

**Profiles of Starting Cohort Members  
and Transfer Students in a  
Texas Public High School Cohort**

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Division of Research and Evaluation  
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Texas Education Agency  
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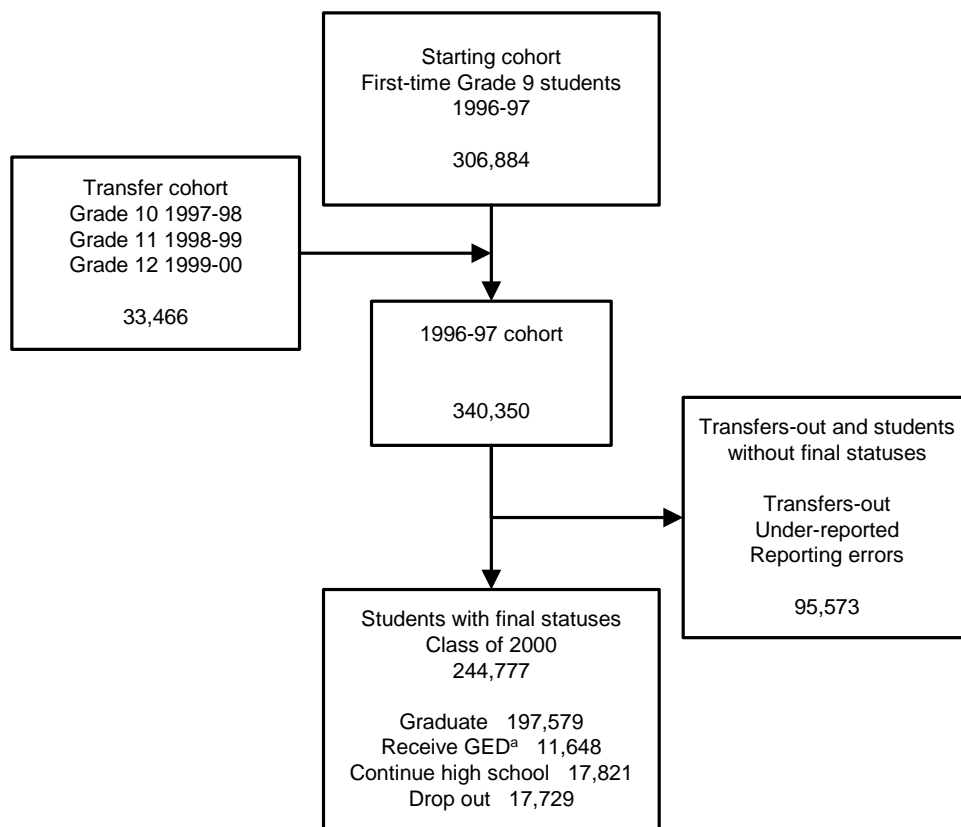
## **Development of a High School Completion Indicator**

The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) provides the structure of accountability for public schools in Texas. Since the AEIS was established in 1990-91, a wide range of information on each public school and district in Texas has been assembled and disseminated to the public in annual AEIS reports.

includes some students who attended Grade 9 previously in private school or out of state because they appear to be first-time Grade 9 students.

Students who transfer into Texas public schools at the expected grade levels join the cohort as new members as the cohort progresses through high school. For example, Grade 10 transfers-in in 1997-98, Grade 11 transfers-in in 1998-99, and Grade 12 transfers-in in 1999-00 will join the students who began Grade 9 in 1996-97 (Figure 1). Grade 7 cohorts are constructed based on similar rules. The analyses in this paper focus on Grade 9 cohorts.

**Figure 1. Starting and Transfer Membership in the Grade 9 Cohort and Class, Texas Public School, Class of 2000**



<sup>a</sup>GED = General Educational Development certificate.

