

THE CLASS

As Denver Public Schools wrestles with how to improve its high schools and increase the number of students who graduate, the Rocky Mountain News decided to examine what happened to one class from eighth grade through graduation. The News partnered with the district and Alan Davis, an associate professor at the University of Colorado at Denver, to dissect DPS student data — without knowing names or addresses — for the eighth-graders who attended DPS in the fall of 1999. The study found that a third of those eighth-graders — and 43 percent of those who went on to ninth-grade in DPS — graduated from DPS. The study also examined suspensions, attendance, grades, income and other information about the class. Numbers for dropouts and students who transferred outside DPS reflect only students who permanently left DPS, not those who were in and out over the four years.

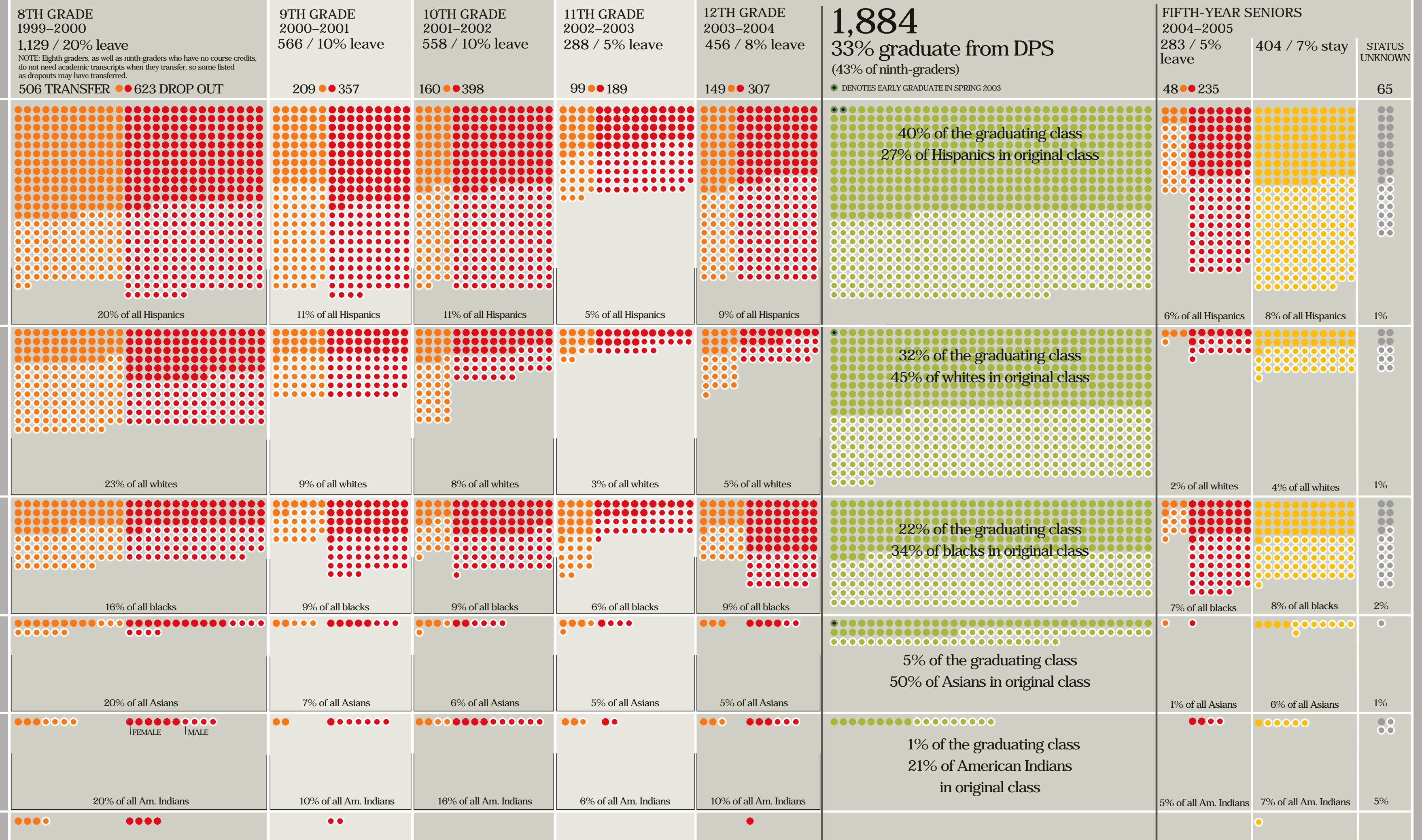
GRADUATED 33% of those who started eighth-grade; 43% of those who started ninth-grade • **DROPPED OUT** 37% of those who started eighth grade; 32% of those who started ninth-grade • **TRANSFERRED** 21% of those who started eighth-grade; 15% of those who started ninth-grade • **STILL IN SCHOOL FOR FIFTH YEAR** 7% of those who started eighth-grade; 9% of those who started ninth-grade • **SUSPENSIONS/DISCIPLINE** 44% suspended — of those, 50% graduated; 56% not suspended — of those, 79% graduated • **GRADE POINT AVERAGE** Average GPA*: 1.87 (C-) to 2.27 (C) over four years for the entire class; 0.87 (D-) to 1.11 (D) for dropouts; 2.81 (B-) to 2.86 (B-) for graduates; 1.30 (D) to 1.48 (D+) for those still in school for a fifth year; 0.97 (D-) to 1.51 (D+)** for those who transferred elsewhere • **ATTENDANCE** Average days missed yearly per student: 25 for the total class; 53 for dropouts; 14 for graduates; 34 for those still in school for fifth year • **FALLING BEHIND** 27% fell behind a grade or more by what should have been their senior year • **INCOME** Among those who started ninth-grade, excluding those who transferred elsewhere, 42% of low-income students graduated; 69% of non-poor students graduated. FOR AN EXPLANATION OF HOW THE STUDY WAS DONE, SEE S2.

5,633 students begin eighth grade in DPS in the fall of 1999

● TRANSFER
● DROP OUT
● FEMALE
● MALE

Hispanic 50% of the class

- Out of 2,786 who began 8th grade:
- 27% graduated from DPS (35% of 9th-graders).
- 42% dropped out.
- 22% transferred to another district.
- 8% still in high school for fifth year.
- 1% unknown.
- Dropouts outnumbered graduates, 1,167 to 759.
- Dropouts tended to leave before 11th grade.
- 54% to 64%, depending on the year, had a grade point average below 2.0 (C), compared with about half of all students in the class.
- Accounted for 57% of students in the class who were still in high school for a fifth year.
- Accounted for 59% of students behind by at least a grade, based on course credits, by fall 2003, which should have been their senior year. Hispanics made up 46% of the class by then.
- 39% of low-income Hispanics graduated, compared with 59% of non-poor Hispanics, excluding students who transferred.
- 47% of Hispanics were disciplined or suspended, accounting for 48% of disciplinary actions.



NOTE: Some totals may not equal 100% because of rounding

* Range represents high and low of yearly GPA average. Overall GPA was not calculated because students varied year to year because of those in this class going in and out of DPS. **Includes almost half with no GPA recorded, which may indicate transfer occurred before a GPA was established

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