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An Education About Education Data: Embedded Librarians, Education Students, and a Data Odyssey

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An Education About Education Data: Embedded Librarians, Education Students, and a Data Odyssey

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University of Northern Iowa

Rod Library and Department of Ed Psych and Foundations

2019 ILA/ACRL & IPAL Spring Conference

Mount Mercy University

Cedar Rapids, IA

Agenda

- Instructor's goals for the course & How did this collaboration get started?
- First session - introduction to advanced Google searching, Google Scholar, ERIC
- Subsequent research days focused on:
 - locating local data state and district level data for Iowa
 - locating national and state-by-state level data
 - locating relevant research articles
 - allowing for failure (what if our topic doesn't work?)
 - lots of consulting with librarian and primary professor throughout
- Consulting with other experts (on campus and off)
- Takeaways

Among the instructor's goals for the course and project:

- Students will become skilled at locating and assessing both archived education data and research about current educational topics. They will become familiar with quality sources of educational information such as ERIC, NCES, the Iowa State Department of Education, and the Iowa State Data Center.
- Students will understand the imperfect nature of secondary research in education, including unavailable, outdated, or incomplete information.
- Students will learn how knowledge about education in the U.S. and Iowa is created, contribute to what is known, and identify opportunities for further inquiry.

Why the collaboration with librarians?

- Lots of students playing with lots of information.
- Topics and questions needed a lot of real-time refining.
- Statistics are trouble! Data likes to hide!
- Having enough veteran researchers on hand to offer alternative approaches and encouragement.
- Librarians help model non-linear, flexible, and iterative research approaches.

That first session. Showing off the free tools of the trade.

- Google - how and why to focus?
- Google Scholar - techniques for finding relevant/current research.
- ERIC - a focused alternative for education research.
- These are some of the only databases they graduate with.

Research Days - Students Explored/Researched the following factors

Class generated a list of possible factors that might correlate with low dropout rates, including:

Personal Characteristics of Students:

- Disability
- Mental Health
- Gender, Ethnicity
- Teen Pregnancy
- Academic Achievement
- Substance Abuse
- School Attendance
- Socioeconomic Status
- Student Engagement


Community/School Characteristics

- Crime Rate
- Community Size
- Teacher Pay
- Teacher Preparation
- Summer Reading Programs
- Alternative Schools

Research Days - Locating Local Data (District and State of Iowa)

- Education Research
- Social Sciences Research
- Search Tips
- School Districts
- Dropout Data
- Demographic Data
- More Data
- History of High Schools
- Help?

Iowa Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates




IOWA
Department of Education

- [Iowa Dropout and Graduation Rates](#)
Dropouts by school district since 1991.
State dropout rates - total, by race, by economic status.

=====
Graduation rates by school district, building, and subgroup.
Graduation trend data.
State graduation rates - total, by race, by economic status.

National Dropout Rates (Status Dropout Rates)



- [Dropout Rates - Comparisons by State](#)
Try using advanced Google searches such as:


intitle:dropout

intitle:dropouts

intitle:dropout "Iowa"

intitle:state "dropout" "rate"

