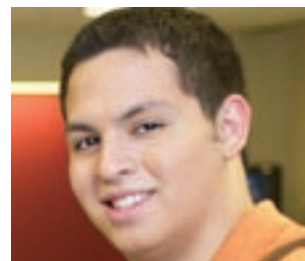




# Reenrollment of high school dropouts in a large, urban school district



Institute of Education Sciences  
U.S. Department of Education



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July 2008

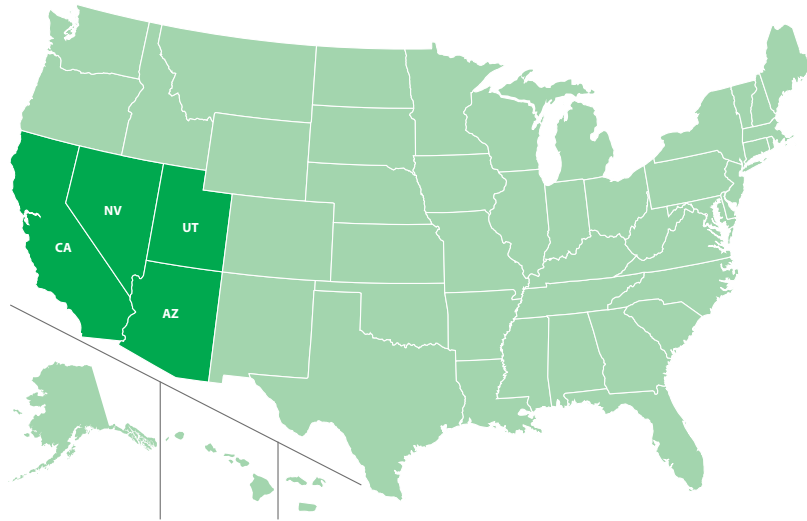
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July 2008

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## Reenrollment of high school dropouts in a large, urban school district

**This study follows a cohort of first-time 9th graders in one large urban school district from 2001/02 to 2005/06 and documents their dropout, reenrollment, and graduation rates. For the one-third of dropouts who reenrolled in the district over that period, it reports course credit accrual and graduation outcomes as well as students' reasons for dropping out and the challenges districts face with their reenrollment.**

In 2005/06 an estimated 1.2 million U.S. students did not complete high school with their classmates (National High School Center 2007; Pinkus 2006). While public attention and an extensive research literature focus on the dropout problem evident in that figure, much less is known about the number and characteristics of students who drop out and then reenroll.

This study follows a cohort of first-time 9th graders over five years (2001/02–2005/06) in San Bernardino City Unified School District to describe the magnitude of its dropout problem and the numbers, characteristics, and graduation outcomes of the students who dropped out and subsequently reenrolled in the district. It documents issues related to the reenrollment of dropouts and what district staff and reenrollees say about policies and practices to

improve graduation outcomes for dropouts who return to school. By focusing on reenrollees, this study contributes to shaping policy that addresses the broader dropout challenge.

In 2001/02 there were 3,856 first-time grade 9 students enrolled in San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools. By 2005/06, 45 percent of standard graduates had earned regular high school diplomas, 35 percent had dropped out at least once during the five years, and 20 percent had transferred to other schools and their outcomes are unknown. Dropping out of high school is not necessarily a permanent outcome. Among the dropouts, 31.0 percent eventually reenrolled in a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school during the five years of the study, and 18.4 percent of these reenrollees graduated from a district high school by 2005/06.

This study reports on the personal and academic reasons why students dropped out and reenrolled in high school. In interviews reenrollees reported on both “push” and “pull” factors that motivated their dropout and return to school. The dropout literature describes school experiences that push students out of school before graduation—academic struggles, boredom, and limited ways to make up failed course credits—or life circumstances that pull them in directions that stall

completion—family crises, employment, pregnancy, and gang pressure (Bridgeland, DiIulio, and Morison 2006; Jordan, McPartland, and Lara 1999). Without a diploma, however, dropouts are often pushed out of the labor market. And principals, teachers, sports coaches, and counselors helped to pull dropouts back to high school by offering to immediately reenroll them in school and by providing counseling and academic assistance on their return.

The enrollment data show that the majority (59.7 percent) of reenrollees dropped out in their first year of high school and that close to half (47.2 percent) returned to school for only one year, earning few course credits.

Reenrollment rates were also assessed by various student background characteristics. Reenrollment rates were lowest for Asian students (13.3 percent), who also had the lowest dropout rate (22.6 percent). Hispanic, English language learner, and male students also had low reenrollment rates but were more likely to drop out than were other students. Hispanic students had a higher dropout rate (39.0 percent) and a lower reenrollment rate (27.9 percent) than students of other races/ethnicities. English language learner students dropped out at a higher rate (43.3 percent) than did other students (32.5 percent) and reenrolled at a lower rate (25.6 percent). Male students were more likely to drop out than were female students (39.5 percent compared with 30.7 percent) and less likely to reenroll (28.1 percent compared with 34.7 percent). For these student subgroups low reenrollment rates meant that dropout events became permanent exits from San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools during the period covered by the study.

The highest reenrollment rates were found for grade 9 dropouts (49.4 percent), Black dropouts (43.4 percent), female dropouts (34.7 percent), and student dropouts not classified as English language learner students (33.7 percent). The higher reenrollment rates, especially for grade 9 and Black student dropouts, demonstrate how dropout events can be a temporary interruption rather than a permanent high school outcome.

The reenrollment rates showed less variability by suspension and low socioeconomic status than by the other characteristics analyzed, staying close to the overall 31.0 percent reenrollment rate of the study cohort.

The evidence also indicates that while reenrollees fared better than dropouts who did not return to a district school, most did not earn enough course credits upon reenrollment to graduate within the five years of the study. Nevertheless, 18.4 percent of reenrollees earned a district high school diploma by 2005/06.

District contacts reported a strong commitment to reenrolling dropouts but cited practical challenges or disincentives to reenrollment. They noted the complexity of offering credit-recovery interventions for credit-deficient students at continuation schools and the lack of such interventions at traditional high schools.<sup>1</sup> Demand generally exceeds enrollment capacity at continuation schools, which offer these interventions for reenrollees. Funding concerns were especially pressing on the district and high schools. State funds, tied to enrollment and attendance rates, were reduced as a result of the unstable enrollment and attendance of dropouts and reenrollees.

District contacts also explained that the poor attendance of reenrollees—and the likelihood that they will drop out again—made it difficult to meet specific testing, graduation, and other accountability requirements. Given these challenges, district administrators, principals, and reenrollees presented their suggestions for improving graduation outcomes for dropouts who reenroll in district high schools.

This study of one district offers findings on which future research can build. Findings about the magnitude of the dropout problem and the numbers, characteristics, and graduation outcomes of reenrolled students could

change as the results of additional longitudinal research on dropouts and reenrollees become available.

**July 2008**

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Note

1. Continuation schools, public alternative schools for students ages 16–18, offer a more flexible schedule than traditional high schools for students who have fallen behind, allowing them to make up failed credits and earn additional credits toward graduation at a quicker pace.

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**This study follows a cohort of first-time 9th graders in one large urban school district from 2001/02 to 2005/06 and documents their dropout, reenrollment, and graduation rates. For the one-third of the dropouts who reenrolled in the district over that period, it reports course credit accrual and graduation outcomes as well as students' reasons for dropping out and the challenges districts face with their reenrollment.**

## WHY THIS STUDY?

In 2005/06 an estimated 1.2 million American students did not complete high school with their classmates (National High School Center 2007; Pinkus 2006). While there has been considerable recent research (for example, Orfield 2004) on this national education crisis, much less is known about the number and characteristics of those students who drop out and then reenroll but face nearly impenetrable barriers to graduation. This study focuses on reenrollees in one of California's largest school districts—the San Bernardino City Unified School District. It combines secondary analyses of student demographic, enrollment, and course history data with interviews of reenrollees and district staff to reveal the magnitude of the dropout problem and the characteristics and graduation outcomes of the dropouts who reenrolled in district high schools between 2001/02 and 2005/06.

California's graduation rate mirrors the national rate. According to the most recent National Center for Education Statistics data available, the averaged freshman graduation rate of public high school students in 2003/04 was 73.9 percent in California and 75.0 percent nationwide (Laird et al. 2007).<sup>1</sup> In California low graduation rates are especially troubling among American Indian students (49.7 percent), Black students (55.3 percent), and Hispanic students (57.0 percent). In many urban districts, including San Bernardino, these groups have a less than 50 percent chance of graduating (De Cos 2005).<sup>2</sup> Low graduation and high dropout rates are under intense public scrutiny in school districts like San Bernardino. Educators and policymakers are seeking effective strategies to keep more students in high school until graduation.

The extensive literature on dropouts has focused largely on calculating dropout and graduation rates, predicting high school failure and dropout, and evaluating prevention programs. Critical information gaps still exist (Orfield 2004). As the Wayman studies (2002, 2001) report, there is little

research on returning dropouts, their rate of on-time diploma attainment, and the challenges districts face when student dropouts return to school. Data limitations largely account for this information gap and restrict longitudinal investigations of individual students as they entered and exited schools. A further complication was tracking reenrollees as they transferred between schools, districts, and even education systems, including adult education and community colleges.

Currently, there is no national or California accounting of the number of dropouts who reenroll

in high school in either their district of origin (where they dropped out) or another district. Some studies on returning dropouts estimate reenrollment and graduation rates based on retrospective survey data. For instance, Ekstrom et al. (1987), using the High School and Beyond dataset for 1980–82, found that 17 percent of their sample returned to an education institution. Chuang (1997), using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth dataset, estimates that nearly 50 percent of the dropouts in the sample for

1979–86 reenrolled by 1986. Using the National Education Longitudinal Study dataset, Hurst, Kelly, and Princiotta (2004) report that 40 percent of dropouts earned a high school diploma or alternative certificate within eight years of their cohort's expected graduation year.

Assessing the magnitude of reenrollment and the characteristics of students who vanish from and then reenroll in the education pipeline will provide critical information to policymakers about how well schools first retain students and then graduate them after they return. A more complete and accurate description of reenrollees is needed to shape policies and practices that enable students to reenroll and improve their graduation outcomes. This is a top priority for California's education leaders as evidenced by a focus on increasing

graduation rates in the current reform agendas of the governor, the chief state school officer, and the state's P-16 council.

