

# Dropout Profile

## What Does Research Say?

The literature presents extensive and complex reasons students drop out of high school. There are typically a combination of circumstances that influence a student's choice to drop out, and dropout is considered to be a process involving multiple factors rather than a distinct event, which for some students starts as early as elementary school.<sup>1</sup> Researchers commonly categorize dropout reasons into two categories: individual characteristics (e.g., educational performance) and situational characteristics (e.g., family, school). Research is available on dropout reason from both the student perspective and the school/system perspective. In researching the student perspective, the US Department of Education conducted a longitudinal study<sup>2</sup> where they surveyed sophomore dropouts on their reasons for leaving school. The reasons for dropout chosen by the students are displayed below in order of most to least frequently chosen:

- Missed too many school days
- Thought it would be easier to get GED
- Was getting poor grades/failing school
- Did not like school
- Could not keep up with schoolwork
- Got a job
- Was pregnant
- Thought could not complete course requirements
- Could not get along with teachers
- Could not work at same time
- Had to support family
- Did not feel belonged there
- Could not get along with others
- Was suspended
- Had to care for a member of the family
- Became a father/mother of a baby
- Changed schools and did not like new one
- Thought would fail competency test
- Did not feel safe
- Was expelled
- Married or planned to get married

The experiences of students who drop out and their reasons for leaving school are numerous and diverse. A student's lived experience is much more complex than just their at-risk status. As one study describes, context matters – “the decision to drop out is not simply a result of what happens in school... Dropouts themselves report a variety of reasons for leaving school, but these reasons do not reveal the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.hws.edu/about/pdfs/school\\_dropouts.pdf](https://www.hws.edu/about/pdfs/school_dropouts.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009307.pdf>

underlying causes. Multiple factors in elementary or middle school may influence students' attitudes, behaviors, and performance in high school prior to dropping out."<sup>3</sup> The California Dropout Research Project conducted a comprehensive review of 25 years of literature to better understand the underlying causes behind students' decisions to drop out.<sup>4</sup> Some of the strongest predictors of high school completion outcomes they found across research studies, grouped by category, include:

- Educational performance
  - test scores and grades in high school
  - academic achievement in both middle and elementary school (with grades a more consistent predictor than test scores)
  - school changes (i.e., student mobility) during middle and high school
  - retention (being held back one or more grades), in elementary, middle, and high school
- Behaviors
  - student engagement
    - active involvement in academic work (e.g., coming to class, doing homework)
    - social aspects of school (e.g., participating in sports or other extracurricular activities)
  - high absenteeism
  - misbehavior in high school and delinquent behavior outside of high school
  - drug or alcohol use during high school
  - teenage parenting and childbearing
  - having friends who engage in criminal behavior or friends who have dropped out
  - work more than 20 hours a week
- Attitudes
  - educational expectations (how far in school a student expects to go)
- Background
  - participation in preschool
- Families
  - family structure, along with other potentially stressful events (such as a family move, illness, death, adults entering and leaving the households, and marital disruptions)
  - family resources—as measured by parental education, parents' occupational status, and family income; and parenting practices (e.g., monitoring school progress, having high expectations)
  - have a sibling who dropped out
- Schools (student and family characteristics account for most of the variability in dropout rates, about 20 percent can be attributed to characteristics of schools)
  - small classes (15:1) in grades K-3 improve high school graduation rates
  - academic climate, as measured by more students taking academic courses and doing homework
  - disciplinary climate, as measured by student disruptions in class or in school

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.hws.edu/about/pdfs/school\\_dropouts.pdf](https://www.hws.edu/about/pdfs/school_dropouts.pdf)

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Grade 9 is recognized as a gatekeeper to high school graduation. “Ninth grade serves as a bottleneck for many students who begin their first year only to find that their academic skills are insufficient for high school-level work...Unfortunately, many students are not given the extra support they need to make a successful transition to high school and are lost in ninth grade.”<sup>5</sup> Dropout prevention services during grade 9 are key to mitigate the loss of students in this grade.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/HighSchoolDropouts.pdf>