ies NCES Dropout/Completion Report: 2014



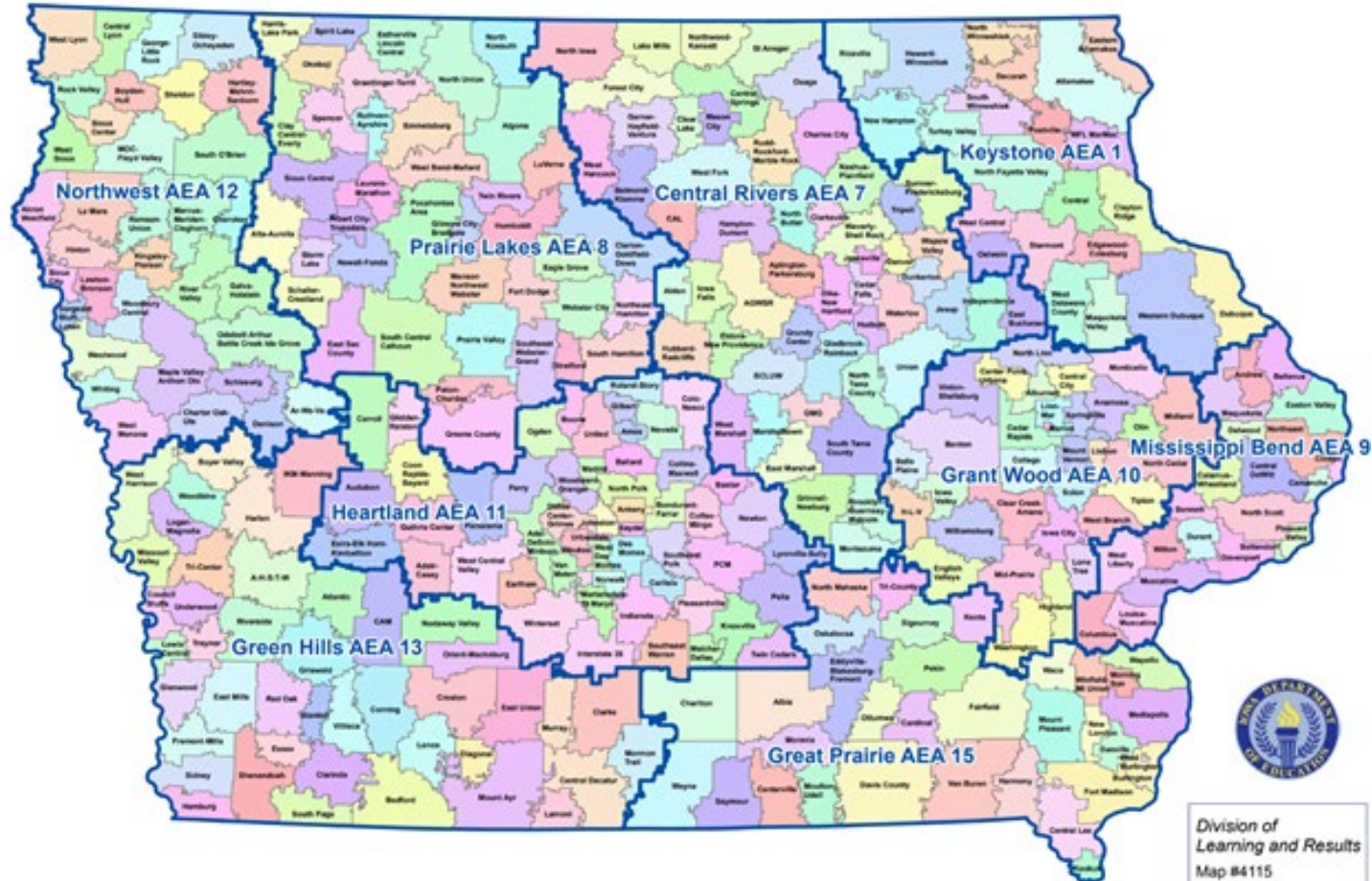
Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2014 is the recent (2018) NCES review of dropout trends and high school completion rates in the U.S. This is an excellent source for a deeper understanding of these national trends and how these statistics are reported. **Use Ctrl-F or Command-F (MAC/Apple) to search for a specific state or demographic variable.**

- [Previous Reports \(1993-2013\)](#)

Research Days - Data difficulties encountered:

Iowa school districts and Iowa counties don't correspond.

Iowa Area Education Agencies and School Districts 2018-19





Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates

This webpage provides data including four- and five-year graduation rates and dropout rates for Iowa public schools.

Graduation Rate News

[Graduation rate edges up to all-time high](#) (2019-03-13)

Contact(s)

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kim.wilson@iowa.gov

- Graduation Rates by District, by Subgroup: [2018](#), [2017](#), [2016](#), [2015](#), [2014](#), [2013](#), [2012](#), [2011](#), [2010](#), [2009](#)
- Graduation Rates by Building, by Subgroup: [2018](#), [2017](#), [2016](#), [2015](#), [2014](#), [2013](#), [2012](#), [2011](#), [2010](#), [2009](#)
- Combined Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates Data: [2017-2018](#), [2016-2017](#), [2015-2016](#), [2014-2015](#), [2013-2014](#), [2012-2013](#), [2011-2012](#), [2010-2011](#)



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Article

Talk

List of school districts in Iowa

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

See also: [Category:School districts in Iowa](#)

This is a **list of school districts in Iowa**.