By examining reenrollees, this study better enables policymakers and educators to discuss the dropout problem. It describes the 2001/02 grade 9 cohort in San Bernardino City Unified School District by tracking student dropout, reenrollment, and graduation over five years, adding the increasingly common fifth year to the conventional on-time four-year graduation time frame.<sup>3</sup> San Bernardino City Unified School District, in Southern California's Inland Empire, is the state's seventh largest school district, with about 59,000 students (California Department of Education 2007a). As a convenience sample, it provides a large, urban, high poverty, and racially diverse setting for exploratory research and is similar in these attributes to other unified school districts in the state, such as Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Oakland (California Department of Education 2007b). Moreover, it is subject to the same state policies that govern all other California districts.

This study creates an initial profile of the students who dropped out of a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school and subsequently reenrolled in one of the district's five traditional or two continuation high schools from 2001/02 through 2005/06.<sup>4</sup> It is an exploratory analysis of the magnitude and characteristics of dropouts who reenrolled in the district and contrasts key academic outcomes of reenrollees and students who dropped out without reenrolling during the five-year study period. In addition, it documents the issues this district confronted in reenrolling students who missed weeks, months, and even years of schooling. Finally, this study of one district offers findings on which future research can build. Box 1 and appendix A provide details on the study data and methodology.

Five research questions guided the study of reenrollment of dropouts in the San Bernardino City Unified School District between 2001/02 and 2005/06:

**This study is an exploratory analysis of the magnitude and characteristics of dropouts who reenrolled in a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school and contrasts key academic outcomes of reenrollees and students who dropped out without reenrolling during the five-year study period**

## BOX 1

**Study data and methodology****Study data**

This report describes the dropout events, reenrollment, and graduation outcomes of the cohort of students who were first-time 9th graders in San Bernardino City Unified School District in 2001/02. Data were collected on the magnitude, characteristics, and outcomes of reenrollees from a district dataset with linked, longitudinal student-level data for 2001/02 through 2005/06. The dataset contains student demographic, enrollment, and course data on all district high school students.

In addition, interviews were conducted with seven district administrators, high school principals from the district's five traditional and two continuation high schools, and six dropouts currently reenrolled in different district high schools (table B6 in appendix B provides a summary). The interviewees explained why students dropped out and reenrolled and described the challenges reenrollees present to high schools and the district.

**Cohort selection**

Researchers constructed a census from the San Bernardino City Unified School District dataset to follow a cohort of students through high school. There were 5,674 students enrolled in district public high schools in grade 9 during the 2001/02 school year. The dataset was restricted to students who entered grade 9 for the first time in 2001/02. Second-time 9th graders (students who were enrolled in

grade 9 the previous year but had not advanced to grade 10) were dropped from the dataset. Students younger than 13 or older than 17 on September 1, 2001, the year they entered high school, were also dropped from the dataset (41 students) so that the analysis would examine only students of typical high school age and, presumably, behavior. The final sample consisted of 3,856 first-time 9th graders.

**Data analysis**

The dataset provided information on dropout events, enrollment, and graduation outcomes for students annually between 2001/02 and 2005/06 (see appendix A for more details). The researchers used exit status codes to classify the 2001/02 grade 9 cohort into three broad categories: standard graduates, dropouts, and others for each year of the study (see table B1 in appendix B). Students were classified based on the exit code of their first interruption of continuous enrollment in the district.

- *Standard graduates* are students who earn a regular high school diploma from a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school in four or five years without any interruption in enrollment (through dropout event, transfer to another district, or expulsion).
- *Dropouts* are students whose first withdrawal from a district high school between 2001/02 and 2005/06 met one of three criteria: withdrew before graduating and not in an education program

leading to a diploma, stopped attending school and cannot be located, or transferred to another school district without having their transcript sent to the receiving district and are not in an education program that led to a high school diploma. The dropout category includes students who reenroll at least one time in San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools between 2001/02 and 2005/06 after dropping out (table B3 in appendix B provides reenrollment rates by key characteristics).

- *Others* are primarily students who transferred to other school districts between 2001/02 and 2005/06 (see table B1 in appendix B), and there is no way to know the outcomes for these students since the district lacks complete information on their education histories. This category also includes students who were expelled, died, earned alternative high school completion certificates before dropping out or graduating, or who remained enrolled in a district high school for the five years of the study without dropping out or graduating and were still enrolled in 2005/06.<sup>1</sup>

The cohort graduation rate was computed by dividing the number of students from the cohort of first-time 9th graders continuously enrolled in the district from 2001/02 to 2005/06 who graduated within the study time frame by the total number of first-time 9th graders in the district.

(CONTINUED)

## BOX 1 (CONTINUED)

**Study data and methodology**

Students categorized as “other” and students graduating in the district after dropping out and reenrolling were not included in the numerator. Dropout rates were computed by dividing the number of students from the cohort of first-time 9th graders in the district who dropped out at least once during the five-year study time frame by the total number of first-time 9th graders in the district (see table B2 in appendix B). Students categorized as “other” were not included in the numerator.

Demographic information in the district dataset was used to compute reenrollment and dropout rates by gender, race/ethnicity, English language learner status, low socioeconomic status, age entering grade 9, and suspensions. Course data were used to report on course failure and course credit accumulation.

Because the entire population was included in the analysis, no statistical tests were computed. Appendix B tables B4 and B5 report the

number of students in each category for categorical variables, averages, standard deviations, and quartiles for the percentage of courses failed and the number of course credits accumulated.

**Note**

1. Students in the “others” category were not included in the analysis because they did not meet the study definitions of “standard graduates” or “dropouts” or because San Bernardino City Unified School District lacked their complete enrollment data.

- What is the magnitude of reenrollment?
- What are the characteristics of reenrollees?
- What are the academic and graduation outcomes for reenrollees?
- What issues did the district confront regarding reenrollment of dropouts?
- What do district staff and students suggest about changes in policies and practices?

419 (31.0 percent) eventually reenrolled in a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school, and 77 (5.7 percent) earned a high school diploma from the district within five years.

Dropping out was not a fixed outcome for some students (table 1). While most of the cohort’s 1,352 student dropouts (81.2 percent) experienced a single dropout event, nearly one in five of the district’s dropouts (18.8 percent) dropped out multiple (2–4) times. In interviews one district reenrollee mentioned dropping out “at least three times before this time,” and another related “dropping out so many times I forget how many.” These students repeatedly dropped out and reenrolled before eventually graduating or dropping out as their final high school outcome.

**WHAT IS THE MAGNITUDE OF REENROLLMENT?**

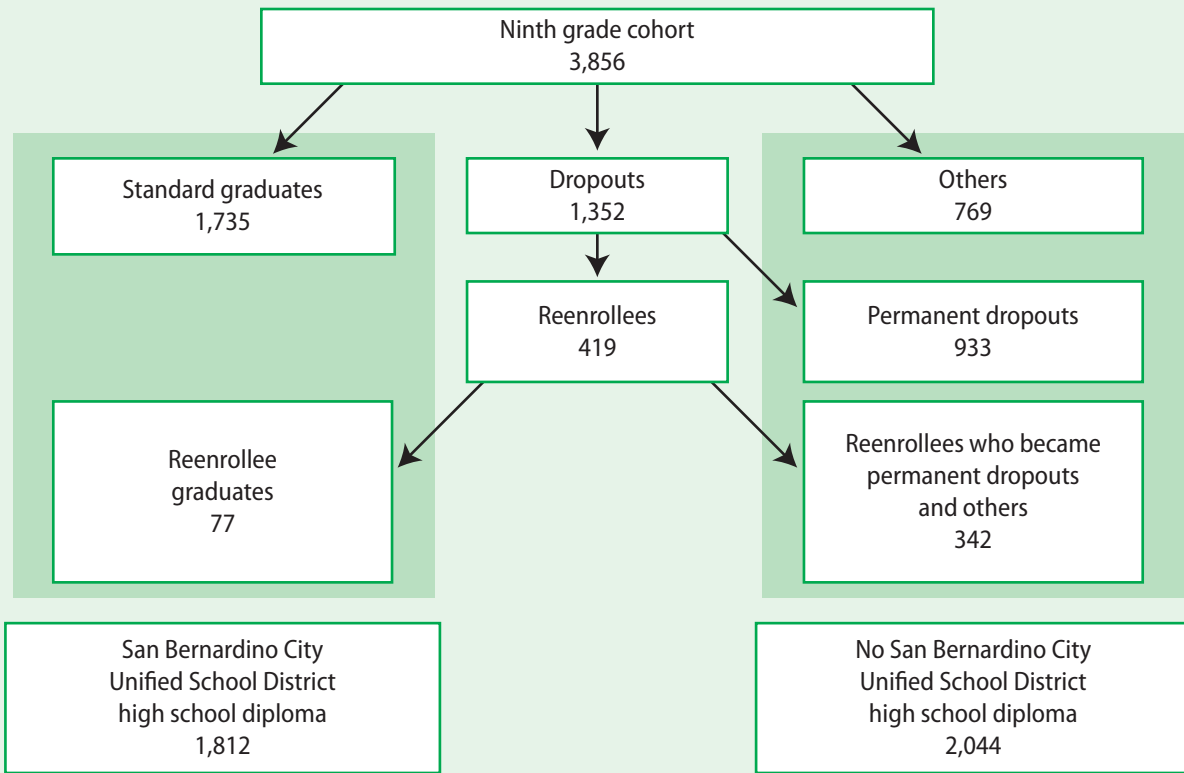
In 2001/02 there were 3,856 first-time grade 9 students enrolled in San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools. Five years later 1,735 of these students (45.0 percent) had been continuously enrolled in district high schools and had earned regular high school diplomas (figure 1).<sup>5</sup> But for 1,352 students, more than a third of this grade 9 cohort (35.1 percent),<sup>6</sup> high school was interrupted by at least one dropout event. Dropping out of high school was not necessarily a permanent outcome, however (Wayman 2001; Chuang 1997). Of the students who dropped out,

**WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF REENROLLEES?**

District enrollment data provide general descriptive information about the characteristics of reenrollees and allow for a comparison of reenrollment rates by key background characteristics. The dropout literature and interviews with San Bernardino City Unified School District

FIGURE 1

**Student trajectories in San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools, 2001/02–2005/06**



Source: Authors’ analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

**TABLE 1**  
**Number and percentage of students who dropped out of a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school one or more times, 2001/02–2005/06**

Number of dropout events	Students	
	Number	Percentage
One	1,098	81.2
Two	216	16.0
Three	32	2.4
Four	6	0.4
Total	1,352	100

Source: Authors’ analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

**Both push and pull factors influenced decisions to drop out of school**

The reasons students drop out of high school tend to be complex. Research shows that dropping out is less a singular event than a gradual process of disengagement from school that encompasses years of academic and behavioral difficulties, absenteeism, and stressful life circumstances (Rumberger 2004; Lehr et al. 2004).

