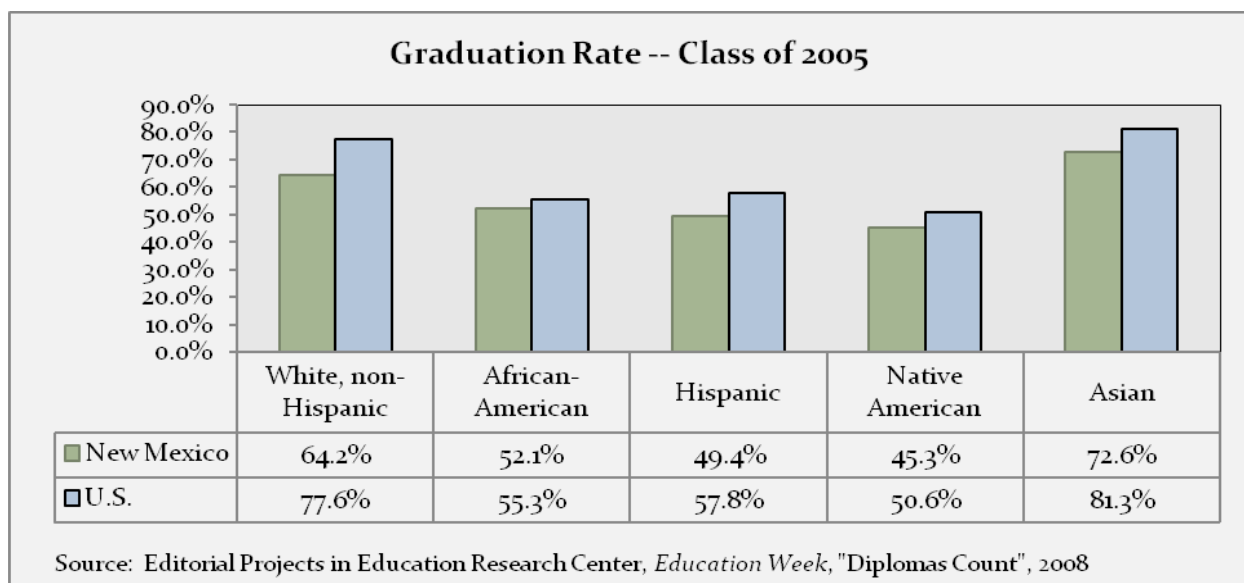


New Mexico High School Graduation and Dropout Rates

October 2008

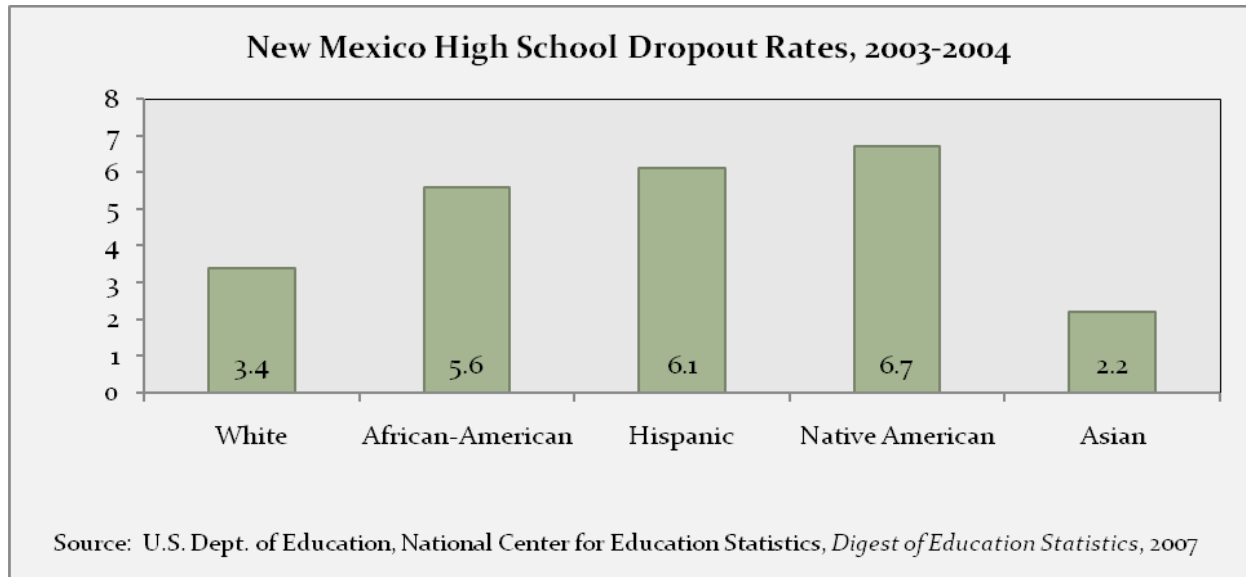
While there are different methodologies for calculating high school graduation and dropout rates, data on racial and ethnic disparities are consistent. Hispanic, African-American, and Native-American students have lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates than white, non-Hispanic students. In the class of 2005, New Mexico's disparities mirrored the disparities nationally.



