

1.1.a High School Graduation Rates

Increase the proportion of students who graduate from Nebraska high schools.

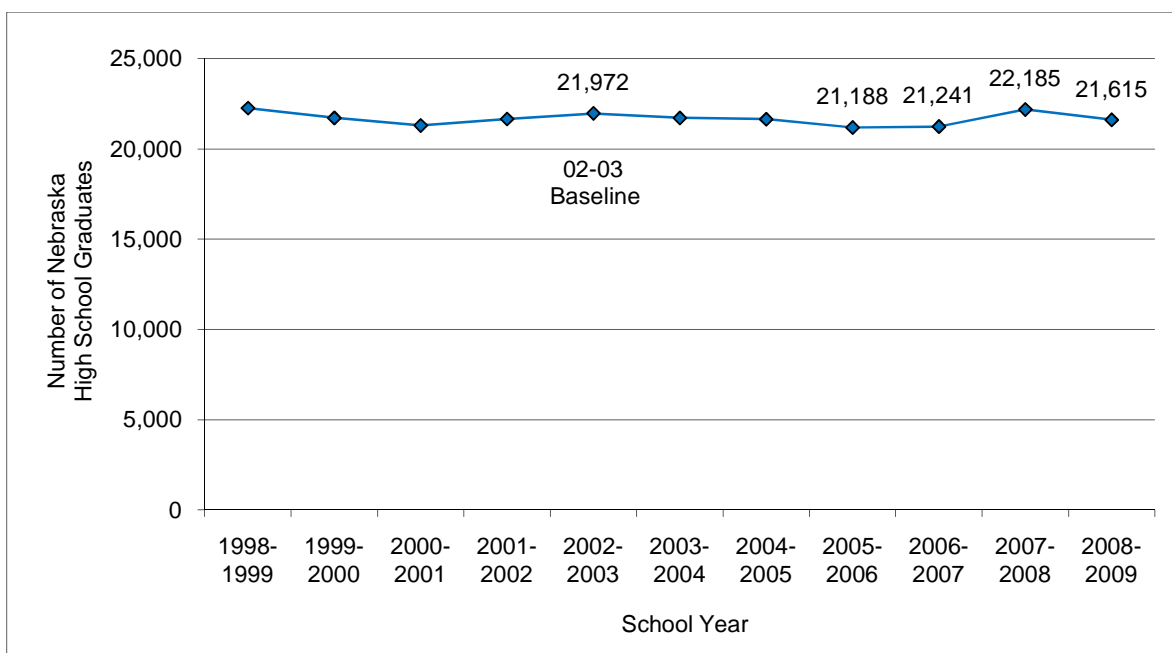
One strategic approach to increasing the number of students who enter postsecondary education in Nebraska is to increase the proportion of students who graduate from the state's high schools. In other words, increase Nebraska's high school graduation rate and, in the process, increase the pool of high school students who could potentially attend college.

Past and Present Trends in the Total Number of Nebraska High School Graduates

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.1](#), the number of students who graduated from Nebraska high schools started to decline slightly after the 2002–2003 school year, the latest year for which official data were available from the Nebraska Department of Education for the *2004 Baseline Report for the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force*.
- Over the next three years, the number of students receiving regular diplomas decreased 3.6%, from 21,972 in 2002–2003 to 21,188 in 2005–2006.
- The number of graduates from Nebraska high schools increased 0.3% in 2006–2007 and 4.4% in 2007–2008 for a two-year increase of 4.7%. However, the number of graduates decreased 2.6% in 2008–2009 to 21,615. As a result, 357 or 1.6% fewer students graduated from Nebraska high schools in 2008–2009 than in 2002–2003, which is the baseline for this progress report.

Figure 1.1.a.1

**Total Number of Nebraska High School Graduates
1998–1999 through 2008–2009¹**



¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 for data for 1998–1999 through 2005–2006, January 2009 for data for 2006–2007 and 2007–2008, and February 2010 for updated 2007–2008 data and for data for 2008–2009. Counts include graduates of public schools, nonpublic (private) schools, educational service units, and state-operated schools. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. See [Table A2.1](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data.

The Proportion of Graduates from Public and Nonpublic Nebraska High Schools

- Since 2002–2003, about 90% of Nebraska’s high school graduates have received their diplomas from public schools while the remaining 10% have graduated from nonpublic (private) schools.

Type of School	Baseline 2002–2003		2007–2008		2008–2009	
	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates
Public	19,604	89.8%	19,987	90.3%	19,398	90.1%
Nonpublic	2,234	10.2%	2,158	9.7%	2,121	9.9%
Subtotal	21,838	100.0%	22,145	100.0%	21,519	100.0%
ESU & SO ²	134		40		96	
State Total	21,972		22,185		21,615	

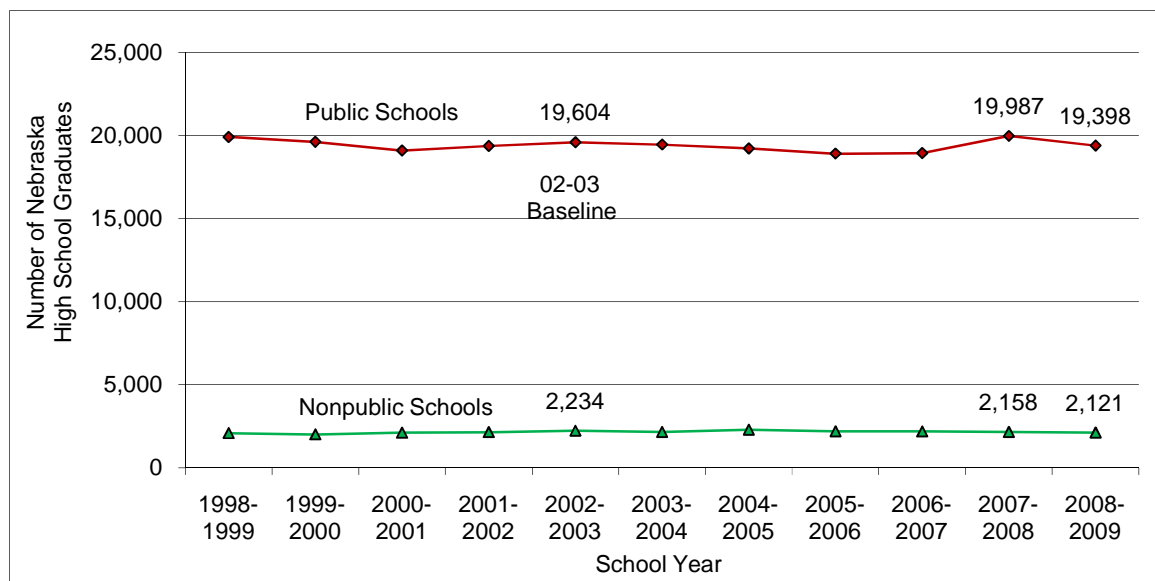
¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 for 2002–2003 data and February 2010 for updated 2007–2008 data and 2008–2009 data. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas.

