GRADUATION AND DROPOUT REPORT 2014

Graduation Matters Montana
gmm.mt.gov

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Montanans have a lot to be proud of when it comes to our public education system. Montana's public schools have the flexibility to adapt to the needs of their communities, the small class sizes necessary for individualized instruction, and strong family and community engagement to support student success.

When Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau took office in 2009, there were 2,272 public school students who dropped out of school, and Montana had a dropout rate of five percent. For a state with a school population as small as Montana, these numbers were unacceptable. In today's economy, a quality public education is the key to economic prosperity for our young people. As parents, taxpayers, business owners and educators, Montanans cannot ignore the long-term economic consequences of students not graduating from high school.

Understanding the potential economic consequences for individuals, communities and our state, Superintendent Juneau made dropout prevention a priority of the Office of Public Instruction.

Montana's dropout rate costs our state millions of dollars each year:

- Nearly 80% of male inmates and 75% of female inmates at Montana State Prison are high school dropouts.
- Almost 30% of Montana's high school dropouts meet the federal definition of low-income, which is twice the rate of high school graduates.
- High school dropouts earn $9,200 less per year than highschool graduates and about one million dollars less over a lifetime than college graduates.
- The economy of Montana would see a combination of crime-reduction savings and additional revenue of about $19.6 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5 percent.
- It is estimated that 30 million of the 46.8 million job openings in 2018 (about 64%) will require education and training beyond high school.

Graduation Matters Montana

Inspired by the early successes of the Graduation Matters Missoula initiative, Superintendent Juneau launched Graduation Matters Montana in 2010. Graduation Matters Montana is a statewide effort to ensure Montana students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. Juneau's effort has drawn from national best practices and strategies that are working right here in Montana.

Under the umbrella of Graduation Matters Montana and with the goal of ensuring Montana students are college and career ready, Superintendent Juneau successfully advocated for raising Montana's English and math standards, engaged student voices through her statewide Student Advisory Board, built public-private partnerships at the state and local level, and worked with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education to expand dual-credit opportunities, promote College Application Week, and offer the ACT at no cost to every public high school junior. Additionally, Juneau continues to advocate to the Montana Legislature to raise the legal dropout age from "age 16" to "age 18 or upon graduation," adopt anti-bullying legislation, and provide State funding for schools to educate students older than 18 years of age.

Most importantly, Superintendent Juneau traveled to communities across the state to ask schools and businesses to join her in creating local Graduation Matters initiatives. Beginning with a three-year investment in 2011 of $450,000 from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, Juneau has been able to add $150,000 from the Student Assistance Foundation, $50,000 from BNSF Foundation, $38,000 from AT&T, $35,000 from State Farm Insurance, $30,000 from the Steel Reese Foundation, and additional investments from First Interstate Bank Foundation, Northwestern Energy, Optimum Cable, IBM, MEA-MFT, D.A. Davidson, and the Going to the Sun Rally Foundation. An estimated $90,000 has enabled the OPI to provide technical

assistance, materials and training to communities and to convene the Superintendent's Student Advisory Board. **In 2014, the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation renewed its commitment to Graduation Matters Montana with an additional $450,000 investment, bringing the total to more than $1.2 million in private funds to grant out directly to school-community efforts to raise graduation rates and improve college and career preparedness.**

To date, 48 communities have joined Superintendent Juneau's statewide effort by creating locally-designed Graduation Matters initiatives, including all of Montana's largest communities and 11 communities on or near American Indian reservations. As a result, nearly 75 percent of high school students in our state are currently attending a school with a Graduation Matters initiative.

Producing Results

The positive results of these state and local partnerships have been demonstrated in the data over the past four years. Since the launch of Graduation Matters Montana, the statewide dropout rate has been on the decline, and the graduation rate has gone up. **Montana's high school dropout rate has decreased from 5 percent in 2009 to 3.7 percent in 2014, and the graduation rate has increased from 80.7 percent in 2009 to 85.4 percent in 2014. This is the highest the graduation rate has been in Montana since the OPI began calculating the graduation rate in 2000.** In 2013, only 16 states in the nation had graduation rates of 85 percent or above. The credit for this improvement belongs to the school leaders, teachers, community members, parents and students who have put in the work at the local level to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of students who may not have made it to graduation without their efforts.