The dropout literature describes school experiences that “push” students out of school before graduation or life circumstances that “pull” them in directions that stall completion (Bridgeland, DiIulio, and Morison 2006; Jordan, McPartland, and Lara 1999). San Bernardino City Unified School District reenrollees reported academic struggles and the need for more help to master

administrators, high school principals, and reenrollees offer explanations about why students drop out and reenroll.

grade-level content (6 of 6 respondents), boredom (2 of 6), and limited ways to make up failed courses and credits (6 of 6) as experiences that pushed them to drop out. They believed that meeting course requirements to graduate was out of their reach. “I failed courses and was behind in credits,” explained one dropout who reenrolled in a continuation school, “and too much piled up, so I gave up.”

Meanwhile, family crises such as homelessness and alcohol and drug use, fatigue from physically demanding jobs, pregnancy and parenting, gang pressures, and violence in the community were personal challenges that “pulled” them away from school. One reenrollee explained that life “stresses made me miss school” and told of experiencing depression after a gang-related shooting that killed a childhood friend, caring for a terminally ill mother and three younger nephews, and “working long hours” to support himself and the extended family. Without exception, reenrollees reported mental health issues that impeded their ability

to attend school regularly— anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness “that can take you nowhere far.” Half of them also mentioned that their parents and other relatives were not high school graduates. Low expectations about earning a diploma and the perceived limited value of a diploma in the labor market were common experiences in their

families and peer groups.

**In 2001/02, the year the grade 9 cohort entered high school, there were 391 first-time dropouts; 250 (63.9 percent) of them eventually reenrolled in the district at least once**

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#### Both push and pull factors influenced reenrollees to return to school

The district had no records documenting why dropouts reenrolled in school. Interviews with reenrollees revealed a few key turning points. The primary reason to return to school, according to all interviewed reenrollees, was their failure to secure employment. Without a diploma dropouts were pushed out of the labor market. “Wanting a better future” and realizing that a high school

diploma was the minimum credential needed to earn a subsistence income were critical. “I looked for work and realized I needed a diploma, so I came back,” explained a grade 12 dropout who returned for a fifth year of high school. Reenrollees knew of other dropouts whose lives they described as “dead-ended,” given their struggles to find employment.

All reenrollees interviewed also acknowledged the persuasive power of caring and persistent school staff. Principals, teachers, sports coaches, and counselors pulled dropouts back to high school by offering to immediately reenroll them in school and by providing counseling and academic assistance once they returned. “The school welcomed me back” and “reenrollment was easy and happened the same day I returned” were common sentiments among reenrollees (5 of 6 respondents).

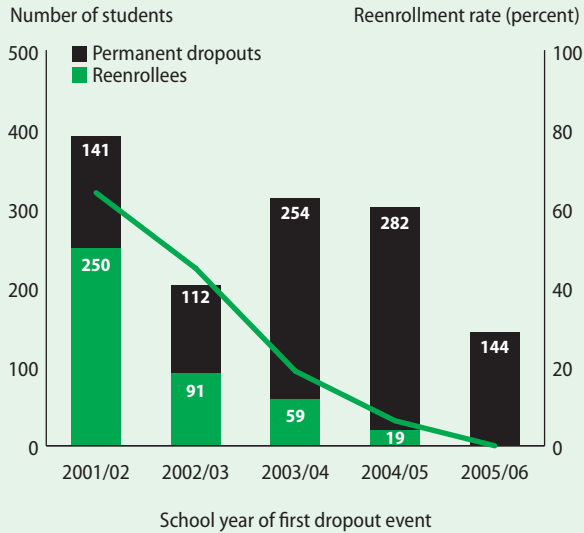
Reenrollees and principals considered the reenrollment of dropouts to traditional high schools as straightforward and routine (8 of 13 respondents), with schools immediately enrolling students in courses arranged for by school counselors upon receipt of district documents. The reenrollment process was the same in continuation schools as in traditional schools, but often involved a waiting period since enrollments at these schools were at full capacity. For reenrollees involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems reenrollment and regular attendance were a mandated probation provision or eligibility condition for their parents to receive public assistance.

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#### The majority of reenrollees had dropped out in the first year of high school

In 2001/02, the year the grade 9 cohort entered high school, there were 391 first-time dropouts (figure 2). Over the five years covered by the study, 250 (63.9 percent) of these student dropouts eventually reenrolled in the district at least once. In 2005/06, the cohort’s fifth year of high school, there were 144 first-time dropouts.<sup>7</sup>

**FIGURE 2**  
**Number of San Bernardino City Unified School District dropouts and reenrollees, by year of first dropout event, 2001/02–2005/06**



Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

The declining reenrollment of dropouts from the first to the fifth year of high school shows that the reenrollees were mainly students who dropped out in the early years of high school (see figure 2). Of the 419 dropouts who reenrolled in the district over the five years, almost 60 percent dropped out for the first time in 2001/02.

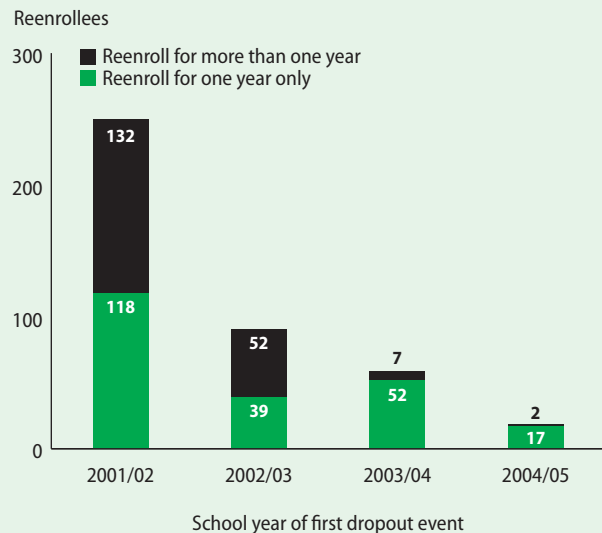
According to all six reenrollees interviewed, both push and pull factors contributed to the declining rate of reenrollment. Interviewees mentioned the mounting pressures of credit deficiencies building over time and the need to earn an income. In addition, students ages 18 and older who transferred from the K–12 system to the adult education system could not be tracked as reenrollees in this study. The cohort followed in the study is composed of first-time 9th graders in 2001/02 and is therefore quite homogeneous in age. More than 85 percent were 14-year-olds in the first year of high school (see table B2 in appendix B), and all students who dropped out in 2004/05 or 2005/06 were ages 18 and older. In interviews older

students explained that dropouts who returned to high school at age 17 or 18, especially those with severe credit deficiencies, were routinely sent to the district's adult education school since they were "aging out" of the public school system. However, one fifth-year reenrollee told of returning first to a charter school and then to an adult education school to recover lost credits but of eventually reenrolling in a traditional high school, despite turning 18, because "I wanted a high school diploma not an equivalency degree."

**More than half of reenrollees returned to school for only one year**

Of the 250 reenrollees who had dropped out during their first year in a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school, slightly under half (47.2 percent) reenrolled for one year or less (figure 3). The rate was similar (42.9 percent) for the 91 reenrollees who had dropped out in their second year. This pattern suggests that for many

**FIGURE 3**  
**Number of years students in the San Bernardino City Unified School District remain reenrolled, by school year of their first dropout event, 2001/02–2004/05**



Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

**Reenrollment rates declined among dropouts with each successive grade, from 21.8 percent in grade 10 and 16.4 percent in grade 11, to 2.2 percent in grade 12**

dropouts reenrollment resulted in other dropout events shortly following their return to school.

Of the 59 students who dropped out in their third year and the 19 who dropped out in their fourth year, much higher percentages (88.1 percent and 89.5 percent)

reenrolled for one year or less. In

interviews reenrollees again mentioned some age-related obstacles that also contributed to limiting the length of reenrollment for older students. Family circumstances, such as the need to earn income and care for younger, infirm, and elderly family members were cited by all reenrollees interviewed, and half cited encouragement from the district to transfer to the adult education school. All told how feelings of hopelessness affected their length of reenrollment, mainly about how graduation remained out of reach when failed course credits were not quickly made up. A fifth-year senior at a traditional high school added that while “there is no stigma to coming back,” there is also “no support” for older dropouts returning to school.

**Some reenrollees returned to school multiple times**

While most reenrollees returned to high school just once (84.5 percent), for some students dropping out and reenrolling were each impermanent

conditions (table 2). During the five years of the study 15.5 percent of reenrollees reenrolled two (14.1 percent) or three (1.4 percent) times. Specifically, 65 students in the cohort dropped out at least twice and reenrolled in the district multiple times—repeatedly dropping out and reenrolling in a district school before either graduating or dropping out again.

**Reenrollees returned mainly to their schools of origin**

The 419 reenrollees in this study had a total of 490 reenrollments, a combination of one-time and multiple reenrollment events. In nearly three-quarters of reenrollments (71.8 percent) reenrollees returned to the school from which they first dropped out. In 138 instances (28.2 percent) dropouts reenrolled at a different school.

**Grade 9 and Black student dropouts reenrolled at higher rates than did other student subgroups**

Most dropouts left school for the first time in grade 9 (see table B3 in appendix B), and nearly half of these dropouts (49.4 percent) eventually reenrolled in high school (figure 4). This rate includes students who did not earn enough credits in their first year of high school to be promoted to grade 10, and who repeated grade 9 before dropping out. Reenrollment rates declined among dropouts with each successive grade, from 21.8 percent in grade 10 and 16.4 percent in grade 11, to the lowest reenrollment rate of 2.2 percent in grade 12, reflecting the results found in the reenrollment rates by the year of first dropout event (see figure 2).

