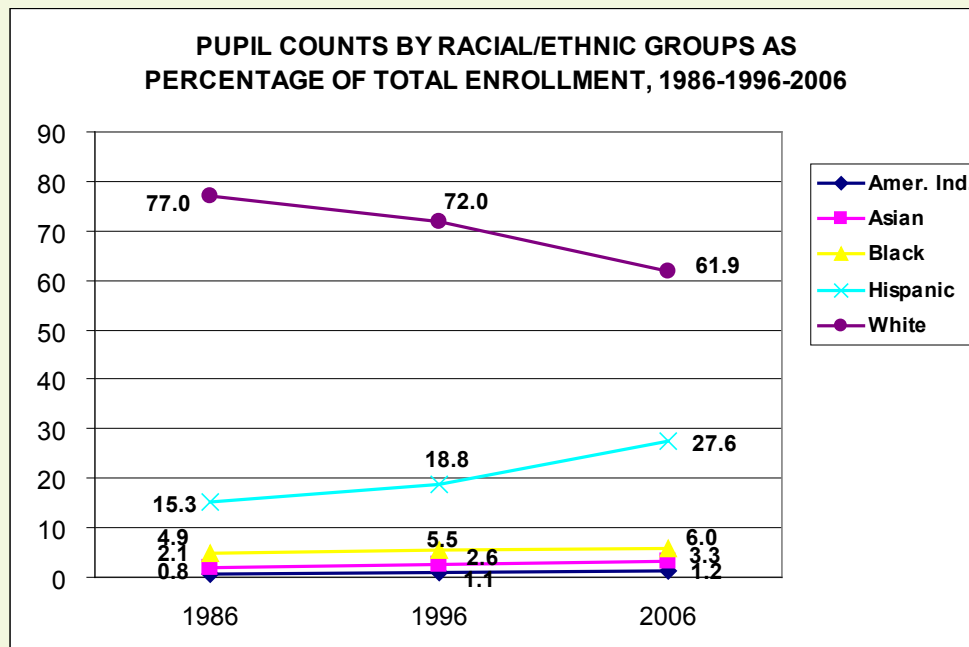
² The Bell Policy Center. (2006). Blueprint Brief No. 1. <http://www.thebell.org/PUBS/annual/2006/Brief/Brf1-preschool.pdf>.

Our K-12 Students

In fall 2006, 794,026 students were enrolled in Colorado public schools, grades K-12. Of these children 6.6 percent of which were in charter schools. Colorado ranks 22nd in the country in terms of total state K-12 public school enrollment.³ Altogether, student enrollment has increased 18 percent from 1996 and 42% from 1986. According to statistics maintained by the Colorado Department of Education, 93 percent of the state's K-12 students attend public schools, while 6.5 percent attend private schools and just under one percent are home schooled. Like Colorado's population generally, students are increasingly diverse. According to CDE, the number of PK-12 Hispanic students has increased by 157% since 1986.

Actual and projected percentage changes in PK-12 enrollment in public schools, CO and US: Selected years, fall 1997 through fall 2015				
Region and state	Actual 1997–2003	Projected Growth		
		2003–2009	2009–2015	2003–2015
Change in Grades PK-12 enrollment				
United States	5.2	1.5	4.0	5.5
Colorado	10.3	5.2	7.1	12.7
Change in Grades 9–12 enrollment				
United States	9.8	4.0	-0.9	3.1
Colorado	14.9	4.0	5.7	9.9
Change in Public High School Graduates				
United States	11.5	10.2	-4.3	5.5
Colorado	18.4	11.3	1.4	12.9

Source: NCES. Projections of Education Statistics to 2015. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/projections/tables/>



The number of Colorado's public high school graduates has been growing since the last decade and growth is expected to grow at an annual rate ranging from 1 to over 5 percent. Without changing graduation rates, the total number of high school graduates could reach to 57,170 in 2017-18, a 40.3 percent increase over 2001-02.⁴