Definitions

Dropout Rate: Counts students who were enrolled in school on the date of the previous year's October enrollment count or at some time during the previous school year and were not enrolled on the date of the current school year October count.

Graduation Rate: Prior to the 2010-2011 school year, the graduation rate included the number of students who completed a district's graduation requirements in four years or less from the time the student enrolled in the 9th grade or had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) allowing for more than four years to graduate. Beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, the graduation rate has been calculated using the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate calculation.

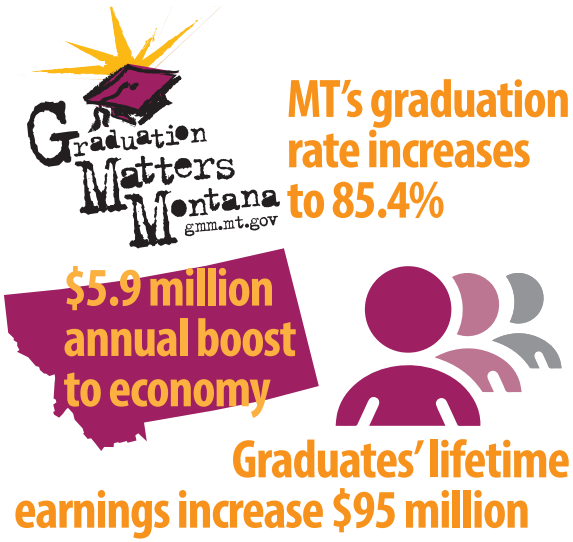
***Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate:** The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently "adjusted" by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the 9th grade and the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or pass away during that same period.

Completion Rate: Counts students who complete the high school graduation requirements of a school district, including early graduates, during the previous school year, or complete the high school graduation requirements of a school district at the end of summer prior to the current school year.

	Graduation Rate	Completion Rate	Dropouts	H.S. Dropout Rate
2008-2009	80.7%	81.7%	2,272	5.0%
2009-2010	80.2%	82.0%	1,896	4.3%
2010-2011	82.2%*	82.2%	1,859	4.3%
2011-2012	83.9%*	83.7%	1,744	4.1%
2012-2013	84.4%*	84.2%	1,500	3.6%
2013-2014	85.4%*	85%	1,539	3.7%

Economic Impact

According to calculations made by the Alliance for Excellent Education, Montana is likely to see significant economic gains as a result of increases in its high school graduation rate over the period of 2009 to 2014, which resulted in 520 additional high school graduates. The Alliance estimates Montana will see a $5.9 million annual boost to the state's economy going forward and an increase of $12.3 million in spending on homes and a $700,000 increase in automobile sales. Collectively, the additional graduates will likely earn an additional $95 million over the course of their lifetimes, compared to if they had not graduated from high school.



Graduation and Dropout Data Collection and Comparison Tools

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has been implementing improvements to its processes for tracking student achievement, including graduation and dropout rates, since 2007-08. These improvements include the implementation of a student information system, AIM (Achievement in Montana), which collects enrollment, demographic, and program participation information at the individual student level. The advent of a statewide student information system using data verified and cleansed at the state and local level has improved the accuracy and reliability of Montana's dropout data. This report reflects the seventh year of collecting and verifying data using Montana's statewide student information system.

In spring 2012, the OPI launched its new online education data system, GEMS (Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students). The data reporting system provides access to multiple years of data and interactive reports on student achievement, graduation rates, enrollment, program and course offerings, financial information, and college readiness. GEMS allows users to compare Montana schools and districts side-by-side. To review graduation and dropout data by school and district, go to: http://gems.opi.mt.gov.