²ESU = Educational Service Units; SO = State-Operated Schools.

- Between 2002–2003 and 2008–2009, the number of public high school graduates decreased 1.1% to 19,398, while the number graduating from private high schools decreased 5.1%.

Figure 1.1.a.2

**Numbers of Nebraska Public and Nonpublic High School Graduates
1998–1999 through 2008–2009¹**

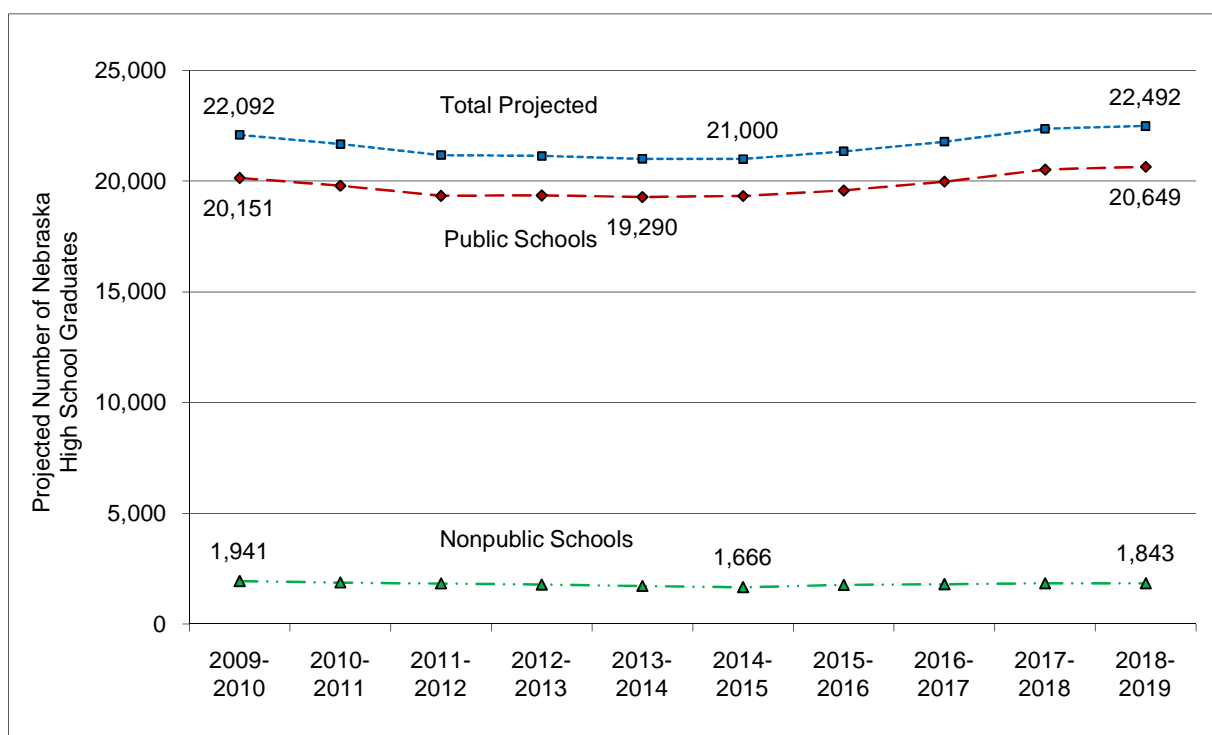


¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 for 1998–1999 through 2005–2006, January 2009 for 2006–2007, and February 2010 for 2007–2008 (updated) and 2008–2009 data. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas.

Projected Trends in the Total Number of Nebraska High School Graduates

- Based on projections by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education:
 - About 880 more students will be graduating from Nebraska public and nonpublic high schools in 2018–2019 than graduated during the 2008–2009 school year. This is a 4.1% projected increase.
 - As in the past, public schools are projected to account for about 90% of Nebraska’s high school graduates through the 2018–2019 school year.¹

Figure 1.1.a.3
Projected Numbers of Graduates
from Nebraska Public and Nonpublic High Schools
2008–2009 through 2018–2019¹



¹Data Source: *Knocking at the College Door*, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, March 2008, page 91. Projections do not include graduates of educational service units or state-operated schools. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. See [Table A2.2](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data.

¹ *Knocking at the College Door, Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity*, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, March 2008, page 121. See [Table A2.2](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data.

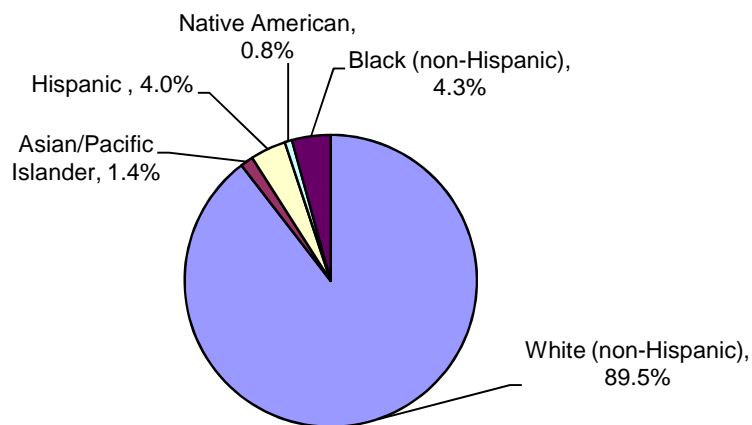
Projected and Recent Changes in Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity

- The number of graduates from Nebraska public high schools is projected to increase 6.4% over the next decade. Over this period, minority students, especially Hispanics, are projected to account for much higher percentages of the graduates from the state’s public schools in 2018–2019 than they did in 2002–2003, as illustrated in [Figure 1.1.a.4](#). This is projected to be the case, despite the fact that Hispanic students tend to graduate from high school at lower rates than white and Asian students. Conversely, white non-Hispanics are projected to account for a significantly lower percentage of the students who will graduate from Nebraska’s public high schools in 2018–2019.