The reenrollment rates by race/ethnicity show considerable variability. Hispanic, Black, and White students are the predominant races/ethnicities in the study cohort (see table B2 in appendix B). Black student dropouts had the highest reenrollment rate, with slightly under half returning to high school following a dropout event (43.4 percent). American Indians, a small cohort of students (41 students and 16 dropouts), reenrolled at a 37.5 percent rate. Among Hispanic student

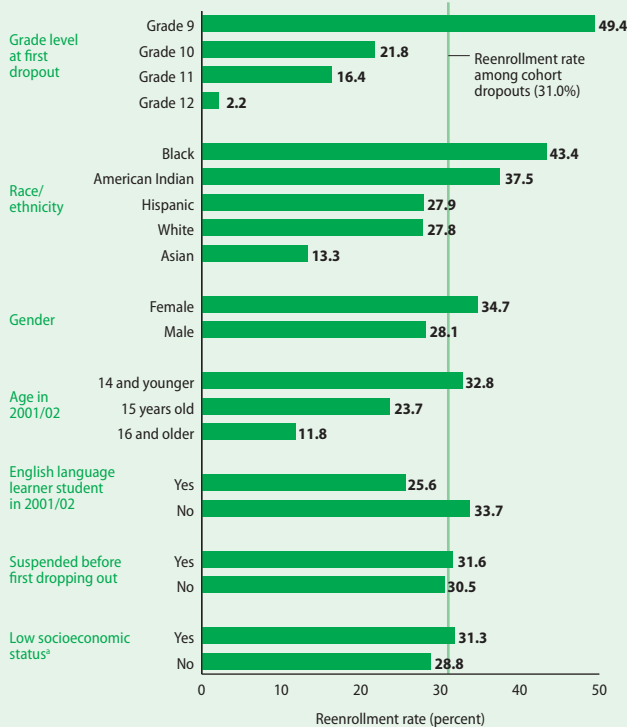
**TABLE 2**  
**Number and percentage of dropouts who reenrolled in the San Bernardino City Unified School District one or more times, 2001/02–2005/06**

Number of reenrollments	Reenrollees	
	Number	Percentage
One	354	84.5
Two	59	14.1
Three	6	1.4
Total	419	100.0

Source: Authors’ analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.



**FIGURE 4**  
**Reenrollment rates by key student characteristics for San Bernardino City Unified School District reenrollees, 2001/02–2005/06 (percent)**



*Note:* Reenrollment rates by student characteristics are calculated by dividing the number of San Bernardino City Unified School District high school students who reenrolled in the district between 2001/02 and 2005/06 after dropping out by the total number of dropouts for each characteristic.

a. District classifies students as low socioeconomic status based on qualification for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

*Source:* Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

dropouts, 27.9 percent reenrolled in the district at some point during the study period. The reenrollment rate for White student dropouts is nearly the same as that for Hispanic students (27.8 percent). Asian student dropouts had the lowest reenrollment rate, at 13.3 percent.

These reenrollment rates by race/ethnicity differ from the dropout rates for the two largest ethnic groups in the San Bernardino City Unified School District, Hispanic and Black students (see table B2). While Hispanic students had a higher

dropout rate (39.0 percent) than Black students (33.3 percent), they had a lower reenrollment rate (27.9 percent for Hispanic students and 43.4 percent for Black students). These patterns reflect the greater propensity of Hispanic students to drop out and not reenroll in San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools compared with other races/ethnicities. It also identifies a different pattern for Black student dropouts, who reenrolled in greater numbers than students of other races/ethnicities.

In the study cohort male students were less likely than female students to graduate from high school. They are more likely to drop out (39.5 percent compared with 30.7 percent; see table B2) and less likely to reenroll (28.1 percent compared with 34.7 percent).

The age of the study cohort was homogeneous, with more than 85 percent of the first-time 9th graders 14-years-old in September 2001 (see table B2 in appendix B). Dropouts who entered grade 9 when they were older than age 14 had a lower rate of reenrollment than those who started high school at 14. In interviews reenrollees mentioned that older dropouts encounter age-related challenges to returning to school. Students who are older than age 14 when they start high school encounter these obstacles earlier than their younger classmates.

In the study cohort English language learner students in the San Bernardino City Unified School District in 2001/02 were also at greater risk of not completing their high school education. They dropped out at a higher rate (43.3 percent) than other students (32.5 percent; see table B2 in appendix B) and reenrolled at a lower rate. Dropouts who were English language learner students had a 25.6 percent reenrollment rate, whereas dropouts not classified as English language learner students had a 33.7 percent reenrollment rate (see figure 4).

Reenrollment rates showed less variability by suspension and low socioeconomic status than

by the other characteristics analyzed, staying close to the overall 31.0 percent reenrollment rate of the study cohort (see figure 4). Reenrollment rates were 30.5 percent for students who had been suspended at least once before their first dropout event and 31.6 percent for students who were not suspended before their first dropout event. Similarly, reenrollment rates were 31.3 percent for dropouts classified by the district as low socioeconomic status (based on their qualification for the free or reduced-price lunch program) and 28.8 percent for dropouts not classified as low socioeconomic status. Both the presence of a suspension and low socioeconomic status are linked to higher dropout rates, however (see table B2).<sup>8</sup>

### WHAT ARE THE ACADEMIC AND GRADUATION OUTCOMES FOR REENROLLEES?

A recent study on statewide dropout rates for California in 2002 concludes that course failure and the inability to keep up with schoolwork are the primary reasons 10th graders dropped out

(Rotermund 2007). This section examines the course failure rate and course credit accumulation of San Bernardino City Unified School District high school students before their first dropout event, comparing outcomes among dropouts who reenrolled and those who did not return to school. It also assesses how well reenrollees fared at accumulating course credits after they returned to school and, ultimately, at earning a high school diploma.

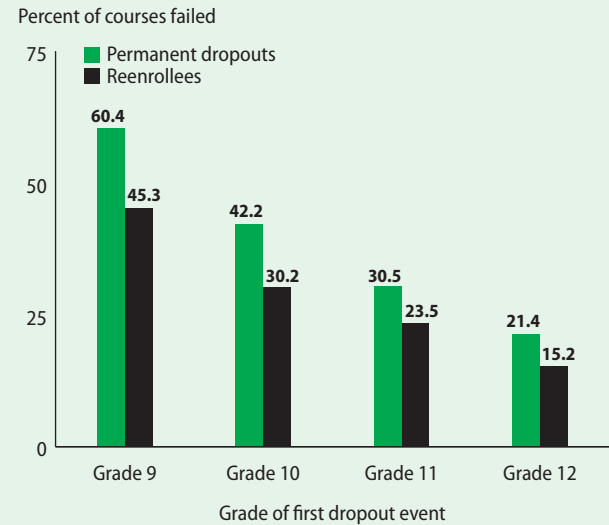
**Among students who dropped out for the first time in grade 9, reenrollees failed an estimated average of 45.3 percent of their courses before dropping out, whereas dropouts who did not return to district high schools failed an average of 60.4 percent of their courses**

Reenrollees fared better than permanent dropouts at course completion and credit accumulation before the first dropout event

The course failure rate among all dropouts in the study cohort is substantial (figure 5). For example,

FIGURE 5

### Average percentage of courses failed by San Bernardino City Unified School District student dropouts, by grade of first dropout event, 2001/02–2005/06



Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

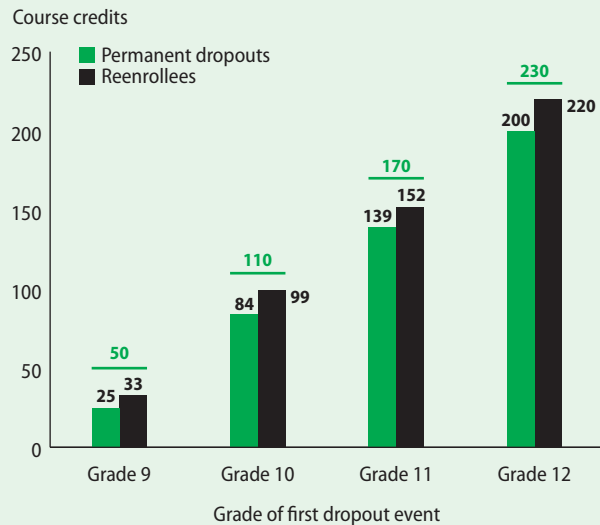
among students who dropped out for the first time in grade 9, reenrollees failed an estimated average of 45.3 percent of their courses before dropping out, whereas dropouts who did not return to district high schools failed an average of 60.4 percent of their courses. Similarly, first-time dropouts in grade 10 who eventually reenrolled failed 30.2 percent of their high school courses before dropping out, while grade 10 permanent dropouts failed 42.2 percent of their courses.

At the time of the dropout event students who later reenrolled in the district within the five-year study time frame had failed a lower average percentage of courses than permanent dropouts. This pattern remained consistent for all dropouts, from students dropping out for the first time in grade 9 to those who reached grade 12 before dropping out for the first time.

Also evident for both reenrollees and for students who dropped out and did not return to school

FIGURE 6

**Average number of course credits accumulated by San Bernardino City Unified School District student dropouts, by grade of first dropout event, 2001/02–2005/06**



Note: The horizontal lines and the numbers above them indicate the credit requirements to advance to next grade.

Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

was a declining trend in the percentage of course failures as students dropped out for the first time later in their high school years. The rate of course failure before dropping out was 45.3 percent for reenrollees who first dropped out in grade 9 and declined to 15.2 percent for students who first dropped out in grade 12. For permanent dropouts within the study time frame the rate of course failure before dropping out was 60.4 percent for those whose first dropout event was in grade 9 and declined to 21.4 percent for those who reached grade 12 before their first dropout event.

Related to this finding are the results for the average number of course credits accumulated before dropping out, by grade level and reenrollment status (figure 6). Among students who dropped out of a district high school for the first time in grade 9, those who eventually reenrolled in a district high school had accumulated an average of 33 credits

at the time of the dropout event—50 are needed to advance to grade 10. Permanent dropouts had accumulated only half the required credits at the time of the dropout event. All reenrollees interviewed confirmed that credit deficiency in academic courses is a common reason students drop out of school.

The expected pattern of credit accumulation for a four-year, on-time graduation requires students to earn 50 credits in grade 9 and 60 credits each year thereafter in appropriate courses, accumulating 230 course credits to graduate.

At the time of the first dropout event students who later reenrolled in the district had accumulated more course credits than students who had dropped out and failed to reenroll. This pattern remained consistent across all grade levels. In grade 12 permanent dropouts were short an average of 30 credits of meeting the district's graduation requirement at the time they dropped out and did not reenroll in a district high school.

### One-third of reenrollees failed to complete even one course after reenrollment

For nearly a third (32.0 percent) of reenrollees the data show no course credit or grade information after reenrollment, even though they completed courses before dropping out, implying that they reenrolled for too brief a period to complete even one course (table 3). Most reenrollees (61.6 percent) earned grades by completing some courses both before and after reenrolling.