Adair County

- [Nodaway Valley Community School District](#)
- [Orient-Macksburg Community School District](#)

Adams County

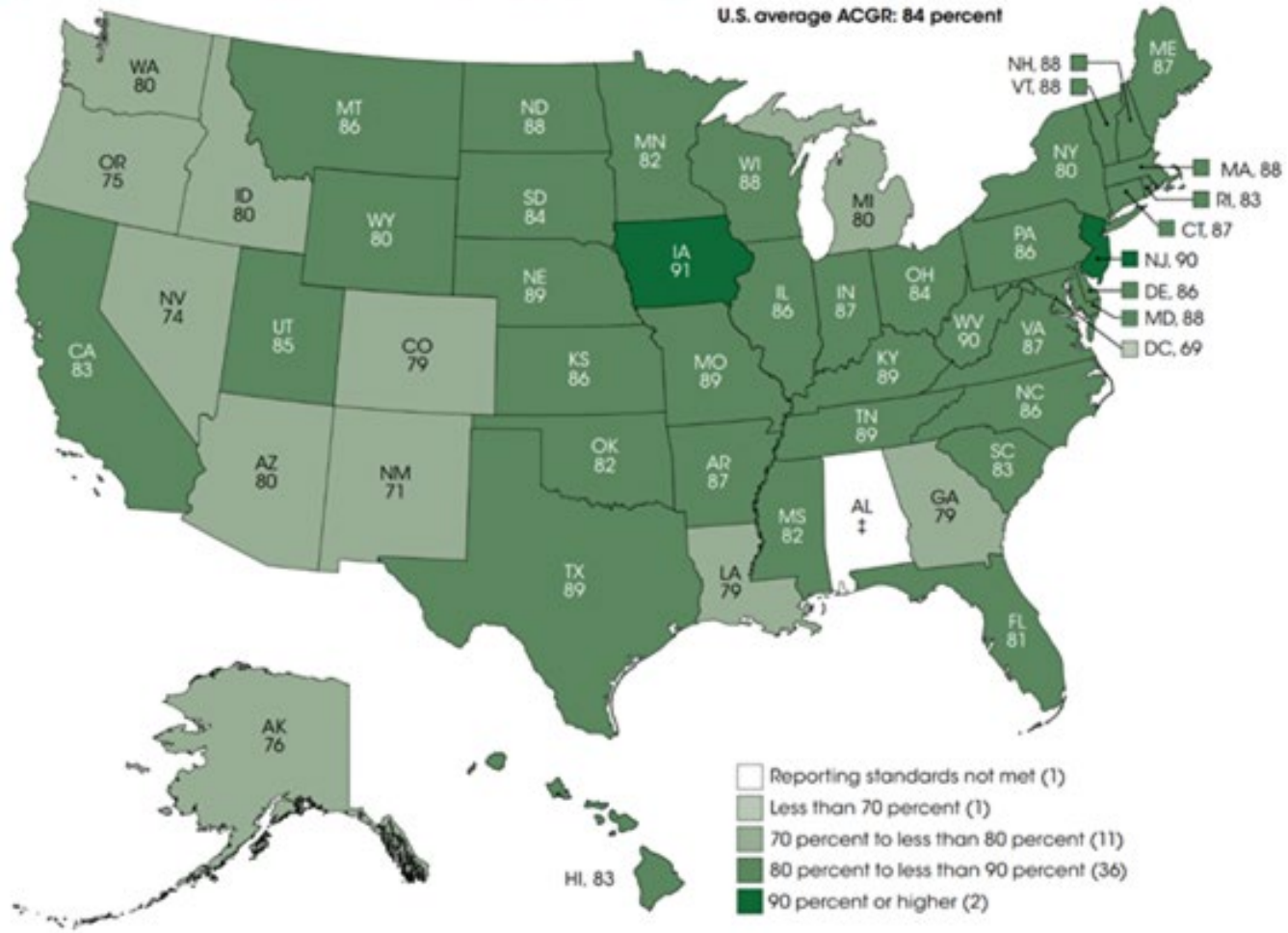
- [Corning Community School District](#)
- [Prescott Community School District](#)