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

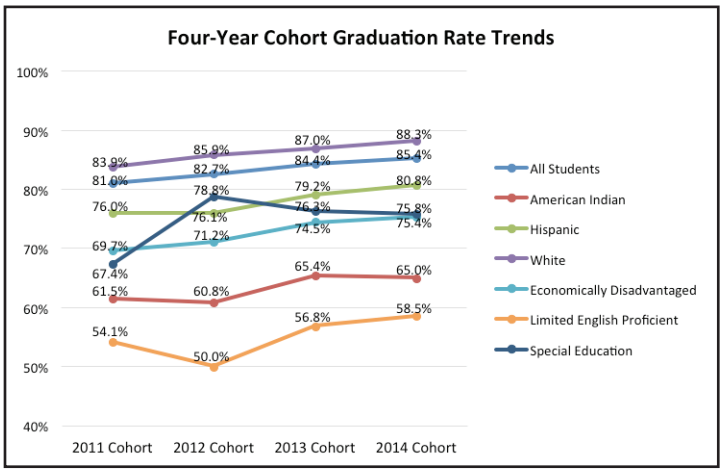
The graduating class of 2010-2011 was the first cohort for which the Montana Office of Public Instruction was able to calculate a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. This rate is the percentage of students in a cohort, adjusted for transfers in and out of school, district, or state, that graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of the student's first enrollment in ninth grade. For the graduating class of 2013-2014, the cohort began ninth grade in the fall of 2010.

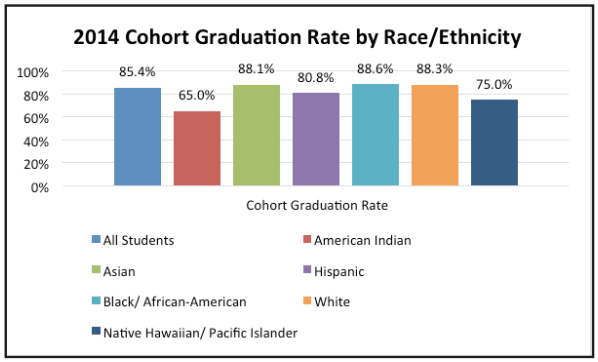
This is the fourth year the OPI has had the data to calculate the four-year adjusted cohort rate. The cohort graduation rate has increased from 82.2 percent in 2011 to 85.4 percent in 2014. **This is the highest the graduation rate has been in Montana since the OPI began calculating the graduation rate in 2000.** Over the past four years, the statewide cohort graduation rate has continually increased. Between 2011 and 2014, the graduation rate for every student group except for Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students increased. American Indian students have seen an increase from 61.5 percent in 2011 to 65 percent in 2014, and the graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students has increased from 69.7 percent to 75.4 percent.

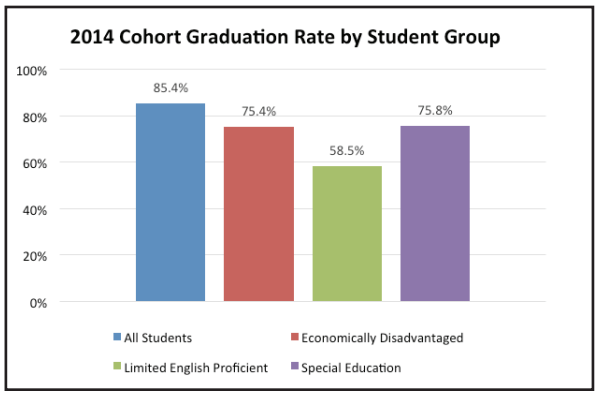
Frequently Asked Questions about the calculation of the Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate can be found on the OPI website on the Measurement and Accountability webpage http://opi.mt.gov/Reports&Data/Measurement.

For the purposes of student confidentiality, cells with a count under five in the statewide graduation report (for both the four- and five-year adjusted cohorts) have been suppressed.

2014 Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate					
Student Group	Graduates	Dropouts	Continuing	Cohort Count	Cohort Graduation Rate
All Students	9,273	1,329	253	10,855	85.4%
American Indian	774	336	81	1,191	65.0%
Asian	96	*	*	109	88.1%
Hispanic	308	61	12	381	80.8%
Black/ African-American	109	*	*	123	88.6%
White	7,959	903	153	9,013	88.3%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	27	*	*	36	75.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	3,659	1,002	193	4,854	75.4%
Limited English Proficient	226	129	31	386	58.5%
Special Education	920	233	61	1,214	75.8%







Five-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students in a cohort, adjusted for transfers in and out of school, district, or state, that graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of the student's first enrollment in ninth grade.