### Most reenrollees did not earn enough credits to graduate

Reenrollees in the San Bernardino City Unified School District who earned credits before and after their first dropout event had accumulated an average of 38 credits at the time of their first dropout event and accumulated an average of 52 additional credits during their reenrollment in the district (figure 7). Thus, even after students who did not complete at least one course are excluded,

TABLE 3

**Course completion by San Bernardino City Unified School District reenrollees, 2001/02–2005/06**

Course completion	Reenrollees	
	Number	Percentage
Courses completed before and after reenrollment	258	61.6
Courses completed only before reenrollment	134	32.0
Courses completed only after reenrollment	15	3.6
No courses completed before and after reenrollment	12	2.9
Total	419	100.0

*Note:* Determinations of course completion are based on available data on course credit and grades in the San Bernardino City Unified School District database.

*Source:* Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

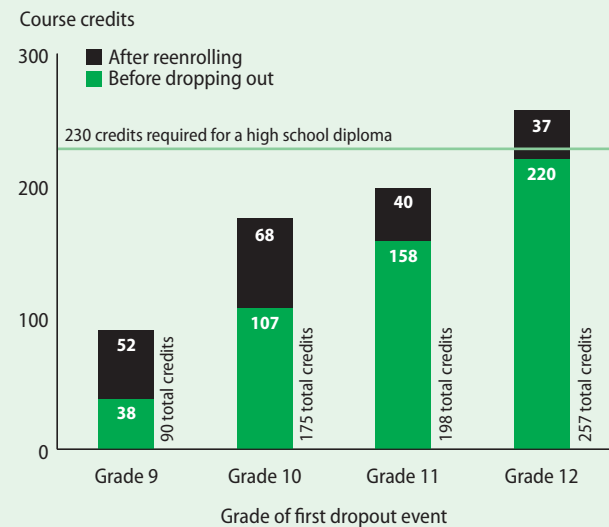
reenrollees in grades 9–11 did not accumulate enough credits on average after returning to school to earn the minimum 230 credits required for a high school diploma.

On average, reenrollees who dropped out earlier in high school accumulated fewer credits over their high school years in the San Bernardino City Unified School District than did reenrollees who first dropped out in the later high school years. Reenrollees accumulated an average of 90 credits before and after reenrollment if they first dropped out in grade 9, 175 if they first dropped out in grade 10, 198 if they first dropped out in grade 11, and 257 if they first dropped out in grade 12 (see figure 7). And if the credits were not earned in appropriate academic courses, students can still not graduate from high school even with more than the required 230 course credits.

### Nearly one-fifth of reenrollees graduated from high school

While most reenrollees in the San Bernardino City Unified School District during 2001/02–2005/06 did not earn the credits required to graduate, some did (see figure 7). Of the 419 district reenrollees

FIGURE 7

**Average number of course credits accumulated by San Bernardino City Unified School District student dropouts before and after reenrollment, 2001/02–2005/06**

*Source:* Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

77 (18.4 percent) obtained a high school diploma within four or five years (table 4). Among the rest, more than half dropped out before graduating (54.2 percent), more than a fifth (21.0 percent) transferred to another district, and there were still 22 (5.3 percent) reenrollees from the 2001/02 grade 9 cohort enrolled in district high schools who had neither officially graduated nor dropped out after five years.

For the 18.4 percent of reenrollees who earned a high school diploma from the district within four or five years the graduation rate was higher for students who dropped out later in their high school years (figure 8). Only 9.5 percent of the 295 grade 9 reenrollees graduated from a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school during 2001/02–2005/06, whereas 35.4 percent of the 79 grade 10 reenrollees, 45.2 percent of the 42 grade 11 reenrollees, and 66.7 percent of the 3 grade 12 reenrollees did. (Table B3 in appendix B shows the number of students by final high school outcomes for each grade.)

TABLE 4

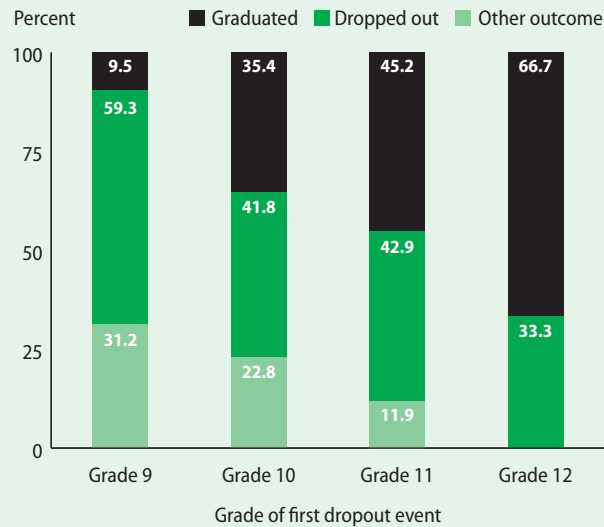
**Number and percentage of final high school outcomes for reenrollees in San Bernardino City Unified School District, 2001/02–2005/06**

Final high school outcome	Reenrollees	
	Number	Percentage
Dropped out	227	54.2
Graduated from the district with a regular high school diploma	77	18.4
<b>Other outcome</b>		
Transferred to another district (with transcripts received)	88	21.0
Still enrolled in the district as of 2005/06	22	5.3
Expelled	3	0.7
Earned an alternative credential	2	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Authors’ analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

FIGURE 8

**Rates of final high school outcomes for reenrollees, by grade of first dropout event, 2001/02–2005/06**



Source: Authors’ analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

**WHAT ISSUES DID THE DISTRICT CONFRONT REGARDING REENROLLMENT OF DROPOUTS?**

With a cohort dropout rate of 35 percent for the San Bernardino City Unified School District’s high school class of 2005/06, one district leader,

expressing sentiments shared by all the others interviewed, described confronting “a tough dropout problem deeply rooted in community poverty and the personal struggles students face.” Part of the district’s answer to improve graduation rates and lower dropout rates was to find ways for dropouts to return to high school and then to provide the needed supports for them to graduate. While all district leaders viewed reenrolling dropouts as “unquestionably the right thing to do, so we do it,” they also reported “disincentives” to reenrollment. This section explores the policy consequences and practical challenges the district faced when high school dropouts returned to the enrollment rosters.

San Bernardino City Unified School District administrators, high school principals, and reenrollees were interviewed to identify issues related to the reenrollment of dropouts (appendix C contains the interview protocols). Interviewees reported that the generally poor enrollment, attendance, and graduation rates of reenrollees adversely affected the district’s resources in several ways. Interview responses were classified into four categories of concerns—early intervention, capacity, funding, and accountability—that describe the practical challenges the district faced when dropouts returned to school.

### Early intervention concerns

A key concern expressed by San Bernardino City Unified School District contacts was the inadequate opportunities reenrollees had to earn credits quickly, and thus catch up, when they returned to school (18 of 20 respondents). Interventions are needed to enable students to accumulate credits lost due to course failures, to accelerate credit accrual to advance from one grade to the next, and to meet the course credit requirements for graduation. Without early interventions to assist reenrollees in making up credit deficiencies, one reenrollee described that they can “lose hope, give up, and drop out again.”

All reenrollees interviewed explained that credit deficiency was the primary deterrent to staying in school. This was true at the time of their first dropout event and at subsequent dropout events.

“I gave up when I fell behind in credits,” explained a reenrollee who dropped out multiple times. In many cases (4 of 6 respondents) reenrollees believed as early as grade 9 that graduation was unattainable and that recovering from failed courses or credit deficiencies was an insurmountable obstacle. To earn the credits needed to graduate, they described having to “go to school day and night at lots of different places.” One fifth-year senior recalled completing grade 9 with

no credits and entering the fourth year of high school with only 10 of the 230 credits required to graduate. To make up this deficit, this student’s school schedule entailed concurrent enrollment in an accelerated credit recovery program at one of the district’s continuation schools and courses at both a community college and an adult education school. Another student reported, “[I attend high school] eight periods a day [six is typical] and on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays I go to adult school to give me extra opportunities to get credits.”

**According to many reenrollees and school principals, the demand to enroll in continuation schools exceeded the capacity to serve students requesting a transfer from traditional high schools or reenrolling following a dropout event**

The five traditional high schools had no credit recovery interventions. “We have no viable plan to recover credits early on, when it matters,” explained one principal at a traditional high school. Efforts to offer additional courses in periods before and after school had fallen short, according to two principals, because of the difficulty of getting teachers to take on these additional course loads. Accelerated credit recovery options were offered only at the continuation and adult education schools, which had minimum age requirements of 16 and 17.6 years and capacity limitations that restricted the enrollment of eligible students. Summer school, after school, and Saturday school programs were described as primarily preparation for the high school exit examination or tutoring; they were not structured to make up credit-bearing courses.

### Capacity concerns

According to many reenrollees and school principals (9 of 13 respondents), the demand to enroll in continuation schools exceeded the capacity to serve students requesting a transfer from traditional high schools or reenrolling following a dropout event. San Bernardino City Unified School District contacts reported a waiting period of one year, despite the district’s decision to double enrollment capacity (by splitting the school day at continuation schools into morning and afternoon sessions).

Reenrollees explained that continuation schools were often considered a better option than traditional high schools for returning dropouts because of attributes that eased the transition back to school and strengthened their resolve to stay in school. Courses to make up failed credits and self-paced accelerated credit programs, not offered at traditional high schools, were considered especially important (5 of 6 respondents). The more flexible schedule at continuation schools allowed students concurrently to work, receive job training, or attend credit-bearing courses at adult education or vocational schools. Courses at continuation schools also accommodated

the remediation needs of many reenrollees who struggled at traditional high schools because of missed instruction.

The limited enrollment capacity at the continuation schools meant that students “aging out” of compulsory education or struggling to earn the required graduation credits were referred to adult education schools. For students ages 18 and older there is no resource stream responsible for their schooling, and far fewer students generally earn a high school diploma than an equivalency or other alternative high school credential. Reenrollees and principals did not consider summer school an option for accelerated credit recovery because of its focus on preparation for the high school exit examination.

### Funding concerns

San Bernardino City Unified School District leaders and school principals (10 of 14 respondents) expressed concern about how the district’s average daily attendance is affected by dropouts and reenrollees and by other transitory students. Average daily attendance is California’s base district per pupil funding formula, determined by the total number of days of student attendance divided by the total number of days in the regular school year. A district’s average daily attendance decreases with declining enrollments and irregular attendance, both of which are adversely affected by dropouts and reenrollees. As one principal plainly explained, “Students who don’t attend regularly don’t generate much of their expected full [average daily attendance].”

Since the funds a district receives from the state for an upcoming year are based on the prior year’s average daily attendance, high-poverty districts like the San Bernardino City Unified School District receive state funds that do not fully account for its total number of students. In such districts, where families move suddenly seeking affordable housing and work and where large numbers of students drop out, reenroll, and drop out again, daily attendance

for generating official average daily attendance is unreliable.