Allamakee County

- [Allamakee Community School District](#)
- [Eastern Allamakee Community School District](#)
- [Postville Community School District](#)

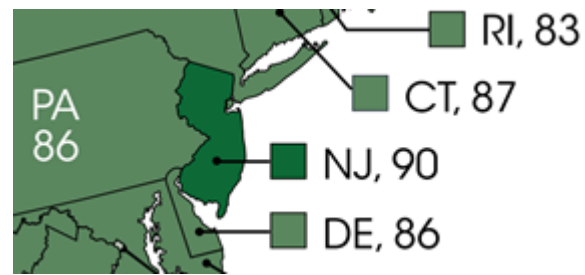
Research Days - Locating National and State-by-State Data

Figure 1. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students, by state: 2015-16



Research Days - Difficulties encountered at the national level

- Different states have different reporting conventions.
- Some states simply don't record or report certain variables.
- Iowa and New Jersey have very similar graduation/dropout rates - but how similar are these two states?



Research Days - Finding research

- Being able to actually limit to empirical studies (ERIC vs Google Scholar)
- Some topics lack extensive research:
 - summer reading programs
 - teacher preparation
 - student engagement

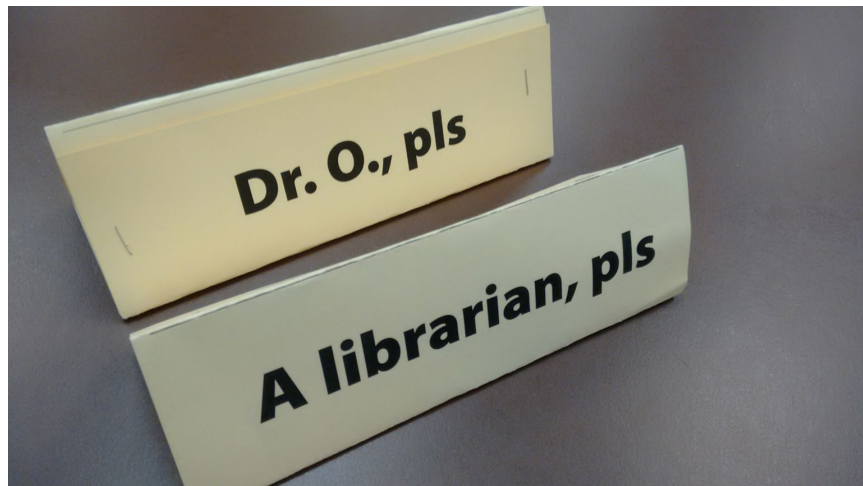
Research Days - Allowing for failure

- What happens if our topic doesn't work?
 - determining topic viability before too many weeks go by (based on lots of professor-student feedback)
 - if topic failed - documenting methods and what WAS found
 - drawing conclusions if possible about why there isn't much research
 - providing team with a new (easier) topic

Research Days - lots of consulting with librarian and primary professor.

Both librarians attended ten 75 minute in-class research sessions each semester.

Librarians were also available outside of class for research consultations and email reference questions.



Research Days - Consulting with other experts (on campus and off).

- Consulting with other education professors
- Visiting public schools to learn more about special programs (e.g., alternative education programs)
- Calls to school districts and the State Dept. of Education
- Q&A with guest speakers.
(e.g., questions about special ed funding posed to guest speaker on state education policy)

Takeaways

- Helping students to come to terms with uncertainty/messiness in the world. Learning to live with complexity. No easy answers. Standards for data collection vary over time and from state to state.
- Questioning those in authority (or those who are seeking power) who oversimplify challenges in education.
- Developing some facility with finding higher quality, publicly available information and the infrastructure that gathers this information/data (NCES, Census, BLS, CDC, etc.)
[.gov vs. .com]
- Developing skills with and knowledge that will help them in later classes and education (Research Methods, graduate school, etc.)

References

American Library Association. (February 9, 2015). Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Retrieved from: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

Rumberger, R. (2011). Dropping out : Why students drop out of high school and what can be done about it. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

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Thank You!

Questions? Comments?