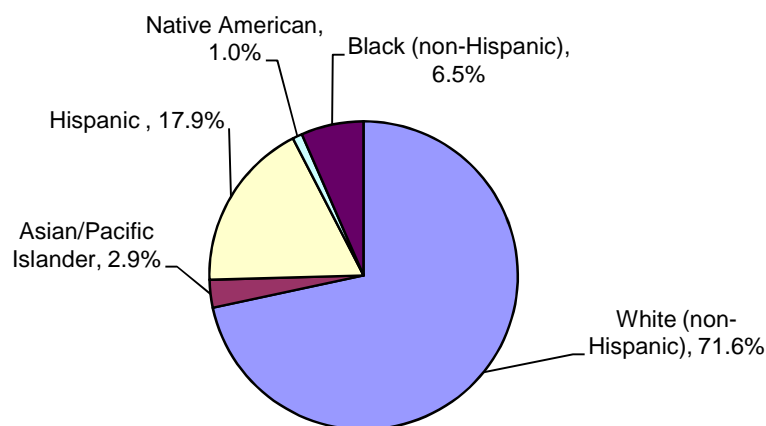
Figure 1.1.a.4

Actual and Projected Percentages of Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity in 2002–2003 and 2018–2019¹

Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2002–2003 Baseline



Projected Percentages of Graduates: 2018–2019



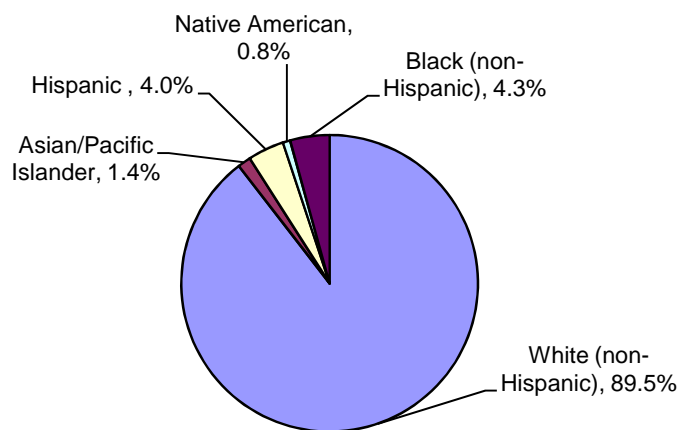
¹Data Sources: 2002–2003 percentages are based on the numbers of graduates obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007. Projected percentages are based on data from *Knocking at the College Door*, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, March 2008, page 91. Actual counts and projections do not include graduates of educational service units or state-operated schools. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. See [Table A2.3](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data.

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.5](#) below, actual changes in the racial/ethnic distribution of Nebraska's high school graduates over the past six years have been in the direction of the projected trend.
 - The number of white non-Hispanic graduates decreased 7.6% from 2002–2003 to 2008–2009, and white non-Hispanics accounted for 83.5% of Nebraska's high school graduates in 2008–2009, down from 89.5% in 2003–2002.
 - In comparison, the total number of minority students who graduated from Nebraska's high schools increased 54.9% from 2002–2003 to 2008–2009. Minorities accounted for higher percentages of the total number of graduates than they did six years earlier.

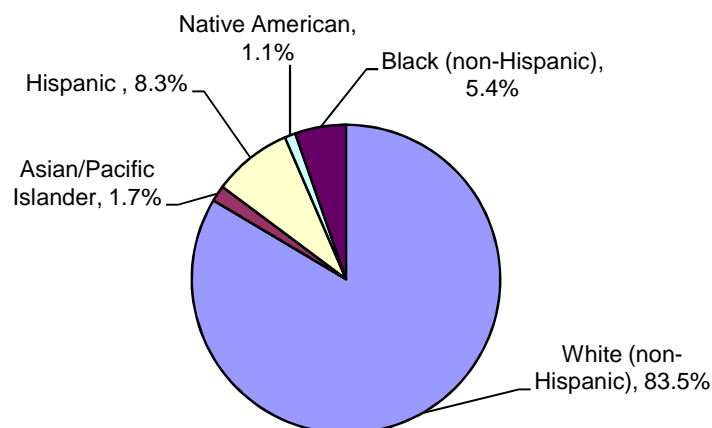
Figure 1.1.a.5

Actual Percentages of Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity in 2008–2009 Compared to 2002–2003¹

Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2002–2003 Baseline



Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2008–2009



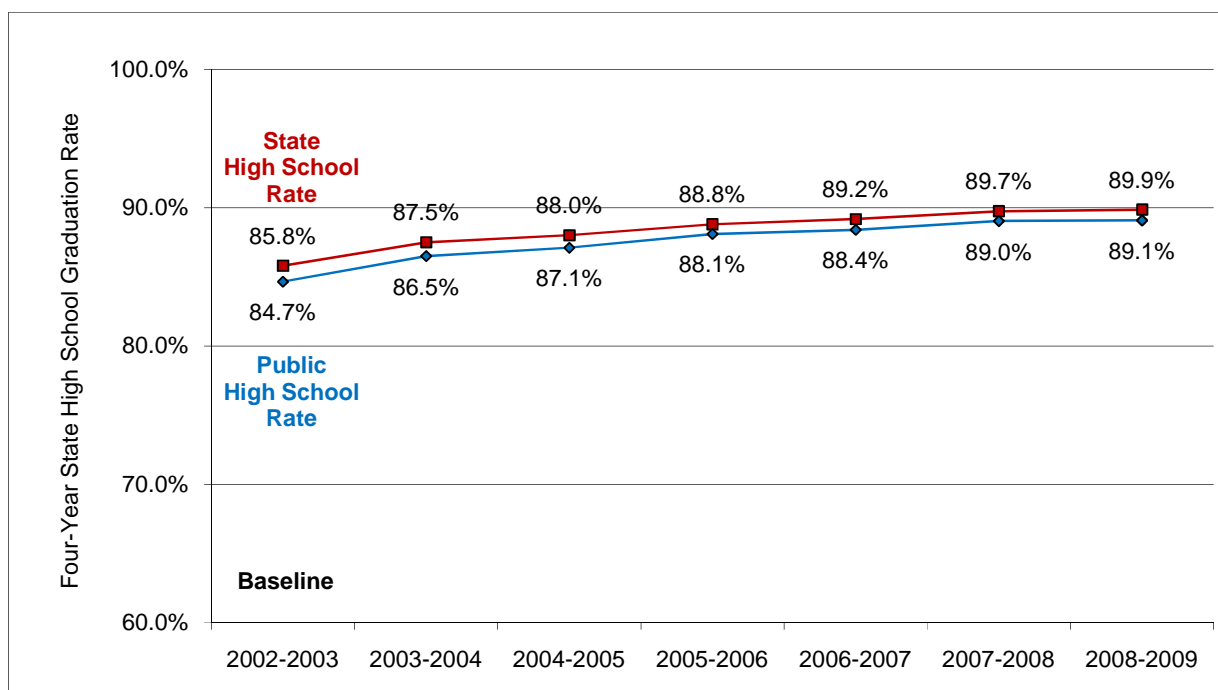
¹Data Sources: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 for 2002-2003 data and February 2010 for 2008-2009 data. Counts do not include graduates of educational service units or state-operated schools. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. See [Table A2.4](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data.