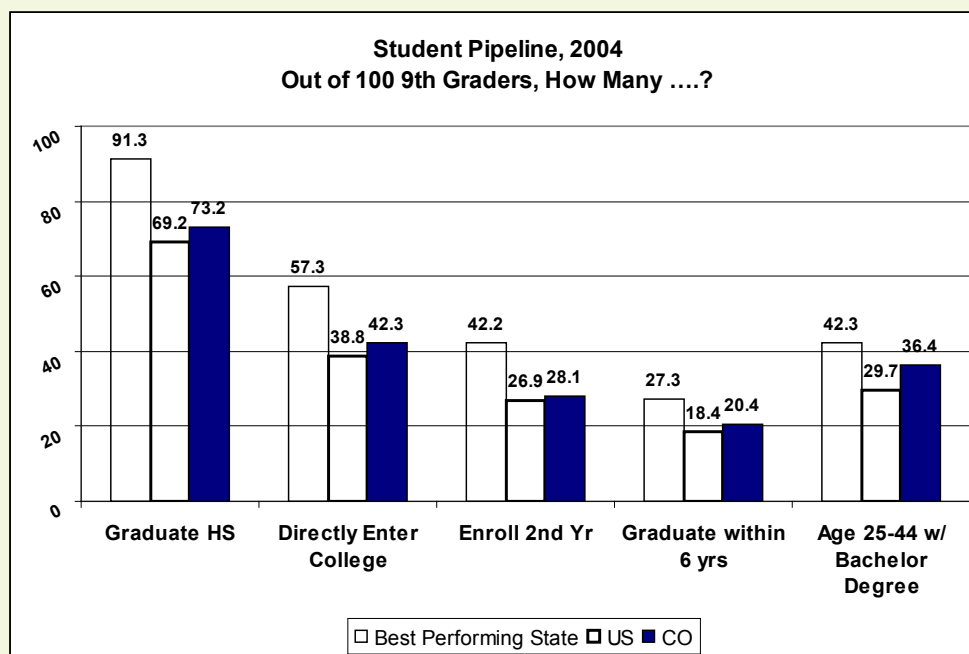
³ National Education Association, (2006). Rankings of the States 2005 and Estimates of School Statistics <http://www.nea.org/edstats/images/06rankings.pdf>.

After High School

In addition to issues of funding, Colorado policymakers have concerns regarding the low rate of high school graduates going directly to college, the low rate of attendance and retention of minority students, and high rates of remediation.

Colorado Post Secondary Performance Indicators by Race/Ethnicity					
Indicator	Asian	White	African-American	Hispanic	State Total (percent)
H.S. Graduation ⁵	79.9	80.3	56.3	43.7	69.1%
College Participation ⁶	not available	36.3	27.8	11.4	29.3%
College Readiness ⁷	not available	41.0	23.0	19.0	34.0%
College Completion ⁸	54.7	54.8	42.4	39.7	51.8%

Source: http://www.reportcardcolorado.com/Files/ReportCard_2006.pdf



Big Questions

Demographic trends will continue to affect Colorado.

- Where should resources be expended to get the biggest impact?
- How can the P-20 system be aligned so that the different age populations are not competing with one other for resources – both human and financial?
- How can the P-20 system be structured to alleviate the various “education gaps” (e.g., school readiness, course preparation, teacher assignment, gender achievement, grades, test results, persistence through K-12 and postsecondary options, affordability of higher education) impacted by changing demographics?

⁵ Center for Education Policy Analysis/Colorado Children's Campaign. (2006). Colorado State Accountability Report. <http://www.reportcardcolorado.org/Files/Footnotes-2005-2006.pdf>.

⁶ Id. Percent of young adults 18-24 enrolled in postsecondary education by race.

⁷ Id. Percent of students who graduate high school with skills necessary for college.

⁸ Id.



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