



STUDENTS AT A GLANCE:  
**Summer Melt**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Exit surveys capture valuable data on high school senior plans for after graduation.

About 29% of PPS high school seniors planning to enroll in college will not successfully matriculate; this phenomenon is called “summer melt.”

Although not all summer melt is bad, it affects different groups at different rates.

Historically underserved students and students planning to attend 2-year colleges are most affected by summer melt.

Outreach to students and families before and after graduation can reduce summer melt.



**BACKGROUND**

**What is Summer Melt?**

“Summer melt” is the term for when high school graduates who plan to enroll in college ultimately do not enroll in the fall after graduation<sup>1</sup>. Nationally, fall enrollment is defined as enrollment in an institution as of its fall reporting date, typically August 1 through October 31<sup>2</sup>.

**What is the Scope of Summer Melt?**

This phenomenon affects students enrolling at all types of postsecondary institutions, including 4-year colleges and universities, 2-year colleges, and technical/trade schools. Nationwide, it affects 10-40% of students planning to enroll in college<sup>2</sup>. Studies suggest that students from low- and middle-income and historically underserved backgrounds experience summer melt to a greater extent than White, Asian, and more affluent students<sup>3</sup>. For students intending to enroll in community colleges, rates of melt are higher than for students planning to attend a 4-year college or university<sup>1</sup>.

**Does PPS have a “Summer Melt” issue?**

Using senior exit survey and National Student Clearinghouse data, System Planning and Performance investigated whether students’ college enrollment matched their post-graduation plans.

**METHOD**

Every year, seniors typically complete an exit survey in the Spring prior to graduation. In this survey, they indicate whether they plan to attend a four-year college or university, a community college, or a technical or trade school. These data were matched with National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data on college enrollments for the 2012-13 cohort. Most but not all 4- and 2-year colleges and universities report to NSC. Trade/technical schools and community colleges are included as 2-year colleges.

Summary statistics and chi-squared analyses were conducted to test for differences of proportions across groups.

**DATA**

Districtwide, summer melt affected approximately 29% of college-intending seniors. This rate is similar even when considering students who enrolled in a different type of school than planned. These rates were higher among historically underserved students and were statistically significant for those planning to attend 4-year colleges/universities.

Although some students plan to enroll in a 4-year college and eventually enroll in a 2-year college (or vice versa), these students (N=59) only account for only 12% of summer melt at PPS.



RESEARCH BRIEF:  
**Summer Melt**

**DISTRICTWIDE – PLANNED VS ACTUAL ENROLLMENT**

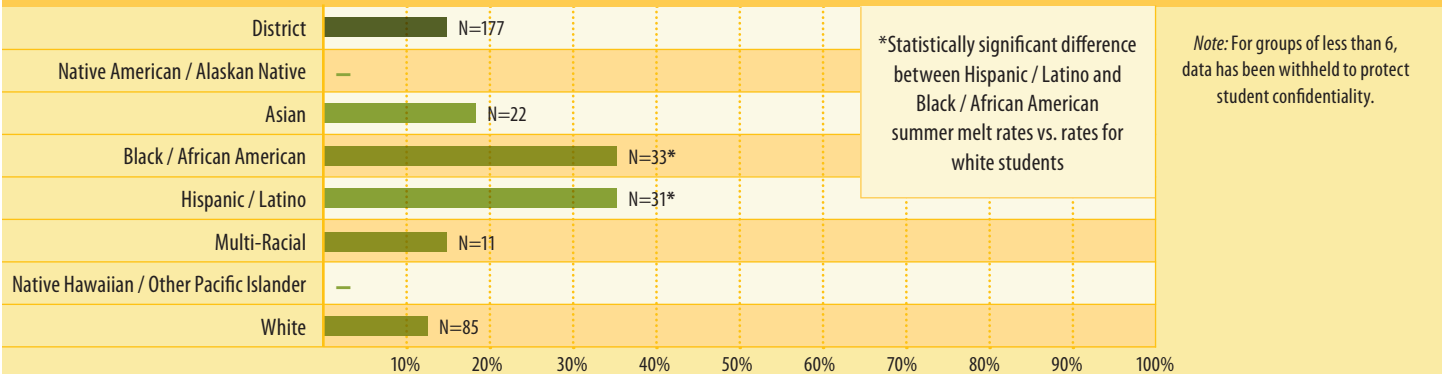
Plans after High School	# Respondents	% of Respondents	# Plans Match Actual Enrollment	% Plans Match Actual Enrollment	# Summer Melt (Plan-Actual)	% Summer Melt
Planning to attend a 2-year or 4-year	1620	86%	1143	71%	-477	-29%
2-year	538	29%	246	46%	-292	-54%
4-year	1082	58%	897	83%	-185	-17%

**BY RACE – PLANNED VS ACTUAL 4-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT**

Race	# Planning to Attend 4 year	# Actually Enrolled	% Actually Enrolled	# Difference	% Difference
Native American / Alaskan Native	–	–	–	–	–
Asian	128	106	83%	-22	-17%
Black / African American	94	61	65%	-33	-35%***
Hispanic / Latino	89	58	65%	-31	-35%***
Multi-Racial	69	58	84%	-11	-16%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	–	–	–	–	–
White	693	608	88%	-85	-12%

Note: For groups of 6 or less, data has been withheld to protect student confidentiality; \*\*\* = compared to White group, significantly higher summer melt at p<0.001.