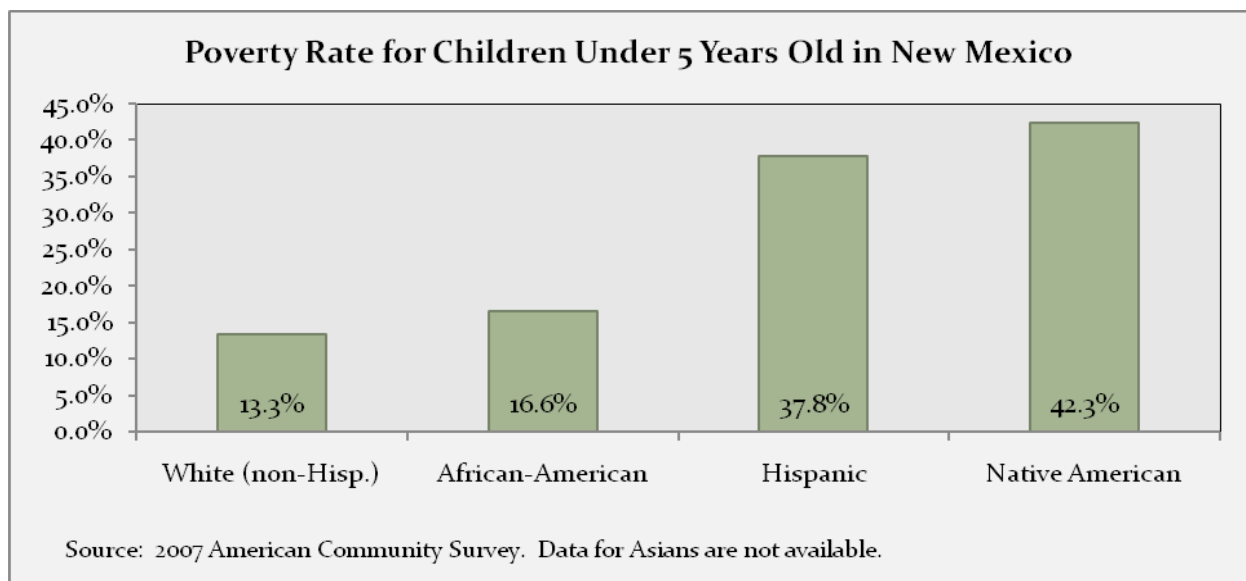
In the state Public Education Department's (PED) student dropout report for the 2004-2005 school year, the percentages of students dropping out were given by gender and race. Hispanic, African-American, and Native-American students had higher dropout rates.

Dropout percentages in 2004-2005		
	Male	Female
White	3.7%	3.1%
African-American	6.8%	4.6%
Hispanic	6.6%	5.6%
Native American	5.8%	4.5%
Asian	4.1%	2.1%