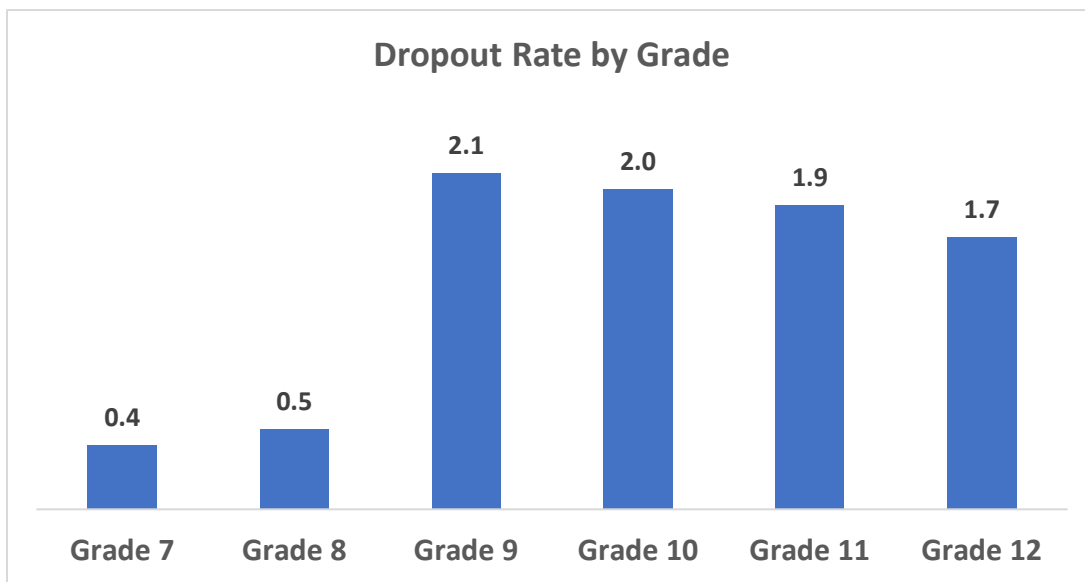
# What Does Texas Data Show?

## By Grade

Dropout data show that statewide, students predominantly drop out in grades 9-12. There is a spike in dropouts occurring in grade 9, and over 25% of total dropouts occur in this grade level.

### Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, Texas Public Schools, 2018-19<sup>6</sup>

Grade	Count of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	% of Total Dropouts
Grade 7	1,489	0.4	4.3%
Grade 8	2,090	0.5	6.1%
Grade 9	9,281	2.1	26.9%
Grade 10	8,232	2.0	23.9%
Grade 11	6,984	1.9	20.3%
Grade 12	6,401	1.7	18.6%



## By Age

Dropout data show that statewide, students predominantly drop out at the ages associated with high school. Higher age is associated with a higher dropout rate, particularly beyond age 18. 28% of the total dropouts are age 17, 84% of dropouts are between ages 14-18, and 93% of dropouts are ages 14 and up.

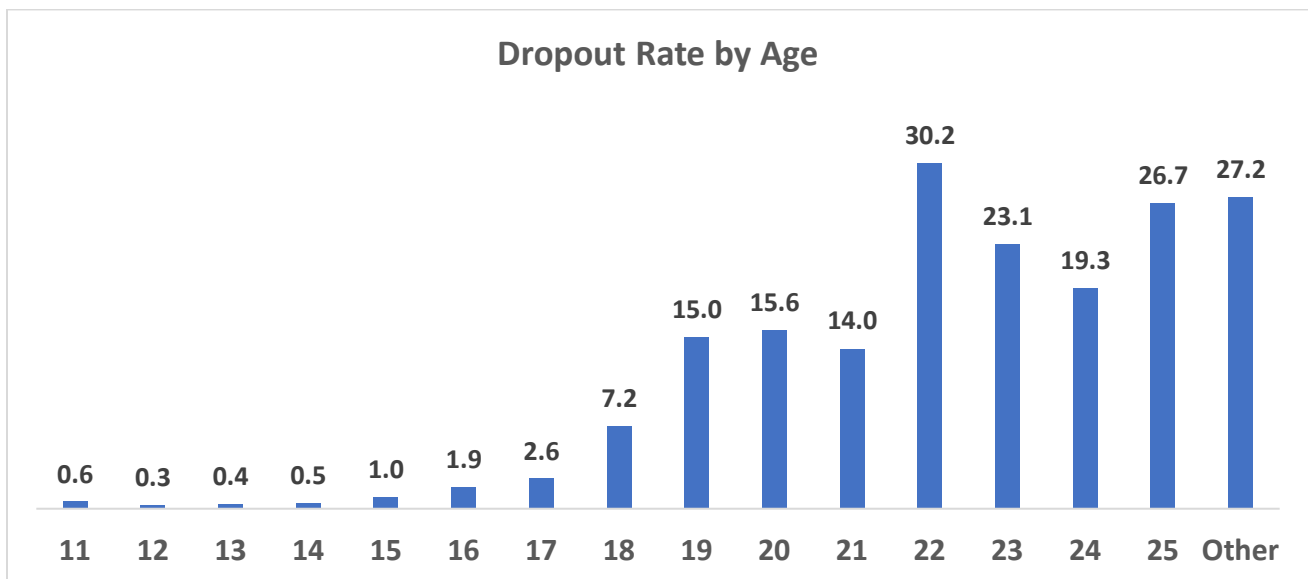
### Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Student Age, Texas Public Schools, 2018-19<sup>7</sup>