Based on the rules establishing cohort membership, the "cohort" consists of every student in attendance in that grade level for the first time in a Texas public school, and every student who transfers into a Texas public school at the expected grade level as the cohort progresses through high school. Every student in Texas public high school is a member of one and only one grade-level cohort. That is, each student is a

member of one and only one Grade 7 cohort, and one and only one Grade 9 cohort. This feature is essential to an accountability indicator used year after year.

In calculations that can not or do not distinguish between first-time and retained students, retained students are members of two or more cohorts and are included two or more times in counts of outcomes. "One-time" longitudinal studies are often based on cohorts made up of all students in the grade level of interest, regardless of retention status. Because a student who repeats a grade is much more likely to drop out than a student who does not repeat a grade, the dropout counts are much higher in longitudinal rates that do not remove retained students from starting cohorts than in longitudinal rates that do remove retained students from starting cohorts. Rates based on cohorts made up of all students in the starting grade are not comparable to rates based on cohorts made up of students in the starting grade for the first time.

A "class" consists of every student in the cohort with a "final status". Currently, the final statuses are graduate, continuing student, General Educational Development (GED) recipient, and dropout. Final statuses are determined the fall of the school year following expected graduation. There are no distinctions in cohort or class membership between students who begin with starting cohorts and students who transfer in.

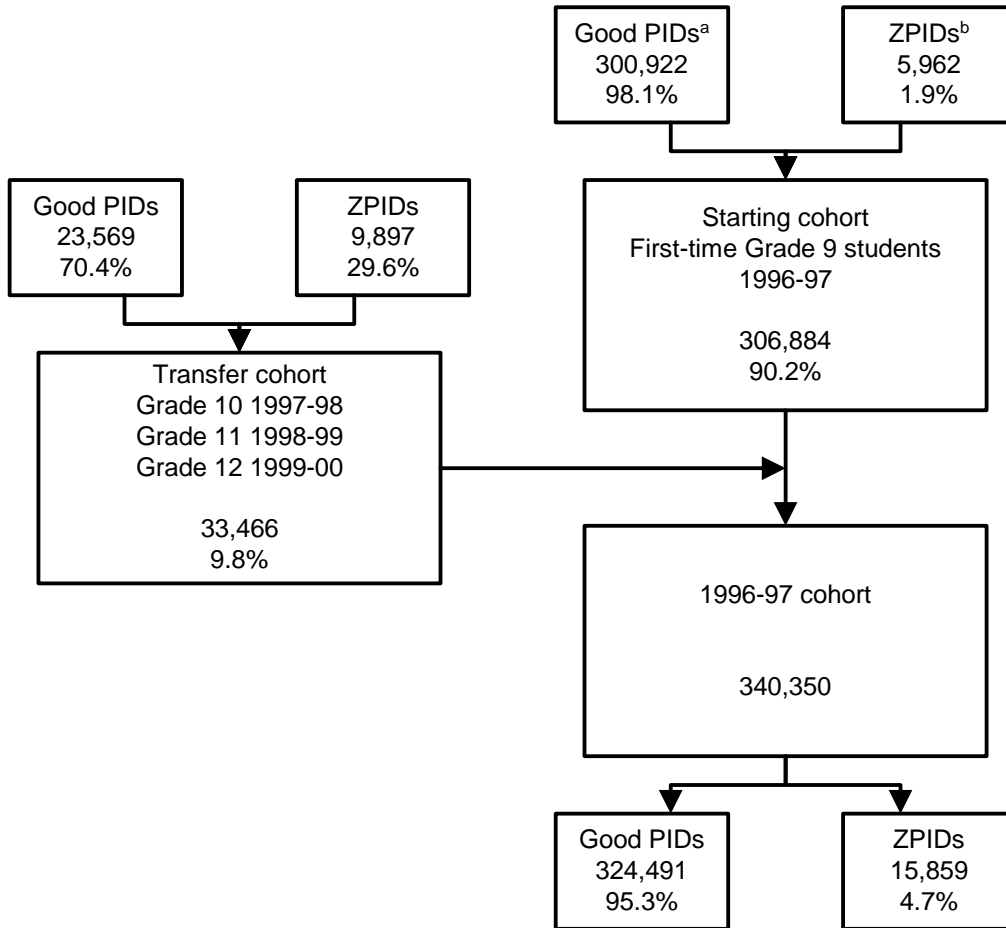
"Official leavers" do not have any of the four final statuses that qualify for inclusion in a class. Because official leavers are not considered to have final statuses, they are not included in longitudinal student status rates. Students for whom final statuses are not reported are also removed from the class.