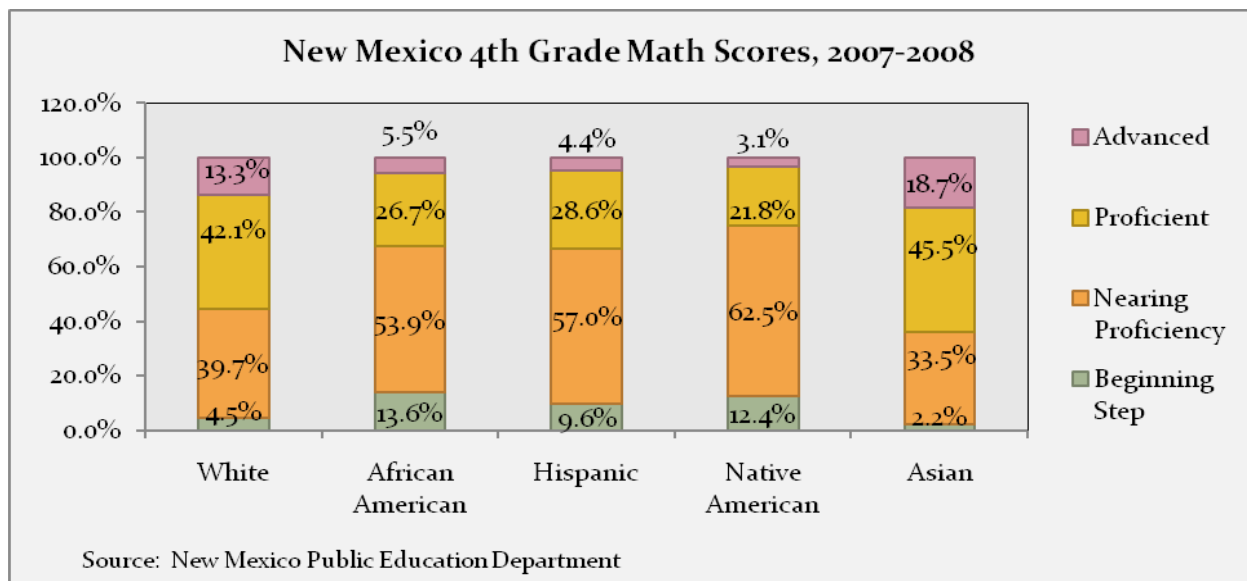
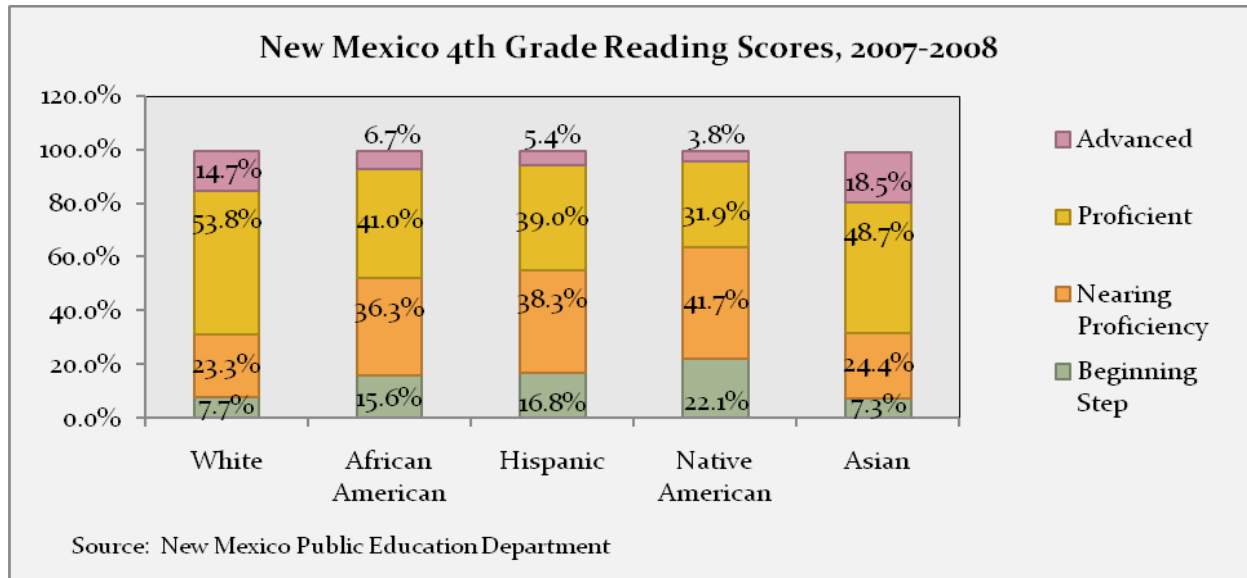
The U.S. Department of Education's most recent *Digest of Education Statistics* also shows the same pattern of those dropping out of school in New Mexico.