The OPI also calculates graduation rates for additional years, allowing schools and the public to recognize the percentages and numbers of students who continue and receive high school diplomas after the typical four year term. Some students take an additional year to graduate, and it is important to track their progress through Montana's public education system. Accordingly, the OPI has calculated the five-year adjusted cohort rate for the class of 2013.

The four-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2013 was 84.4 percent. **An additional 169 students graduated in 2014, making the five-year cohort graduation rate 85.8 percent.** The "Fifth Year Graduates" column includes all students in the 9th grade 2009-10 school year who received a high school diploma after the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, even if they entered after the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

Class of 2013 Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rate

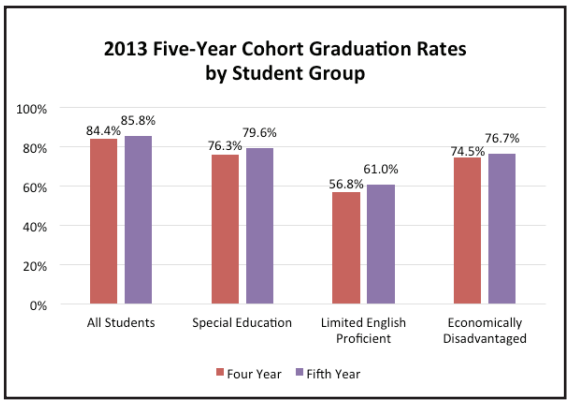
	Graduates		Dropouts		Continuing	Graduation Rates	
Student Group	Four Year	Fifth year	Within four years	During fifth year	Enrolled for sixth year	Four Year	Five Year
All Students	**9111**	**169**	**1390**	**116**	**25**	**84.4%**	**85.8%**
American Indian	779	38	326	43	12	65.4%	68.2%
Asian	112	*	*	*	*	96.6%	98.3%
Hispanic	263	6	59	*	*	76.8%	80.3%
Black/ African American	76	*	20	*	*	76.8%	78.8%
White	7857	121	979	68	10	87.0%	88.3%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	24	*	*	*	*	85.7%	85.7%
Special Education Students	884	40	212	17	8	76.3%	79.6%
Limited English Proficiency Students	235	20	136	19	8	56.8%	61.0%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	3527	116	994	90	22	74.5%	76.7%

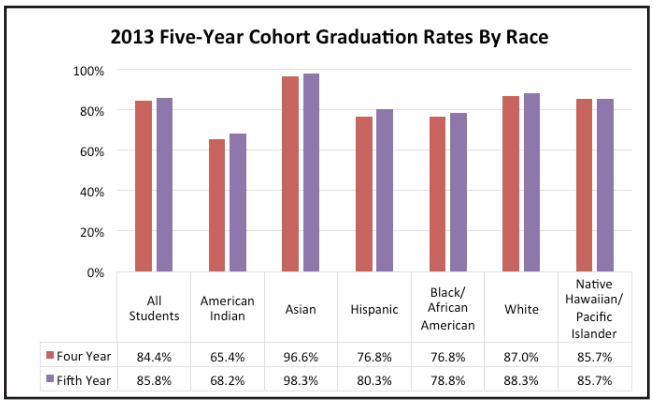
Providing State Funding for Educating Nineteen-Year-Olds

For some students, it can take more than four years to earn their high school diploma, yet schools in Montana do not receive any state funding to educate 19-year-olds. Students who need a "5th year" or an extra semester of high school are often highly motivated to graduate and need the extra time to earn core credits, have transferred from a school system that makes them a "late start" in Montana's school system, or dropped out of school due to family circumstances and have reenrolled in high school to earn their diploma.

In the 2013-2014 school year, 79 students 19 years of age or older were enrolled in the Fall Semester and 66 were enrolled in the Spring Semester. **Currently, Montana is the only state in the nation that cuts off school funding when a student turns nineteen.** The majority of states fund students until they are 21 years of age, including all of Montana's neighboring states (ID, WY, ND, SD).

Montana cannot afford to create disincentives for local schools that are working to graduate every student. For this reason, Superintendent Juneau has proposed legislation during the 2013 and 2015 Legislative Sessions to provide state funding for students who are older than 18.