The class constitutes the denominator of all longitudinal student status rate calculations. Counts of students in each of the final status categories constitute the four numerators in the longitudinal rate calculations: graduates, continuing students, GED recipients, and dropouts. Each student status rate is calculated by dividing the count of students with the status by the total number of students in the class. Because the sum of all students with final statuses is equal to the number of students in the class, the sum of the four longitudinal student status rates equals 100 percent.

## **Data Sources**

The analyses in this report are based on the most recent data available: members of the 1996-97 Grade 9 cohort and members of the class of 2000. Data on GED recipients from GED testing centers are transmitted to TEA. All other student data are reported to the agency by the districts through the Public

**Figure 2. Student Records with Identification Errors, Texas Public School, 1996-97 Grade 9 Cohort**



<sup>a</sup>PID = personal identification number.

<sup>b</sup>ZPID = personal identification number for a record with identification errors.

## Profiles of Starting Cohort Members and Transfer Students

The starting cohort for first-time Grade 9 students in Texas public schools in 1996-97 has 300,922 (92.7%) members, and 23,569 transfers-in (7.3%) with good PIDS. There are some differences in ethnicity—transfers-in have a higher proportion of White students and a lower proportion of Hispanic students than do starting cohort members (Table 1).

**Table 1. Characteristics of Starting Cohort Members and Transfers-in, Texas Public Schools, 1996-97 Grade 9 Cohort**

| Student characteristic            | Starting cohort members |         | Transfers-in |         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|--------------|---------|
|                                   | Number                  | Percent | Number       | Percent |
| <b>African American</b>           | 41,491                  | 13.8    | 3,144        | 13.3    |
| <b>Asian</b>                      | 7,544                   | 2.5     | 1,621        | 6.9     |
| <b>Hispanic</b>                   | 110,424                 | 36.7    | 5,996        | 25.4    |
| <b>Native American</b>            | 786                     | 0.3     | 149          | 0.6     |
| <b>White</b>                      | 140,677                 | 46.8    | 12,659       | 53.7    |
| <b>Economically disadvantaged</b> | 96,758                  | 32.2    | 4,138        | 17.6    |
| <b>Female</b>                     | 146,126                 | 48.6    | 11,863       | 50.3    |
| <b>Male</b>                       | 154,796                 | 51.4    | 11,706       | 49.7    |
| <b>Limited English proficient</b> | 17,411                  | 5.8     | 1,655        | 7.0     |
| <b>At risk</b>                    | 133,782                 | 44.5    | 5,634        | 23.9    |
| <b>Immigrant</b>                  | 3,502                   | 1.2     | 989          | 4.2     |
| <b>Migrant</b>                    | 5,700                   | 1.9     | 169          | 0.7     |
| <b>All students</b>               | 300,922                 |         | 23,569       |         |