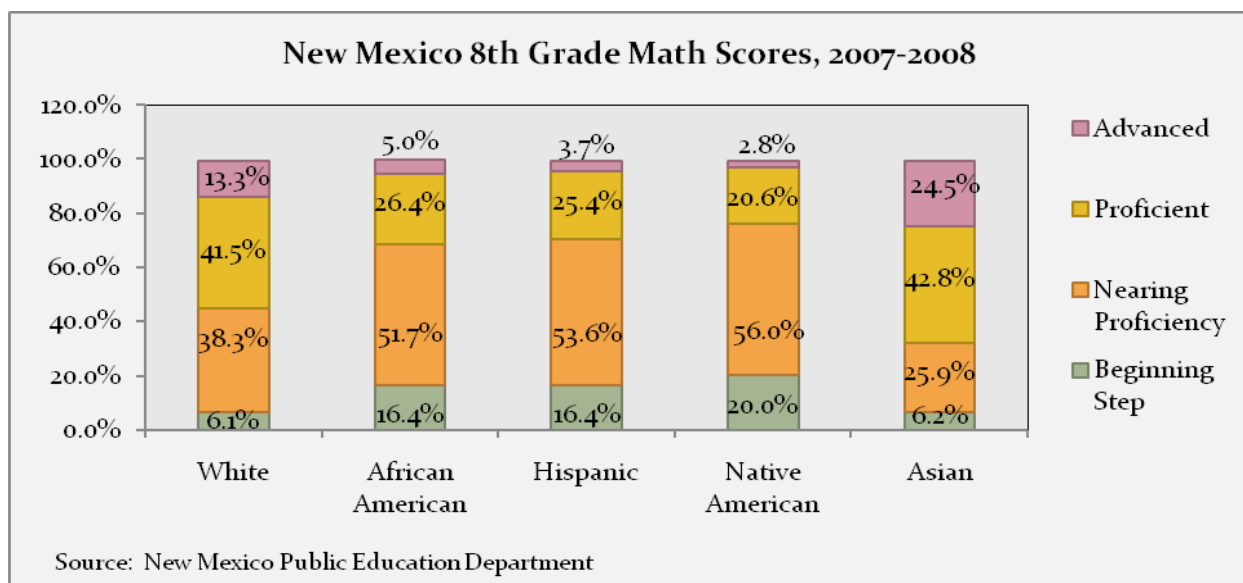
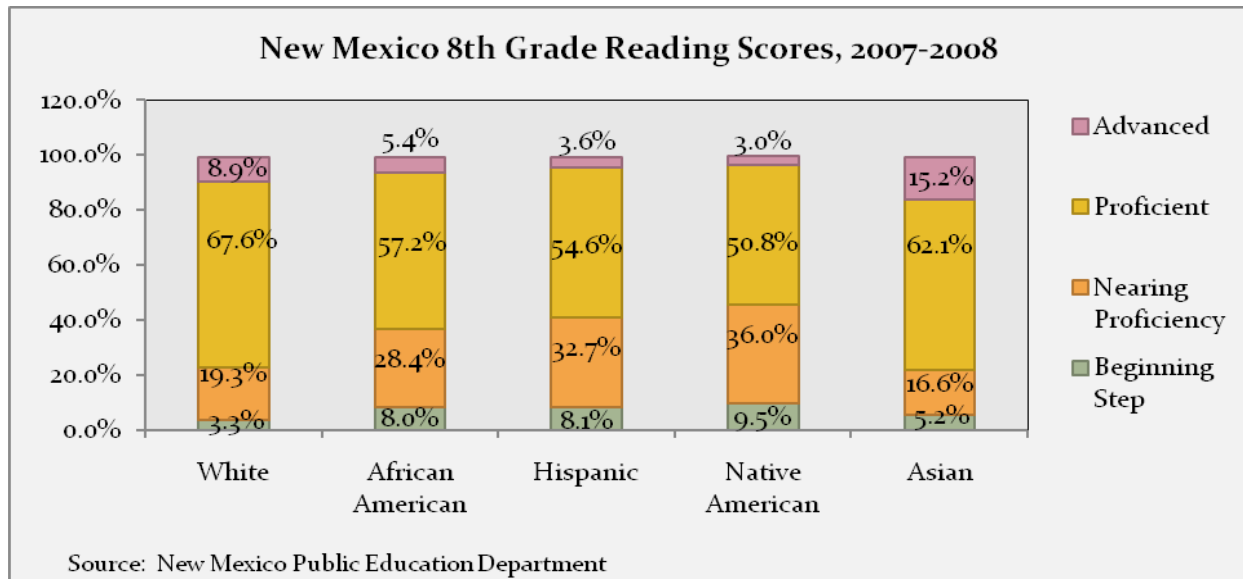
The potential for education success begins early in life. Children who begin life in poverty are at a disadvantage and their chances for success in school are diminished. Limited access to health care (both pre- and post-natal) and high quality early care and education programs, among other obstacles, can affect a child's school readiness. A history of structural racism has meant greater poverty for children of color.



Reading and math scores among fourth-graders serve as one predictor of success in a child's education, which is a predictor of success later in life. These scores reveal the same disparities by race and ethnicity.



These patterns continue into the eighth grade.



New Mexico is a minority-majority state and the state's economic future depends on having an educated workforce. As children of color constitute the majority of the child population (69 percent), it is critical to tackle these disparities now. When these children grow up, they will need to have the basic skills and knowledge required for work and college. Skills and education translate to higher wages, which mean more discretionary income, which, in turn, fuels greater economic activity. Policy makers and all New Mexicans have a stake in confronting this challenge now.