	All Students	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black/ African American	White	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander
Four Year	84.4%	65.4%	96.6%	76.8%	76.8%	87.0%	85.7%
Fifth Year	85.8%	68.2%	98.3%	80.3%	78.8%	88.3%	85.7%

Dropout Rate

The dropout count includes students who were enrolled in school on the date of the previous year's October enrollment count or at some time during the previous school year and were not enrolled on the date of the current school year October count. The dropout rate is calculated as the number of dropouts divided by the enrollment for the previous year.

Over the past six years, the high school dropout rate has decreased from 5 percent to 3.7 percent, resulting in 733 fewer dropouts in 2014 than in 2009. In this report for 2013-2014, the number of dropouts in grades 7-12 slightly increased by 50 students, which means the dropout rate for grades 7-12 slightly increased from 2.4 percent to 2.5 percent. The high school dropout rate slightly increased from 3.6 percent to 3.7 percent. Thirty-nine of the additional students who dropped out were high school students, the other 11 students were in grades seven and eight.

As is consistent with previous years' data, more males than females dropped out, and the gap between male and female dropout rates increases as the grade increases. In the 9th grade, the male dropout rate is 1.7 percent and 1.5 percent for females. In 12th grade, the male dropout rate is 5.9 percent, and the female dropout rate is 4.4

percent. In 2014, the 9th grade dropout rate went down for both genders; however, in the 12th grade the dropout rate declined for males but increased for females.

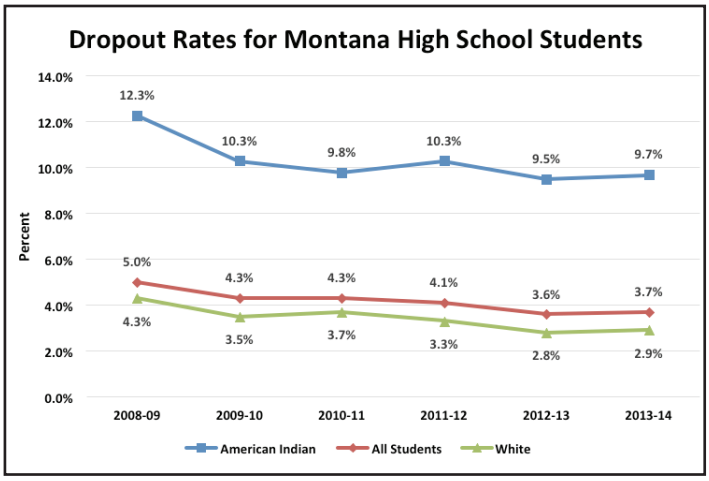
2013-2014 Montana Dropout Rate Summary			
	Dropout Rates	Dropout Count	Enrollment
Overall Total (Grades 7-12)	2.5%	1,581	63,649
HS Total	3.7%	1,539	42,138
Gr 12	5.2%	515	9,912
Gr 11	4.7%	483	10,272
Gr 10	3.4%	362	10,726
Gr 9	1.6%	179	11,228
7 & 8 Total	0.2%	42	21,511
Gr 8	0.2%	26	10,635
Gr 7	0.1%	16	10,876
Gender			
Male	2.8%	921	32,925
Female	2.1%	660	30,724
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian	6.5%	420	6,467
Asian	1.6%	9	559
Hispanic	3.4%	84	2,484
Black	2.5%	16	645
Pacific Islander	3.4%	5	146
White	1.9%	1,014	52,065
Other	2.6%	33	1,263

Over the past five years, the high school dropout rate for American Indian students has decreased from 12.3 percent to 9.7 percent. This trend is in the right direction; however, the dropout rate for American Indian students remains significantly higher than the dropout rate for all students. While American Indian students make up 10 percent of statewide student enrollment, they account for 27 percent of students in grades 7-12 who drop out of school.