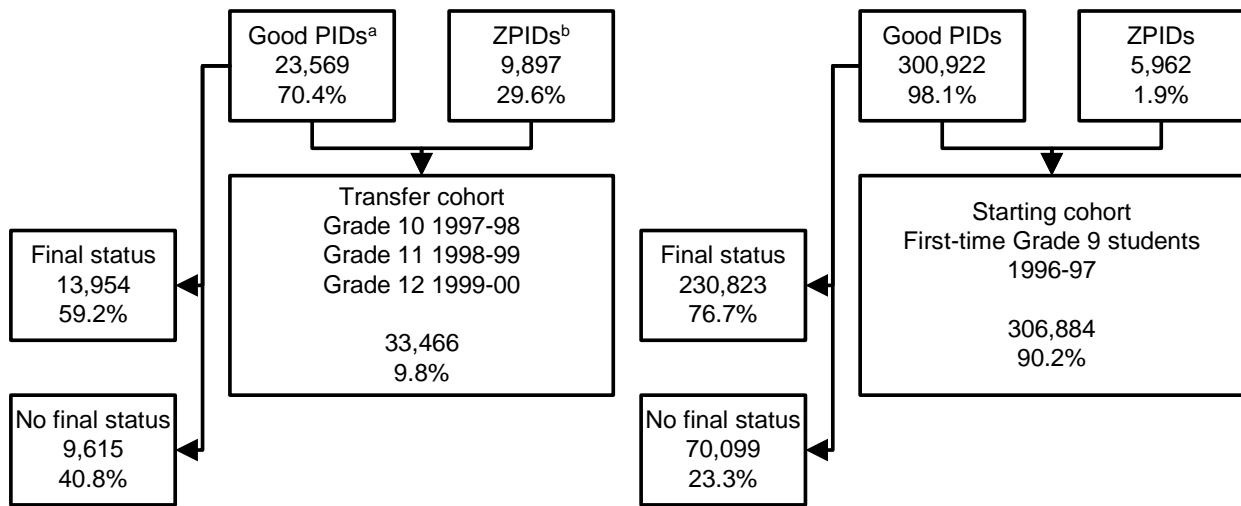
The most noticeable differences are characteristics and programs related to socioeconomic status. Transfers-in are much less likely to be reported as economically disadvantaged, at risk of dropping out, and eligible for Title I (Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 2. Program Participation of Starting Cohort Members and Transfers-in, Texas Public Schools, 1996-97 Grade 9 Cohort**

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**Figure 3. Starting Cohort Members and Transfers With Final Statuses, Texas Public Schools, 1996-97 Grade 9 Cohort**



<sup>a</sup>PID = personal identification number.

<sup>b</sup>ZPID = personal identification number for a record with identification errors.

Members of the starting cohort are much more likely to have a final status than transfers-in (Figure 3). Of the students who are members of the starting cohort, 76.7 percent have final statuses, and of the students who are transfers-in, 59.2 percent have final statuses. Transfers-in appear much more likely to transfer out, to be underreported, or to be reported with incorrect student identification.

The final statuses of the transfers-in who do remain do not differ greatly from those of the starting cohort members (Table 3). Transfers-in are somewhat more likely to receive a GED or to continue in school after the expected year of graduation, and slightly more likely to drop out. The overall effect on the graduation rate is only about 0.2 percentage point statewide.

**Table 3. Longitudinal Student Status Rates of Starting Cohort Members and Transfers-in, Grades 9-12, Texas Public Schools, Class of 2000**

| Cohort                 | Class   | Graduated |        | Received GED <sup>a</sup> |        | Continued HS <sup>b</sup> |        | Dropped out |        |
|------------------------|---------|-----------|--------|---------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|-------------|--------|
|                        | Number  | Number    | Rate % | Number                    | Rate % | Number                    | Rate % | Number      | Rate % |
| <b>Starting cohort</b> | 230,823 | 186,616   | 80.9   | 10,897                    | 4.7    | 16,638                    | 7.2    | 16,672      | 7.2    |
| <b>Transfers-in</b>    | 13,954  | 10,963    | 78.6   | 751                       | 5.4    | 1,183                     | 8.5    | 1,057       | 7.6    |
| <b>All students</b>    | 244,777 | 197,579   | 80.7   | 11,648                    | 4.8    | 17,821                    | 7.3    | 17,729      | 7.2    |

<sup>a</sup>General Educational Development certificate. <sup>b</sup>High school.

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