Trends in the Nebraska State Four-Year, High School Graduation Rates

- Although the total number of students who graduated from Nebraska high schools decreased 1.6% between 2002–2003 and 2008–2009, the state’s graduation rate increased significantly.
- The Nebraska Department of Education uses the **four-year high school graduation rate** to measure the proportion of high school students who receive regular diplomas.
 - Nebraska’s **state four-year graduation rate** is based on data that include the graduates of educational service units, state-operated schools and nonpublic (private) schools as well as the graduates of the state’s public schools.
 - In comparison, the **public four-year graduation rate** is also a statewide rate, but it is limited to data from Nebraska’s public high schools.
 - See Explanatory Note A3.1 in Appendix 3 for information on how four-year graduation rates are calculated.
- As shown in Figure 1.1.a.6 below, Nebraska’s state graduation rate increased from 85.8% in 2002–2003, which is the baseline for this progress report, to 89.9% in 2008–2009, or 4.1% over the six-year period.
- In comparison, the graduation rate for the public high schools rose 4.4%, from 84.7% in 2002–2003 to 89.1% in 2008–2009, narrowing the gap between the state and public four-year graduation rates.

Figure 1.1.a.6

**Nebraska State and Public High School Four-Year Graduation Rates
2002–2003 through 2008–09¹**



¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 for data for 2002–2003 through 2005–2006, January 2009 for data for 2006–2007, and February 2010 for updated data for 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 data. See Table A3.3 in Appendix 3 for supporting data.

- The graduation rate for Nebraska’s public high schools is lower than the overall state rate, whereas the graduation rate for Nebraska’s nonpublic (private) schools is significantly higher than the state rate.¹ Nevertheless, Nebraska’s public high school graduation rate is among the highest rates in the United States.²
- As shown in [Table 1.1.a.3](#) below, 41.7% of Nebraska’s 254 public school districts had four-year high school graduation rates of 100%, and 63.0% had graduation rates in the range of 96% to 100% for the 2008–2009 school year. In contrast, only 9.4% of Nebraska’s public high school districts had graduation rates that were equal to or below the statewide rate of 89.1% for public schools in 2008–2009.
- See [Table A3.2](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for a list of the 24 public school districts with graduation rates below the public statewide rate of 89.1% in 2008–2009. As a comparison, 30 districts had graduation rates below the public statewide rate of 89.0% in 2007–2008.

Four-Year High School Graduation Rate	No. of School Districts	Percentage of School Districts	Subtotaled Percentages of School Districts	Cumulative % of School Districts
100.0%	106	41.7%	63.0%	41.7%
96.0% - 99.9%	54	21.3%		63.0%
93.0% - 95.9%	34	13.4%	27.6%	76.4%
89.2% - 92.9%	36	14.2%		90.6%
85.0% - 89.1%	12	4.7%	9.4%	95.3%
80.0% - 84.9%	5	2.0%		97.2%
75.0% - 79.9%	4	1.6%		98.8%
Less than 75.0%	3	1.2%		100.0%
	254	100.0%	100.0%	

¹Four-year graduation rates by district obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education, February 2010. See [Table A3.1](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for the comparable baseline distribution of public high school graduation rates for 2002–2003.

²The statewide public high school graduation rate for 2008–2009 was 89.1%.

¹Compared to the public high school graduation rates of 84.7% in 2002–2003 and 89.1% in 2008–2009, the four-year graduation rates for nonpublic (private) high schools were 99.4% for 2002–2003 and 98.9% for 2008–2009, based on data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education, January 2009 and February 2010. See [Table A3.3](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data.