**SUMMER MELT – 4-YEAR COLLEGES**



**BY RACE PLANNED VS ACTUAL 2-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT**

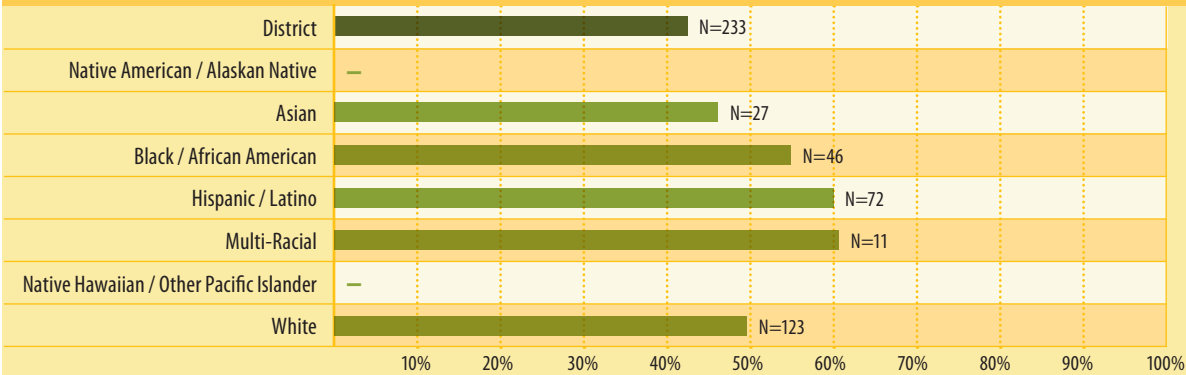
Race	# Planning to Attend 2 year	# Actually Enrolled	% Actually Enrolled	# Difference	% Difference
Native American / Alaskan Native	–	–	–	–	–
Asian	58	31	53%	-27	-47%
Black / African American	85	39	46%	-46	-54%
Hispanic / Latino	121	49	40%	-72	-60%
Multi-Racial	18	7	39%	-11	-61%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	–	–	–	–	–
White	283	115	48%	-123	-52%

Note: For groups of 6 or less, data has been withheld to protect student confidentiality.



RESEARCH BRIEF:  
**Summer Melt**

**SUMMER MELT- 2-YEAR COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**



Note: For groups of less than 6, data has been withheld to protect student confidentiality.

**BY HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS – PLANNED VS ACTUAL ENROLLMENT**

	# with Post Secondary Education Plans	# Actually Enrolled in Planned School Type	% Actually Enrolled
Historically Underserved	416	283	68%
Not Historically Underserved	1204	1004	83%

Note : Historically underserved (HU) races/ethnicities include Black / African American, Hispanic / Latino, Native American / Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander students. HU students successfully enrolled in planned school type at a lower rate than not historically underserved students (p<0.001).

**WHAT CAUSES SUMMER MELT?**

There are many reasons why a college-intending student may not enroll. Some students plan to have a gap year prior to college in order to consider the best fit for their goals or to save money prior to enrolling<sup>4</sup>. Financial concerns and lack of social support for completing the tasks related to enrolling in college (such as registering, completing forms, and receiving and responding to communication from schools) are also common reasons for failure to enroll<sup>1</sup>.

**HOW CAN PPS PREVENT MELT?**

Summer counseling and reminder campaigns (such as via text messages or social media) are among possible interventions for high school seniors<sup>1,2</sup>. Prior to graduation, seniors may also be guided in developing summer plans and checklists for the many tasks that they must complete prior to enrollment. PPS already has a method for collecting senior post-graduation plans and could use these to target students with relevant supports such as digital reminders or summer counseling.

**FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

**Could partnering with local colleges decrease Summer Melt?**

What kinds of support do colleges currently provide?

**What types of support are most needed?**

Resources could include FAFSA completion assistance, emotional and social support through counseling, and reminders to complete various enrollment and orientation tasks.

**REFERENCES**

- 1 Castleman, B. L., Page, L. C., & Snowdon, A. L. (2013). Strategic Data Project summer melt handbook: A guide to investigating and responding to summer melt. Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard University. Retrieved from <http://cepr.harvard.edu/ceprresources/files/newsevents/sdpsummermelthandbook.pdf>
- 2 US Department of Education (2015). *Fall enrollment*. Retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/VisFaqView.aspx?mode=reg&id=3&show=all>
- 3 Roderick, M., Nagaoka, J., Coca, V., & Moeller, E. (2008). *From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College. Research Report*. Consortium on Chicago School Research. 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.
- 4 Castleman, B. L., Page, L. C., & Schooley, K. (2014). The Forgotten Summer: Does the Offer of College Counseling After High School Mitigate Summer Melt Among College-Intending, Low-Income High School Graduates?. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 33(2), 320344.