The reenrollment of dropouts can limit district average daily attendance funds in other ways as well. For instance, the timing of reenrollment has funding implications. Dropouts who return to school after the state’s April 15 average daily attendance cutoff date are not counted in the district’s average daily attendance for the remainder of the school year. And dropouts who reenroll in one of the district’s charter schools instead of in a traditional or continuation high school lower the district’s overall average daily attendance. When these reenrollees transfer, their share of average daily attendance count is redirected to the charter school, and the state lowers the district’s prior year guarantee, leaving the district with fewer funds than originally awarded. Additionally, conventional enrollment projections for funding are based on the assumption that students graduate from high school in four years, yet the San Bernardino City Unified School District accommodates a growing number of fifth-year seniors, mostly credit-deficient reenrollees whose absences from school did not generate their full average daily attendance the prior year. This leaves the district with fewer funds to compensate for the cost of the extra year of schooling.

### Accountability concerns

San Bernardino City Unified School District leaders and school principals reported challenges meeting particular accountability provisions (13 of 14 respondents). Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 schools must demonstrate adequate yearly progress in educating all students to state standards in English language arts and mathematics. In California progress is evaluated using the

**Since dropping out is counted as an event, a single student with more than one dropout and reenrollment event increases the number of dropouts, which in turn decreases the graduation rate**

Academic Performance Index, which measures the academic performance and school growth based on a variety of state-required tests and establishes a statewide ranking based on those scores. In addition, to meet accountability requirements, schools must demonstrate 95 percent participation on state-required tests, and high schools must meet state graduation targets.

According to all the high school principals interviewed, high school enrollments fluctuated considerably from the enrollment census date near the opening of the school year to the testing date in the spring, challenging schools to meet the 95 percent testing rate. In 2005/06 three of the seven district high schools missed the test participation rate target (San Bernardino City Unified School District 2007a–g).

Principals reported that this requirement can be a “near-impossible target,” resulting in “last ditch efforts”—such as “knocking on doors at students’ homes, rounding up students at the mall and juvenile hall,” and “arranging transportation” to boost attendance on test day. Despite these efforts, one principal whose school missed the target “by nine students” acknowledged that the absences of dropouts and

the generally poor attendance of reenrollees were impediments.

Another accountability measurement concern raised by district administrators was “a kind of double, even triple jeopardy” based on the way dropouts are counted (6 of 7 respondents). Since dropping out is counted as an event, a single student with more than one dropout and reenrollment event increases the number of dropouts, which in turn decreases the graduation rate. In California the high school graduation rate (defined as the number of graduates divided by standard graduates plus dropouts over the previous four years) must be at least 82.9 percent or improve by 0.1 percent over the previous year or by 0.2 percent over

the second previous year. School leaders acknowledged a perverse incentive not to reenroll dropouts because the likely outcomes for returning dropouts are poor attendance and additional dropout events, and because dropout rates “count against” the Academic Performance Index. During the final year covered by this study, two of the seven district high schools missed the state’s graduation rate requirement (San Bernardino City Unified School District 2007a–g).

A final accountability measurement concern involved reenrollees who earned the requisite 230 credits to graduate but dropped out after failing the state’s exit exam. To retake the exit examination to graduate, students must reenroll in school. Three of the seven principals interviewed mentioned that dropouts reenrolled at their schools to sit for the examination and then dropped out again, unwilling to take credit-bearing courses not needed to graduate. For high schools this results in higher absence and dropout rates, lower funding based on average daily attendance, and an added challenge to meet the 95 percent test rate accountability requirement.

**While there are no simple solutions to the dropout problem and the reenrollment challenge, the San Bernardino City Unified School District reports a commitment to identify, reach, and reenroll students who leave school before graduating**

### WHAT DO DISTRICT STAFF AND STUDENTS SUGGEST FOR CHANGES IN POLICIES AND PRACTICES?

While there are no simple solutions to the dropout problem and the reenrollment challenge, the San Bernardino City Unified School District reports a commitment to identify, reach, and reenroll students who leave school before graduating. Already in practice were daily attendance verifications, home visits, and attendance “blitzes” for targeted at-risk students, programs to aid the transition from grade 8 to grade 9, and an open fifth-year senior option.<sup>9</sup> With just an 18.4 percent graduation rate for reenrollees from San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools, district administrators and reenrollees were asked in interviews to consider changes to current policies and practices to improve graduation outcomes. The following summarizes what they said:



## Policies

- Create funding and program incentives as a counterbalance to the disincentives districts and schools experience when providing outreach to dropouts and reenrolling these high-risk, high-need students.
  - Target additional financial resources for academic, behavioral, and social interventions to support reenrollees when they return to school.
  - Adjust the formula for the dropout rate to account for students who drop out and reenroll multiple times or who retake the exit exam and fail multiple times so that high schools are not penalized with an inflated dropout rate for returning these students to school.
  - Increase the capacity of districts to offer more continuation school enrollment spots and more short-term credit recovery options at traditional high schools.
  - Digitize and standardize the student enrollment process across all California districts, including reenrollment forms, using a linked student identifier system to account for enrollment and attendance tracking of individual students across time and jurisdictions.
  - Develop outreach, reenrollment, attendance, academic, and other counseling interventions to meet the needs of reenrollees and their families throughout the high school years.
- assisted courses, before and after school classes, concurrent enrollment in adult education or vocational schools or community colleges, weekend or evening academies—to ensure that credits align with graduation requirements and that plans are manageable for students returning after a dropout event.
  - Expand grade 9 academic interventions for students who perform at basic level or below on standardized tests to prevent course failure and credit deficiency.
  - Offer non-credit-bearing courses for reenrollees who complete all necessary courses and credits to graduate and reenroll in school solely to retake the high school exit exam.
  - Designate counseling resources to support the special academic and developmental needs of dropouts, reenrollees, fifth-year seniors, and students aging out of school without earning a diploma.
  - Reevaluate the district practice of assigning an F to students who drop out before completing a course, with no opportunity to regain course credits—replacing it with a grade of “incomplete” and the ability to recover course credits upon reenrolling and receiving a passing grade.

**The research on high school dropouts is silent on reenrollees and lacks longitudinal cohort studies that track the on-time high school graduation outcomes of students who reenroll in their districts of origin**

## Practices

- Enroll all grade 9 and 10 students who fail at least one academic course or earn fewer course credits than are required to advance to the next grade in school-based rapid credit recovery interventions because it becomes increasingly difficult for students to make up credits.
- Coordinate course credit accrual plans for individual reenrollees—including computer-

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research on high school dropouts is silent on reenrollees and lacks longitudinal cohort studies that track the on-time high school graduation

outcomes of students who reenroll in their districts of origin. This study begins to fill that information gap. Some research issues that emerge specifically from its findings include contrasting the graduation outcomes of reenrollees who return to their schools of origin and those who reenroll in traditional high schools or continuation high schools, examining the trend and outcomes of a fifth- or sixth-year time frame for high school enrollment, and disaggregating the characteristics and outcomes of confirmed dropouts with those who purportedly transferred to another district, but for whom there was no evidence of reenrollment. More general questions include investigations of approaches to address course credit deficiencies and factors that explain the varying graduation and dropout rates of reenrollees across racial/ethnic groups.

New primary data could offer more detailed information about certain key issues raised but not addressed in this study, such as the high school experiences and graduation outcomes of reenrollees who enroll in adult education and the characteristics of reenrollees who subsequently drop out again before earning course credit or graduating. Also needed are policy studies to recommend solutions to the disincentives to reenrolling dropouts. Finally, extending this study to larger geographic areas, such as contiguous school districts or the state, would allow the investigation to address the high school enrollment and graduation outcomes of students who transfer out of their district of origin.

## APPENDIX A METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in San Bernardino City Unified School District, California’s seventh largest school district, with about 59,000 students, located in Southern California’s Inland Empire (California Department of Education 2007a). The district was selected as the study site mainly because it maintains a linked, longitudinal student-level dataset that tracks dropout and reenrollment histories across district schools. In addition, the district recognizes its dropout problem and demonstrates a commitment to identify, reach, and reenroll students who leave school before graduating. Specific district practices included daily attendance verification, home visits, and attendance “blitzes” for targeted at-risk students; instant reenrollment procedures;<sup>10</sup> remediation and test preparation courses; programs to aid the transition from grade 8 to grade 9; and an open, fifth-year senior option.

As a convenience sample San Bernardino City Unified School District provides a large, urban, and racially diverse setting, subject to the same state policies that govern all other California districts.

### Data sources

Data sources for this mixed-methods, single case study included a district dataset with linked, longitudinal student-level data for 2000/01–2006/07 and interviews with 20 San Bernardino City Unified School District contacts. Since data on students from 2000/01 were incomplete, this study used data on 9th graders who began high school in 2001/02.

*District dataset of school enrollment, demographic, and course data.* The San Bernardino City Unified School District dataset contained all students enrolled in all district high schools between 2000/01 and 2006/07. The longitudinal dataset included unique student identification numbers that allowed tracking students across schools over time. The dataset contained each student’s enrollment

history in the district. It also contained an “activity file” for 2000/01–2005/06 that was updated annually for students who experienced events that would change their enrollment status in the district (for example, dropping out, graduating, transferring to another district with transcripts being sent to that district, and transferring to another district without transcripts being sent).

The longitudinal nature of the dataset and the unique student identifier allowed researchers to calculate a cohort dropout rate and a reenrollment rate among dropouts. Finally, course-level data for 2001/02–2005/06 provided information about all courses that students took at district high schools during the period under examination. Key demographic characteristics of the cohort are summarized in table B2 in appendix B.

*Interviews.* Drawing on the preliminary analysis of the district dataset, interviews were conducted to clarify, affirm, or challenge the study findings and to explore state and district policies and practices that affect reenrollment and students’ experiences dropping out and reenrolling in San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools. In fall 2007 interview data were collected from 20 district contacts during a weeklong, in-person site visit. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes.<sup>11</sup>

The San Bernardino City Unified School District assistant superintendent identified seven district administrators to be interviewed based on their professional roles and knowledge of dropout and reenrollment issues. They were interviewed using the semistructured protocol in appendix C. The five principals of the district’s traditional high schools and the two principals of the district’s continuation schools were then interviewed about school perspectives on reenrolling dropouts, also using the semistructured protocol in appendix C. The principals then identified dropouts who reenrolled in district schools for the student interview sample. Six students, each from different high schools, were interviewed about their dropout and reenrollment experiences, using the semistructured protocol in appendix C. The interview with

the seventh student from one of the traditional high schools was canceled because of a scheduling conflict with the administration of the state exit exam.