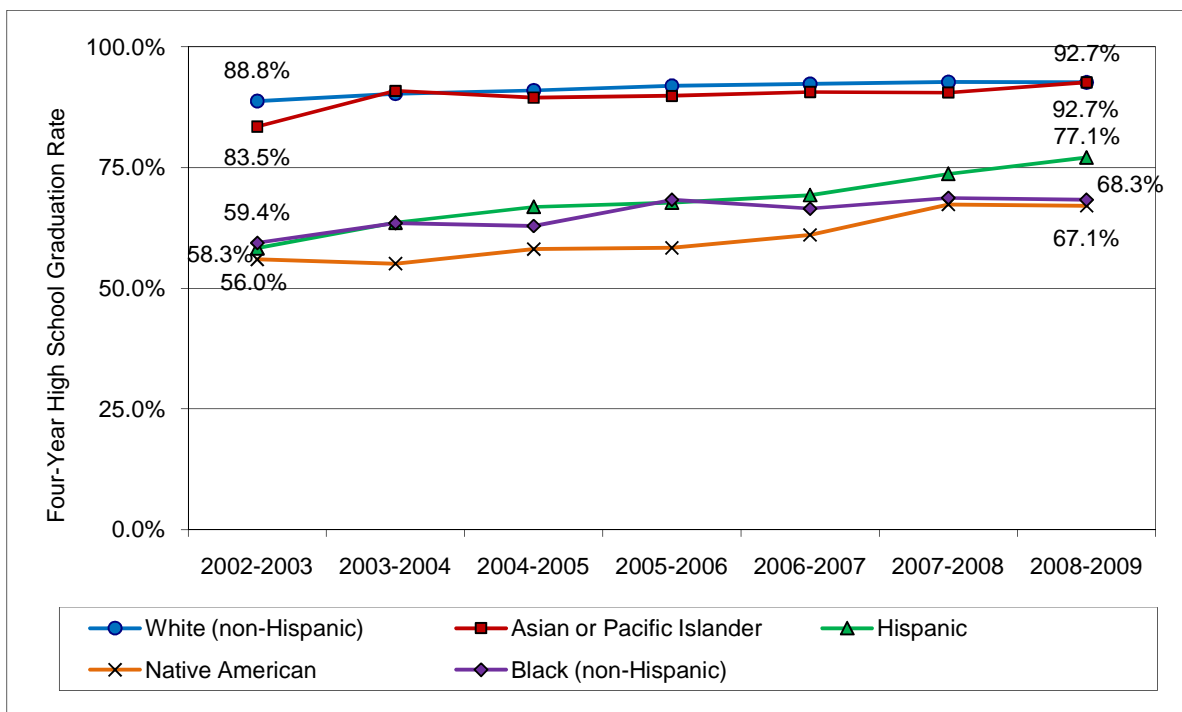
²Compared to the other 49 states and the District of Columbia, Nebraska had the fifth highest public high school graduation rate in 2004; the sixth highest rate in 2003, 2005 and 2006; and the seventh highest in 2007, the most recent year for which state comparisons are available. Data for these comparisons are published on the *Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY* Web site, www.postsecondary.org, in the spreadsheet titled Public High School Graduation Rates by State, updated July 31, 2009.

Nebraska Four-Year, Public High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

- The relatively high four-year graduation rates that characterize most of the state’s public high schools mask the fact that graduation rates within the state vary significantly by race/ethnicity.
- As illustrated in [Figure 1.1.a.7](#), the four-year high school graduation rate for each of the five reported racial/ethnic groups generally increased between 2002–2003 and 2008–2009.
- Among the minorities, the largest increase in graduation rates between 2002–2003 and 2008–2009 was evidenced among Hispanics, while less improvement was reported for Native Americans and black non-Hispanics.
- Although graduation rates have improved for all racial/ethnic groups, the four-year graduation rates for Hispanics, blacks and Native Americans have continued to be significantly lower than the graduation rates for whites and Asians/Pacific Islanders since 2002–2003.
- The net effect of the lower graduation rates for black non-Hispanics, Hispanics and Native Americans is that these minorities continue to account for disproportionately high percentages of the students who drop out of the public high schools in Nebraska, compared to their representation among the graduates of these schools. This is an important finding because minorities, and Hispanics in particular, are projected to account for higher percentages of Nebraska’s high school students in the future.

Figure 1.1.a.7

**Nebraska Four-Year, Public High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity
2002–2003 through 2008–2009¹**



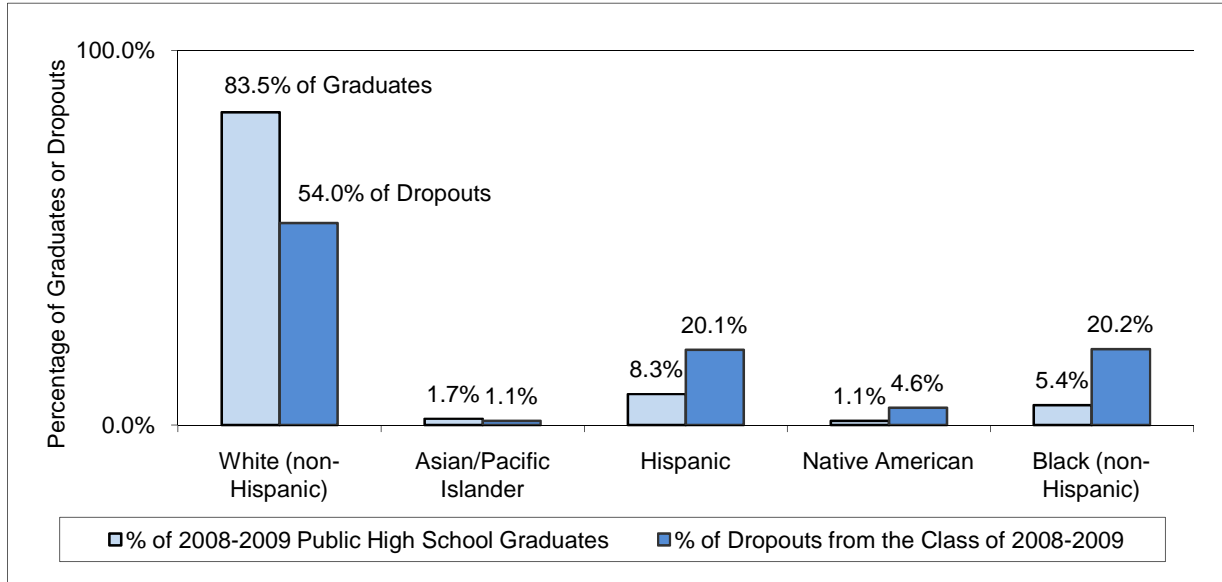
¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 for 2002–2003 through 2005–2006 data, January 2009 for 2006–2007, and February 2010 for updated 2007–2008 data and 2008–2009 data. See [Table A3.3](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data.

- For the purposes of computing four-year graduation and dropout rates for any given high school class, the numbers of students who dropped out of the class in the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades are added together to determine the total number of students who dropped out over the four years. The resulting total number of dropouts can then be compared to the number of graduates in the class, as shown in [Table 1.1.a.4](#) for the class of 2008–2009.

Table 1.1.a.4 Distributions of Public High School Graduates and Dropouts by Race/Ethnicity Based on Four-Year Graduation Rate Data 2008–2009¹				
Race/Ethnicity	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates	No. of Dropouts 9 th – 12 th Grades	% of Dropouts
White (non-Hispanic)	16,202	83.5%	1,283	54.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	328	1.7%	26	1.1%
Hispanic	1,608	8.3%	478	20.1%
Native American	222	1.1%	109	4.6%
Black (non-Hispanic)	1,038	5.4%	481	20.2%
Nebraska Public Total	19,398	100.0%	2,377	100.0%
¹ Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, February 2010. See Table A3.4 in Appendix 3 for the distributions of public high school graduates and dropouts by race/ethnicity for 2002–2003 through 2007–2008.				