Age	Count of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	% of Total Dropouts
11	39	0.6	0.1%
12	879	0.3	2.5%
13	1,511	0.4	4.4%

<sup>6</sup> [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/dropcomp\\_2018-19.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/dropcomp_2018-19.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/dropcomp\\_2018-19.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/dropcomp_2018-19.pdf)

Age	Count of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	% of Total Dropouts
14	2,084	0.5	6.0%
15	3,974	1.0	11.5%
16	7,553	1.9	21.9%
17	9,770	2.6	28.3%
18	5,528	7.2	16.0%
19	1,798	15.0	5.2%
20	633	15.6	1.8%
21	277	14.0	0.8%
22	111	30.2	0.3%
23	68	23.1	0.2%
24	37	19.3	0.1%
25	47	26.7	0.1%
Other	168	27.2	0.5%



## By Program Participation

Dropout data show that the student characteristics most associated with dropouts are at-risk, English learner, homeless, immigrant, and overage. 60% of dropouts are at-risk and 78% of dropouts are overage. The dropout rate is highest for the student groups of English learner, foster care, homeless, immigrant, and overage.

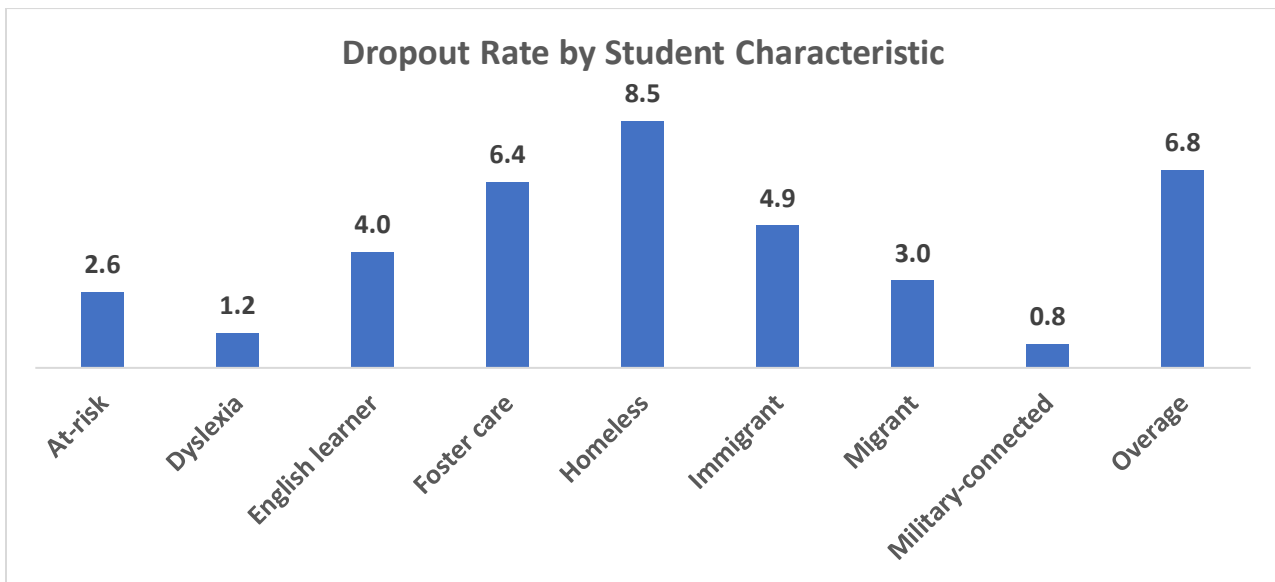
## Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 9-12, by Student Characteristic, Texas Public Schools, 2018-19<sup>8</sup>

Group	Count of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	% of Dropouts
At-risk	18,507	2.6	59.9%
Dyslexia	650	1.2	2.1%

<sup>8</sup> [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/dropcomp\\_2018-19.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/dropcomp_2018-19.pdf)

Group	Count of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	% of Dropouts
English learner	6,990	4.0	22.6%
Foster care	254	6.4	0.8%
Homeless	2,596	8.5	8.4%
Immigrant	1,245	4.9	4.0%
Migrant	218	3.0	0.7%
Military-connected	177	0.8	0.6%
Overage	24,174	6.8	78.2%

Note: Students may be counted in more than one category.



## What Populations are Served by Texas AECs?

As the research demonstrates, reason for dropout whether from the student's or school's perspective is complex. AECs have the ability to meet the unique needs of these students, understanding their challenges beyond simply which at-risk criteria the student meets. The populations served by AECs identified in our review of Texas programs include:

- Previous dropouts and students at-risk of dropping out
- Students in residential treatment facilities
- Middle school students requiring credit recovery to be on-track for high school
- Post-treatment
- Students that are newcomers to the US
- Pregnant/parenting students
- Students receiving special education services