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## Data analyses

*Cohort selection.* To follow a cohort of students through high school, beginning with students who were first-time 9th graders in 2001/02, researchers constructed a sample from the San Bernardino City Unified School District dataset.<sup>12</sup> There were 5,674 students enrolled in district public high schools in grade 9 during the 2001/02 school year. Dropped from the sample were all second-time 9th graders (students who were enrolled in grade 9 the previous year, but who had not accumulated enough credits to advance to grade 10). Also dropped from the sample were all students younger than age 13 or older than 17 on September 1, 2001, the year they entered high school (41 students), so that the analysis would examine only students of typical high school age and, presumably, of typical high school behavior. The final sample consisted of 3,856 first-time 9th graders.

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## Graduates, dropouts and reenrollees, and others

Based on the exit codes used by the San Bernardino City Unified School District to classify the enrollment status of students, the grade 9 study cohort was split into three broad categories: standard graduates, dropouts, and others (table B1 in appendix B). Students are classified based on the exit code of their first interruption of continuous enrollment in the district.

*Standard graduates* are students who earn a regular high school diploma from a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school in four or five years between 2001/02 and 2005/06 without any interruption in enrollment in the district (through a dropout event, transfer to another district, or expulsion). This study distinguishes between standard graduates and high school graduates, which include dropouts and other students who experienced an interruption in their

enrollment but graduated in the district within the study time frame.

*Dropouts* are students whose first withdrawal from a district high school met one of three criteria that align with the dropout and graduation guidelines established by the National Governor's Association and the California Department of Education (2005, 2007):

- High school students who withdrew from school before graduating but were not known to have been in an education program that led to a high school diploma or its equivalent but have not died.
- High school students who did not formally withdraw from school before graduating but were under the compulsory school attendance age of 18 and stopped attending school and could not be located.
- High school students who reported transferring to another district without having their transcripts sent to the receiving district and were not known to be in an education program that led to a high school diploma or equivalent.

*Reenrollees* are students within the dropout category who reenroll in high school. They are high school dropouts who reenroll at least once in the district between 2001/02 and 2005/06 (see table B2 in appendix B for reenrollment rates by key characteristics).

*Others* are primarily students who transfer to other districts before graduating or dropping out between 2001/02 and 2005/06 (see table B1 in appendix B), and there is no way to know the outcomes for these students since complete information about their education histories is unavailable to the San Bernardino City Unified School District. This category also includes students who were expelled, died, or earned an alternative high school completion certificate before dropping out or graduating or who were continuously enrolled in

district high schools for the five years of the study without dropping out or graduating and were still enrolled in 2005/06.<sup>13</sup>

The cohort graduation rate was computed by dividing the number of students from the cohort of first-time 9th graders continuously enrolled in the district who graduated during the time frame of the study by the total number of first-time 9th graders in the San Bernardino City Unified School District. Reenrollees and students categorized as “other” were not included in the numerator of this rate. Similarly, the dropout rates presented in table B2 in appendix B were computed by dividing the number of students from the cohort of first-time 9th graders who dropped out of a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school at least once during the time frame of the study by the total number of first-time 9th graders in the district. Students categorized as “other” were not included in the numerator of this rate.

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### Quantitative analyses

To calculate the magnitude of the dropout and reenrollment rates, dropouts were first identified in the original cohort of entering 9th graders in the 2001/02 school year. Of these 3,856 students, 1,352 students dropped out of the district at least once during the period under observation, for a five-year cohort dropout rate of 35.1 percent. The same method was used to calculate the dropout rates by key characteristics using disaggregated student counts (see table B2). Similarly, the magnitude of the reenrollment rate was calculated by dividing the total number of students who reenrolled in the district after dropping out (419) by the total number of students who dropped out (1,352), for a cohort reenrollment rate of 31.0 percent. The same method was used to calculate the reenrollment rates by key characteristics using disaggregated student counts (see table B3).

The academic and graduation outcomes for reenrollees were calculated using the San Bernardino City Unified School District course dataset, which provided information on all courses taken

by students enrolled in district high schools during the period under examination. This information included the course name, the year in which the course was attempted, and the course grade earned. The percentage of classes failed was computed as the number of classes with a grade of F divided by the number of courses in which the student received a grade in a given year. Students in the San Bernardino City Unified School District get five credits for each course with a passing grade, so the number of credits accumulated was calculated as the number of passing grades multiplied by five; no credits were allocated for courses for which students received a failing grade or no grade.

No tests of statistical significance were conducted for the differences between reenrollment rates or academic outcomes for dropouts who reenrolled in district high schools and dropouts who did not return to district high schools. The study describes the enrollment in the San Bernardino City Unified School District of all students who entered grade 9 for the first time in 2001/02 and is therefore not a sample of a larger population. No statistical inference is implied or needed. To allow readers to make comparisons with other analyses, counts of students in each category analyzed are reported in appendix B; averages, standard deviations, and quartiles are reported for the percentage of classes failed and the number of credits accumulated (tables B4 and B5 in appendix B).

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### Qualitative analyses

Content analysis methods were used to examine the data from the 20 interviews. Interview data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to systematically record responses. Some content categories were established before the analysis based on the dropout literature (for example, push and pull factors contributing to dropout events) and on policymakers’ interest in possible district disincentives to reenrolling dropouts. Other categories emerged following preliminary examination of the data (for example, the sequencing of the reenrollment process). Data were synthesized and categorized to

identify common themes and patterns of information that addressed the research questions and the sequencing of the reenrollment process. In general, frequency counts of the data were not used since the information obtained, especially among the district administrators who have specialized roles and knowledge, was not always comparable. A synthesis of the interview data by categories is displayed in table B6.

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### Limitations of the study

*Quantitative analyses.* While the district dataset has the benefit of tracking students longitudinally, it has limited ability to track the outcomes of students who reenrolled in charter schools, private schools, schools outside the district, and adult education schools. Therefore, the analysis examined only dropouts who reenrolled in San Bernardino City Unified School District high schools. For this reason, the terms *reenrollee* and *graduate* in this report refer solely to students who reenrolled or graduated from a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school. Taking into account the outcomes of students who transferred out of district high schools would lead to both higher dropout and higher reenrollment rates for the study cohort.

The reenrollment rates in this report use enrollment data through the 2006/07 school year only. The study does not capture reenrollments in San

Bernardino City Unified School District high schools that may occur after that.

Several other variables were not included in this study. Specifically, student absences and special education status were not analyzed because of incomplete data for the period under examination. High school exit examination test score data were excluded as well. Students in the study cohort were not required to pass the exam to graduate (it was not required until 2006), and the data showed that many students did not take or pass the exam (Zabala et al. 2007).

*Qualitative analyses.* The interview sample size was small and had several other limitations. As a group district and school contacts had uneven knowledge about the range of dropout and reenrollment issues that were queried, and distinguishing fact from professional judgment was challenging when corroborating information was unavailable. Student self-reports provided richly detailed accounts of the contributing factors to dropping out and reenrolling, but reenrollees were inconsistent in the recall of sequenced events, such as the lapse in time between their dropout event and district outreach, dropout and reenrollment, or reenrollment and a credit accrual or graduation plan. Last, principal and reenrollee interviews took place on high school campuses during the school day, and interruptions shortened some interviews and eliminated one.

## APPENDIX B

### TABLES WITH DETAILS ON CENSUS CHARACTERISTICS

TABLE B1

**Number and percentage of students in the 2001/02 grade 9 San Bernardino City Unified School District high school cohort classified as standard graduates, dropouts, and others, 2001/02–2005/06**

Student status	Number	Percentage
Standard graduates	1,735	45.0
<b>Dropouts</b>		
Transferred without transcripts	916	23.8
Standard dropouts	436	11.3
Total dropouts	1,352	35.1
<b>Others</b>		
Transferred with transcripts	672	17.4
Still enrolled in 2005/06	68	1.8
High school completion certificate	20	0.5
Expelled	8	0.2
Deceased	1	0.0
Total others	769	19.9
<b>Total grade 9 cohort</b>	<b>3,856</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

TABLE B2

**Cohort characteristics and dropout rate by characteristic for the 2001/02 San Bernardino City Unified School District grade 9 high school cohort, 2001/02–2005/06**

Characteristic	All cohort	Standard graduate	Dropout	Other	Dropout rate (percent)
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>					
Hispanic	2,030	907	791	332	39.0
Black, not Hispanic	864	330	288	246	33.3
White, not Hispanic	788	404	227	157	28.8
Asian	133	78	30	25	22.6
American Indian	41	16	16	9	39.0
<b>English language learner student in 2001/02</b>					
No	2,928	1,383	953	592	32.5
Yes	876	352	379	145	43.3
<b>Low socioeconomic status</b>					
No	750	451	156	143	20.8
Yes	3,106	1,284	1,196	626	38.5
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	1,920	773	758	389	39.5
Female	1,936	962	594	380	30.7
<b>Age category in 2001/02</b>					
14 or younger	3,359	1,595	1,103	661	32.8
15	460	137	232	91	50.4
16 or older	37	3	17	17	45.9
<b>Ever suspended</b>					
No	2,619	1,353	770	496	29.4
Yes	1,237	382	582	273	47.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,856</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>1,352</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>35.1</b>

Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.