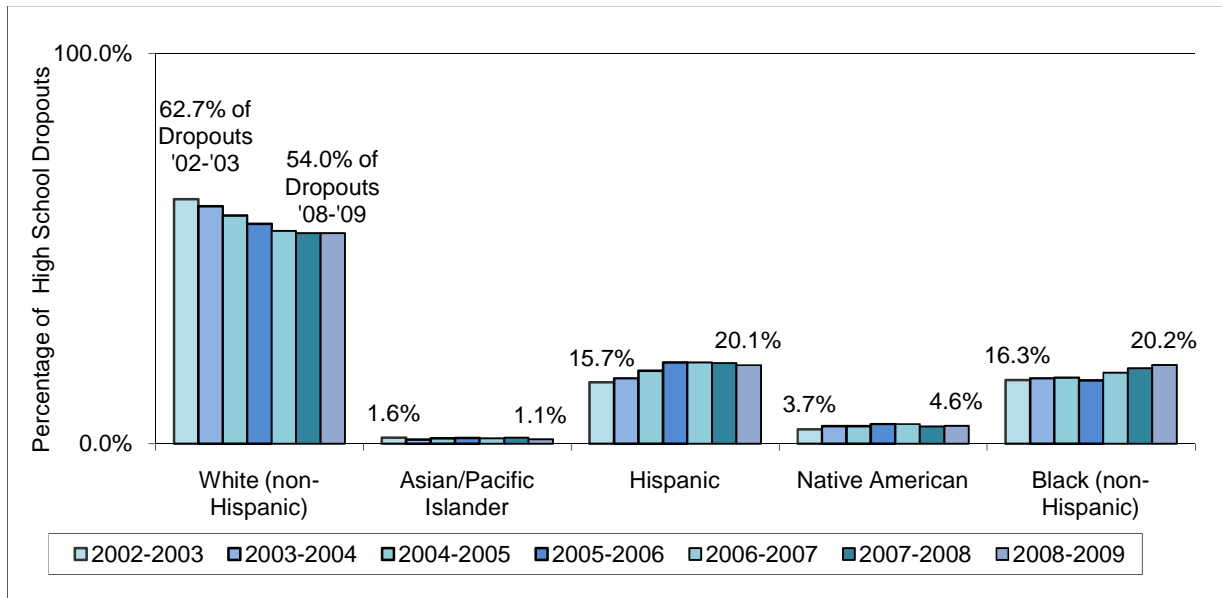
- As evidenced in [Table 1.1.a.4](#) above and illustrated in [Figure 1.1.a.8](#) on the next page, white non-Hispanics accounted for the largest number and percentage of dropouts from the class of 2008–2009. However, Hispanics, Native Americans and blacks accounted for a disproportionately higher percentage of students who dropped out of the class relative to the number of students who graduated in 2008–2009.
- Furthermore, as shown in [Figure 1.1.a.9](#) on the next page, Hispanics, Native Americans and blacks accounted for higher percentages of the dropouts from the class of 2008–2009 than they did from the class of 2002–2003. This increase is a result of both the higher number of minority students and their lower graduation rates, relative to their white and Asian/Pacific Islander classmates.
- Consequently, although the four-year graduation rates for Hispanics, Native Americans and blacks increased between 2002–2003 and 2008–2009, these minorities continue to account for disproportionate and increasing percentages of Nebraska’s public high school dropouts compared to the extent they are represented among the graduates of the state’s public high schools.

Figure 1.1.a.8
Percentages of Public High School Graduates and Dropouts by Race/Ethnicity
Based on Four-Year Graduation Rate Data
2008–2009¹



¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, February 2010. See [Table 1.1.a.4](#) for supporting data.

Figure 1.1.a.9
Percentages of Public High School Dropouts by Race/Ethnicity
Based on Four-Year Graduation Rate Data
2002–2003 through 2008–2009¹



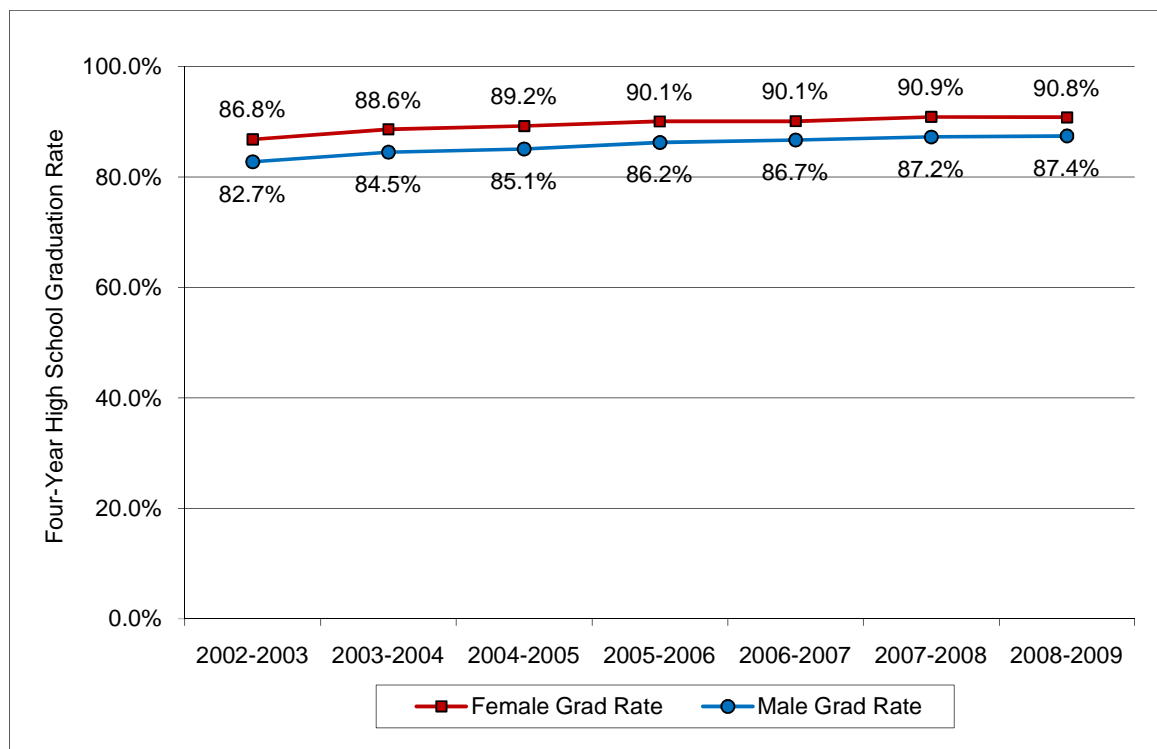
¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, February 2010. See [Table A3.4](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data.