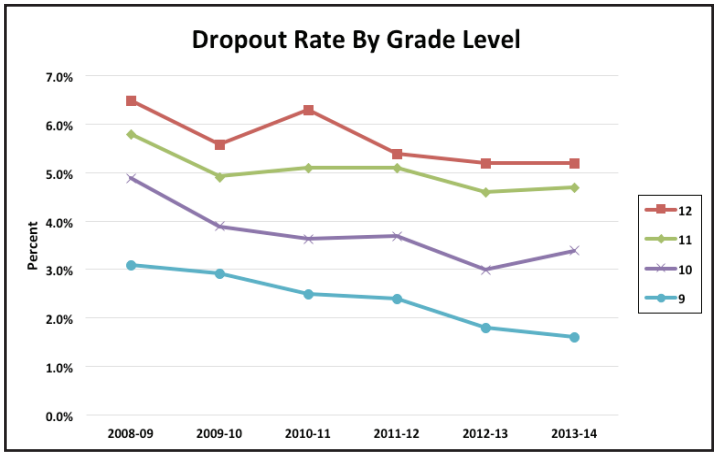
Raising the Legal Dropout Age

Montana's legal dropout age of 16 was established in 1921 – a time of very different social and economic demands. In today's global economy, a student needs at minimum a high school diploma to find a decent-paying job.

In Montana, the 11th and 12th grades continue to show the highest dropout rates. For all students, the dropout rate is 5.2 percent in 12th grade and 4.7 percent in 11th grade. For American Indian students, the highest dropout rate is in the 12th grade at 13.3 percent with 10.4 percent in grade 11. **Students who are 16 or 17 accounted for 1,026 of the students in Montana who dropped out in 2014 or 65 percent of all dropouts.**

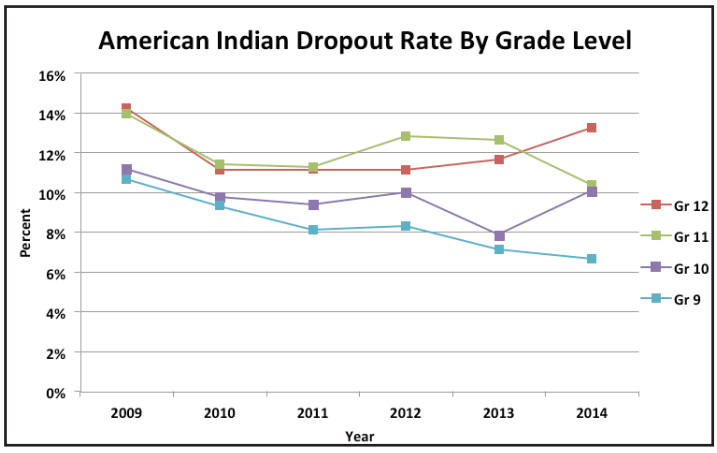


Believing that we should set a statewide expectation of high school graduation, Superintendent Juneau has introduced legislation in the 2011, 2013, and 2015 Legislative Sessions to raise the legal dropout age in Montana to "age 18 or upon graduation." Raising the legal dropout age is a tool for parents and schools. It supports their efforts to keep students in school and on the path to a successful future.



Conclusion

Creating a statewide focus on increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate through Graduation Matters Montana is paying off for Montana students and communities. Montana's high school dropout rate has decreased from 5 percent in 2009 to 3.7 percent in 2014, and the graduation rate has increased from 80.7 percent in 2009 to 85.4 percent in 2014. **Together, this represents an all-time high in Montana's graduation rate and means that 733 fewer students dropped out in 2014 than in 2009.**



Graduation Matters Montana's efforts are having an impact not only on individuals, but on Montana's economy. According to calculations by the Alliance for Excellent Education, Montana stands to see an estimated $4.3 million annual boost to the state's economy. Collectively, the additional graduates will likely earn an additional $68.2 million over the course of their lifetimes, compared to if they had not graduated from high school.

Additional policy changes such as raising the legal dropout age to "age 18 or upon graduation" and providing state funding for students older than 18 could boost Montana's graduation numbers and bring in additional revenue to the state of Montana in the form of decreased social costs and increased spending in Montana's economy.

While the statewide graduation rate continues to increase, persistent achievement gaps still exist, particularly for American Indian students. American Indian students make up 10 percent of the student population but account for 27 percent of our state's students who drop out. Graduation Matters communities have begun to launch in communities on or near reservations, and our efforts must begin to focus on finding and sharing best practices to decrease the dropout rate for American Indian students.

For more information about Graduation Matters Montana, go to http://graduationmatters.mt.gov.

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