TABLE B3

**Dropout characteristics by reenrollment status and reenrollment rate by characteristic for the 2001/02 San Bernardino City Unified School District grade 9 high school cohort, 2001/02–2005/06**

Characteristic	All dropouts	Number of reenrollees	Number of permanent dropouts	Reenrollment rate (percent)
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>				
Hispanic	791	221	570	27.9
Black, not Hispanic	288	125	163	43.4
White, not Hispanic	227	63	164	27.8
Asian	30	4	26	13.3
American Indian	16	6	10	37.5
<b>English language learner student in 2001/02</b>				
No	953	321	632	33.7
Yes	379	97	282	25.6
<b>Low socioeconomic status</b>				
No	156	45	111	28.8
Yes	1,196	374	822	31.3
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	758	213	545	28.1
Female	594	206	388	34.7
<b>Age category in 2001/02</b>				
14 or younger	1,103	362	741	32.8
15	232	55	177	23.7
16 or older	17	2	15	11.8
<b>Suspended before the first dropout event</b>				
No	802	245	557	30.5
Yes	550	174	376	31.6
<b>Grade level of first dropout event</b>				
Grade 9	597	295	302	49.4
Grade 10	363	79	284	21.8
Grade 11	256	42	214	16.4
Grade 12	136	3	133	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,352</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>31.0</b>

Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

TABLE B4

**Percentage of classes failed before the first dropout event, for the 2001/02 San Bernardino City Unified School District grade 9 high school cohort, by grade of first dropout, 2001/02–2005/06**

Dropout and grade level of the first dropout event	Number of students	Average	Standard deviation	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile
<b>Reenrollees</b>						
Grade 9	295	45.3	30.3	18.3	46.2	66.7
Grade 10	79	30.2	22.1	11.5	26.9	50.0
Grade 11	42	23.5	16.3	9.1	20.3	37.0
Grade 12	3	15.2	6.6	8.5	15.6	21.6
<b>Permanent dropouts</b>						
Grade 9	302	60.4	25.9	46.2	65.4	78.6
Grade 10	284	42.2	19.6	31.6	45.0	54.9
Grade 11	214	30.5	15.9	21.1	30.9	39.0
Grade 12	133	21.4	11.5	13.2	22.2	29.1

Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

TABLE B5

**Credits accumulated before the first dropout event, for the 2001/02 San Bernardino City Unified School District grade 9 high school cohort, by grade of first dropout, 2001/02–2005/06**

Dropout and grade level of the first dropout event	Number of students	Average	Standard deviation	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile
<b>Reenrollees</b>						
Grade 9	295	33	27	10	30	50
Grade 10	79	99	38	70	100	130
Grade 11	42	152	42	125	152.5	185
Grade 12	3	220	44	190	200	270
<b>Permanent dropouts</b>						
Grade 9	302	25	22	0	25	40
Grade 10	284	84	31	65	85	100
Grade 11	214	139	38	120	140	160
Grade 12	133	200	32	180	200	220

Source: Authors' analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District, Department of Research/Systems Analysis, enrollment data for the 2001/02 grade 9 high school cohort, personal communication, June 14, 2007.

TABLE B6  
**Synthesis of field notes based on interviews with San Bernardino City Unified School District administrators, high school principals, and reenrollees**

San Bernardino City Unified School District contacts	Issues and concerns				Reasons for dropping out <sup>a</sup>		Reasons for reenrolling		
	Intervention	Capacity	Funding	Accountability	Push	Pull	Instant reenroll	Want diploma for work	Caring staff
<b>Administrators</b>									
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
7				✓	✓	✓		✓	
<b>Principals</b>									
1		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	✓				✓	✓			
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
6	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
7				✓	✓	✓		✓	
<b>Reenrollees</b>									
1					✓	✓	✓	✓	
2					✓	✓		✓	
3					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5					✓	✓		✓	✓
6					✓	✓	✓	✓	

Note: A check indicates that the interviewee provided information about the topic during the interview. Shading signifies areas that were not covered during the interview.

a. In interviews reenrollees reported on both push and pull factors that motivated their dropout and return to school. The dropout literature describes school experiences that “push” students out of school before graduation—academic struggles, boredom, and limited ways to make up failed course credits—or life circumstances that “pull” them in directions that stall completion—family crises, employment, pregnancy, and gang pressure (Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison 2006; Jordan, McPartland, and Lara 1999).

Source: Authors’ analysis based on San Bernardino City Unified School District interview data, October 1–5, 2007.

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## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

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#### District administrator interview protocol

*PART I. These questions clarify, affirm, or challenge findings from the quantitative study.*

1. Let's start by getting a sense of the dropout problem in San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) high schools.

What is the district's current dropout rate, and is this an increase, decrease, or leveling from past years?

- Probe for explanations for the trend.
  - Probe for key or confusing findings from the quantitative analysis.
2. Who drops out? Which types of students are most at risk for dropping out?
    - Probe for demographic characteristics (for example, gender, age, English language learner and special education status, socioeconomic status, gang involvement, mobility of the family, life circumstances, and grade of exit).
    - Probe for student performance variables (for example, performing below grade level, behind in credits, behavioral issues, bored with classes, disengaged from learning, and aging out).
    - Probe for key or confusing findings from the quantitative analysis.

*PART II. These questions address dropout and reenrollment policies, practices, and issues.*

3. What is the district's role in reenrolling students who drop out?
  - Probe for how the district interfaces with schools, necessary forms, placement in the

school of origin or another school, obstacles to students reenrolling, length of time to reenroll, and academic and behavioral/recovery interventions.

4. Does the district provide dropout prevention or recovery programs for students at risk of dropping out or who have dropped out?
  - Probe for district prevention strategies or programs and outreach to students who stop attending school.
5. What policies or practices affect the reenrollment process (i.e., financial, bureaucratic), and describe their consequences?
  - Probe for state or district policies that ease or facilitate the process and/or impede or deter the process.
  - Probe specifically for average daily attendance (ADA) payments, dropout counts, and pressures to transfer low-performing students to alternative settings (for example, adult schools).
  - Request supporting documents or other information to corroborate or further explain impediments/deterrents to reenrollment.
6. What suggestions do you have to strengthen or change state/district policies or practices to improve the reenrollment process for districts?
  - Probe specifically for any disincentives or deterrents mentioned in question 5.

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#### Principal or school site administrator interview protocol

*PART I. These questions clarify, affirm, or challenge the findings from the quantitative study.*

1. What do you know about the characteristics of students who drop out of [name high school]?

- Probe for demographic characteristics (for example, gender, age, English language learner and special education status, socioeconomic status, gang involvement, mobility of the family, and grade of exit).
  - Probe for reasons for dropping out (for example, performing below grade level, behind in credits, behavioral issues, bored with classes, disengaged from learning, aging out, life circumstances, such as sibling/elder care and employment).
  - Probe for key or confusing findings from the quantitative analysis.
2. What do you know about the students who reenroll in [name high school]?
    - Probe for reasons for reenrolling, outreach to students, and recovery interventions.
    - Probe for key or confusing findings from the quantitative analysis.

*PART II. These questions address dropout and reenrollment policies, practices, and issues.*

3. Please describe, step-by-step, the school's role in reenrolling students who drop out.
  - Probe for necessary forms, placement in the school of origin or another school, how schools interface with the district, length of time to reenroll, scheduling of courses, and academic and behavioral/recovery interventions.
  - Probe for policies or practices that ease or facilitate the process and/or impede or deter the process.
  - Probe specifically for ADA payments, dropout counts, and pressures to transfer low-performing students to alternative setting, including adult school. Request supporting documents or other information to

corroborate or further explain impediments/deterrents to reenrollment.

4. What suggestions do you have to improve the reenrollment process for schools?
  - Probe specifically for any disincentives or deterrents mentioned in question 3 or interviews with other informants.

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### High school reenrollee interview protocol

*PART I. These questions clarify, affirm, or challenge the findings from the quantitative study.*

1. Let's start by getting a sense of your dropout and reenrollment history. How many times have you dropped out and reenrolled? During which grades?
  2. Why did you drop out, and why do you think others drop out?
    - Probe for performing below grade level, behind in credits, behavioral issues, bored with classes, disengaged from learning, aging out, life circumstances, such as sibling/elder care and employment.
    - Probe for key or confusing findings from the quantitative analysis.
3. Why did you decide to reenroll in school?
  - Probe for outreach and recovery interventions.
  - Probe for key or confusing findings from the quantitative analysis.

*PART II. These questions address dropout and reenrollment policies, practices, and issues.*

4. What did you have to do in order to reenroll in school?
  - Probe for parent/guardian involvement, necessary forms, placement in the school

of origin or another school, length of time to reenroll, scheduling, and academic and behavioral/recovery interventions.

5. In what ways was reenrolling in school easy?  
In what ways was it hard?

- Probe for ways the district/school encouraged or discouraged reenrollment.
- Probe for what could make the reenrollment process better.

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**NOTES**

1. According to Laird et al., the averaged freshman graduation rate “estimates the proportion of public high school freshman who graduate with a regular diploma 4 years after starting 9th grade. The rate...is designed to provide an estimate of on-time graduation from high school” (2007, p. 2).
2. In this study cohort the graduation rate for Hispanics was 44.7 percent, and the rates for Black students (38.2 percent) and American Indian students (31.0 percent) were lower.
3. As in other urban schools districts (Martin and Halperin 2006), San Bernardino City Unified School District permits students to enroll in high school for a fifth year to earn credits required for graduation. Interviews with San Bernardino City Unified School District administrators noted that this enrollment option has increased during the past few years.
4. Continuation schools in California are public alternative schools for students ages 16–18. They offer a more flexible schedule than traditional high schools for students who have fallen behind and allow them to make up failed credits and earn additional credits toward graduation at a quicker pace.
5. Students transferring out of the district with transcripts and graduating in other districts, and students graduating in the district after dropping out and reenrolling, are not included in the numerator of this rate. As a result, the graduation rates presented in this report are an understatement of the overall five-year cohort graduation rate.
6. The dropout rates reported represent the number of students from the cohort of first-time 9th graders in the district who drop out at least once during the five-year time frame of this study. Students dropping out after transferring from the district with transcripts are not included in the numerator of this rate. As a result, the dropout rates presented in this report are an understatement of the overall five-year cohort dropout rate.
7. None of the dropouts in 2005/06 returned in the following school year, as confirmed by the district enrollment data in 2006/07.
8. Dropout rates were computed for students with and without a suspension during their enrollment in a San Bernardino City Unified School District high school. Reenrollment rates were computed for dropouts with and without a suspension before their first dropout event. Students without a suspension before dropping out might be suspended after reenrolling, so the two rates are not strictly comparable.
9. Daily attendance verification entails calls to the homes of each student reported as tardy or absent per class per day. This automated telephone service records the outcomes (messages or live conversations), which are posted on the district’s web site. Attendance blitzes are conducted monthly for students with six or more unexcused absences. They entail subpoenaing parents to meet with district administrators and putting students on monitored attendance contracts and may involve the district attorney to enforce truancy laws. The San Bernardino City Unified School District also has attendance and reenrollment blitzes that “round up” students who are not attending school. District leaders conduct home visits, walk through neighborhoods, and go to parks and shopping malls to return school-age youths to school.
10. The district uses an instant reenrollment procedure to allow dropouts to reenroll at their school of origin. Once the standard reenrollment forms are completed and submitted to the school, including the signature of parents or guardians for students under age 18, students are immediately assigned course schedules arranged for by counselors.

11. All instrumentation and procedures pertaining to the interviews were reviewed and approved by WestEd's Institutional Review Board (IRB approval number 07133-01).
12. Students who transferred into the district after their freshman year were not included because they were not first-time 9th graders in San Bernardino City Unified School District.
13. Students in the "other" category were not included in the analysis because they did not meet the study definitions of "standard graduate" or "dropout" or because the district lacked their complete enrollment history data.



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