Nebraska Four-Year, Public High School Graduation Rates by Gender

- Analyses of the four-year, public high school graduation rate data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education reveal that females continue to have higher graduation rates than males who attend Nebraska’s public high schools.
- As evidenced in [Figure 1.1.a.10](#), the graduation rates for males and females both gradually increased from 2002–2003 to 2008–2009. Beginning in 2005–2006, the gender gap in graduation rates slightly narrowed.
- Over the three years from 2002–2003 through 2004–2005, there was a 4.1 percentage difference between the graduation rates of males and females who completed high school in Nebraska.
- The difference between the graduation rates of males and females narrowed slightly to 3.9 percentage points in 2005–2006 and the difference narrowed to 3.4 percentage points in 2006–2007, due to a slightly higher increase in the graduation rate for males than for females in 2005–2006 and no change in the graduation rate for females in 2006–2007.
- The difference between the graduation rates of males and females increased from 3.4 percentage points in 2006–2007 to 3.7 percentage points in 2007–2008, and decreased again to 3.4 percentage points in 2008–2009. This suggests that there has been a relatively consistent gender gap in public high school graduation rates.

Figure 1.1.a.10

**Nebraska Four-Year, Public High School Graduation Rates by Gender
2002–2003 through 2008–2009¹**



¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 for 2002–2003 through 2005–2006 data, January 2009 for 2006–2007, and February 2010 for updated 2007–2008 data and 2008–2009 data.. See [Table A3.5](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data.

Public School Districts Selected for Further Analysis

An analysis of the four-year public high school graduation rate data for 2002–2003 through 2008–2009 indicates that Nebraska’s statewide public graduation rate has increased and that the graduation rates for students in all of the reported racial/ethnic groups have improved. However, 2,377 students in the class of 2008–2009 dropped out of Nebraska’s public high schools before they completed the requirements for graduation.

Further analysis of the four-year graduation rate data reveals that 14 (5.5%) of the state’s 254 public high school districts currently account for 73% of the state’s dropouts from public high schools. Consequently, efforts to further increase graduation rates and reduce dropout rates might best focus on these selected districts in order for the graduation rates for each racial/ethnic group and the state as a whole to continue to improve.

The 14 public school districts that currently account for more than 70% of the state’s dropouts are located in the 12 counties highlighted on the map of Nebraska in Figure 1.1.a.11.

Figure 1.1.a.11

The 12 Nebraska Counties Where the 14 Selected School Districts that Account for More than 70% of the States Dropouts are Located

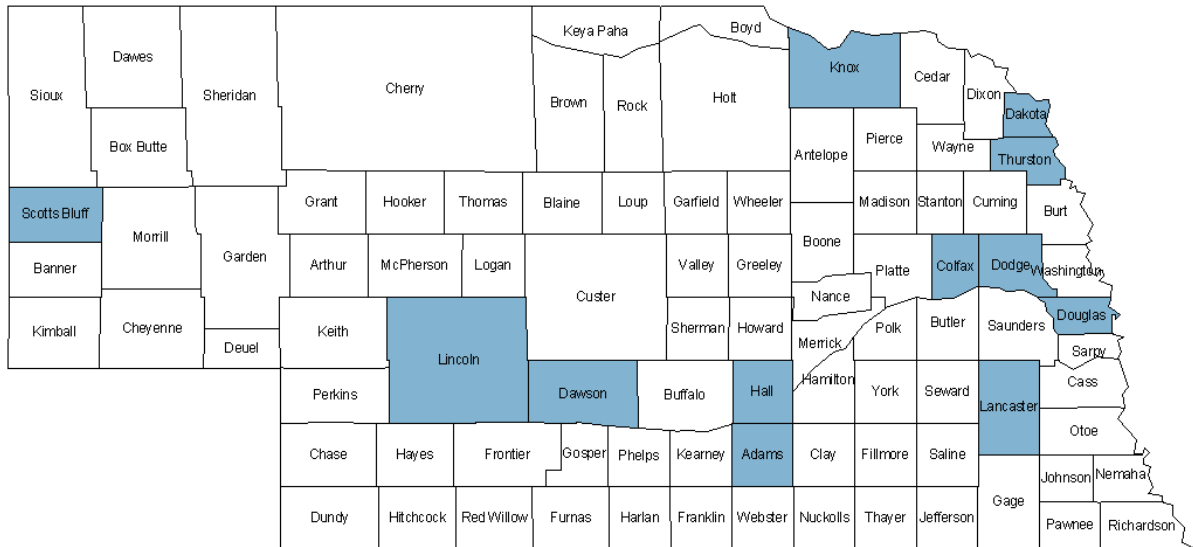


Table 1.1.a.5 lists the school districts that have accounted for 70% or more of the state’s dropouts from public high schools since 2002–2003, which is the baseline for this report. To be included initially among the 14 school districts selected for analysis, a district had to meet one or both of the following criteria:

- (1) The district’s four-year graduation rate was lower than the statewide rate for Nebraska public schools in 2002–2003 and 2003–2004, and the district reported more than 15 dropouts from the class of 2002–2003.
- (2) The district’s four-year graduation rate was one of the five lowest in the state for the 2002–2003 or 2003–2004 school year.

The 14 school districts selected for monitoring have remained the same since 2002–2003, except in 2007–2008, when North Platte Public Schools was removed from the list of monitored districts and replaced with Kearney Public Schools. For 2008–2009, North Platte is included again and Kearney is not among the monitored districts.¹

- As shown in [Table 1.1.a.5](#), the 14 selected school districts represented about 31% of the states public high school graduates but 73% of all of the dropouts from Nebraska’s public high schools in 2002–2003 and 2008–2009.
- Although 14 districts continue to account for 73% of the state’s high school dropouts, the number of dropouts from the districts decreased 32.0% between 2002–2003 and 2008–2009. During the same period, the number of graduates from the districts increased only 1.7%.

Table 1.1.a.5
Number of High School Graduates and Dropouts
for the 14 Selected Nebraska School Districts
2008–2009 Compared to 2002–2003¹

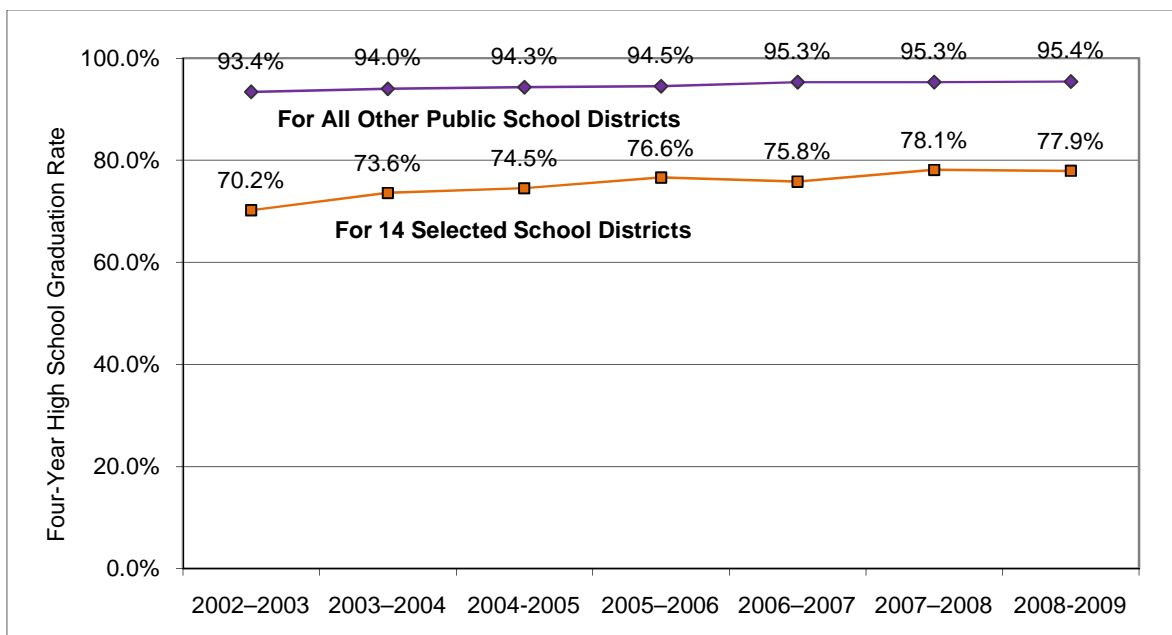
County	District or School Name	No. of Graduates		No. of Dropouts 9 th – 12 th Grades	
		2002–03	2008–09	2002–03	2008–09
Adams	Hastings Public Schools	233	198	54	32
Colfax	Schuyler Central High School	74	117	30	13
Dakota	South Sioux City Community Schools	176	231	64	31
Dawson	Lexington Public Schools	130	180	32	17
Dodge	Fremont Public Schools	286	287	65	55
Douglas	Omaha Public Schools	2,336	2,293	1,342	990
Hall	Grand Island Public Schools	367	373	123	98
Knox	Santee Community Schools	8	8	4	5
Lancaster	Lincoln Public Schools	1,883	1,954	716	428
Lincoln	North Platte Public Schools	297	277	57	37
Scotts Bluff	Scottsbluff Public Schools	207	174	39	17
Thurston	Walthill Public Schools	18	12	7	4
Thurston	Umo ^{ho} Nation Public School	9	17	18	13
Thurston	Winnebago Public Schools	21	24	16	5
	Total for 14 School Districts	6,045	6,145	2,567	1,745
	% of Nebraska Public School Total	30.8%	31.7%	72.7%	73.4%
	Nebraska Public School Total	19,604	19,398	3,531	2,377

¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 and February 2010.

¹North Platte Public Schools was removed from the list of monitored districts for 2007–2008 because the district had a graduation rate that was higher than the statewide rate for Nebraska public schools in 2006–2007 and 2007–2008, but was returned to the list for 2008–2009 because the district’s graduation rate fell below the statewide rate. Kearney Public Schools was added to the list for 2007–2008 because the district had a graduation rate that was lower than the statewide rate for Nebraska public schools and more than 15 dropouts in 2006–2007 and 2007–2008. Kearney was not included in the list for 2008–2009 because its graduation rate was 89.9%, which was above the public state rate of 89.1%.

- As illustrated in [Figure 1.1.a.12](#) below, the combined graduation rate for the 14 districts increased from 70.2% in 2002–2003 to 77.9% in 2008–2009, an increase of 7.7 percentage points.¹
- As also evidenced in [Figure 1.1.a.12](#), the overall four-year graduation rate for the 14 selected school districts continues to be significantly lower than the combined graduation rate for all of Nebraska’s other public high schools. However, the difference between the overall graduation rate for the 14 monitored districts and the graduation rate for all other Nebraska public school districts generally narrowed between 2002–2003 and 2008–2009. This means that, in general, the percentage of students receiving regular high school diplomas in the 14 districts has increased at a higher rate than the graduation rate for all of the other public school districts.
- However, with minor exceptions, each of the selected school districts have continued to have graduation rates that are relatively low, compared to the graduation rates of other public school districts in Nebraska.
- See [Table A3.6](#) and [Table A3.7](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for detailed four-year graduation rate statistics for 2002–2003 through 2008–2009 for the 14 monitored school districts.

Figure 1.1.a.12
Four-Year Graduation Rates for 14 Selected Nebraska School Districts
and All Other Nebraska Public High School Districts
2002–2003 through 2008–2009¹



¹Data Source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007, January 2009, and February 2010. The selected districts are Fremont Public Schools, Grand Island Public Schools, Hastings Public Schools, Lexington Public Schools, Lincoln Public Schools, North Platte Public Schools, Omaha Public Schools, Santee Community Schools, Schuyler Central High School, Scottsbluff Public Schools, South Sioux City Community Schools, UNO ^ HO ^ Nation Public Schools, Walthill Public Schools and Winnebago Public Schools. Kearney Public Schools were included among the monitors districts in 2007–2008 and North Platte Public Schools were not included. For the comparison shown in this chart, North Platte was included in calculating the graduation rate for the 14 districts in 2007–2008 and Kearney was excluded, so that the same 14 school districts are compared over the six-year period. See [Table A3.7](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data.