

# ACTIVE CITIZENS FOR EDUCATION

## WHITE PAPERS ON EDUCATION

**Purpose:** to present independent information and analyses about key educational issues concerning curriculum, instruction, administration and operation of concern to the Madison Metropolitan School District and to the community-at-large.

The reader is requested to keep in mind that as additional information becomes available these papers will be updated.

## RETENTION RATES

**Background:** The Madison Metropolitan School District has one of the highest costs per pupil of any school district in the state (\$12,500, 2004-05). Madison District officials state that the high cost per student is needed in order to achieve success in many of the important academic areas. This paper compares retention rates of the Madison School District, (the number of pupils who were not passed to the next grade level) with four other districts: Appleton, Green Bay, Kenosha and Racine. Retention occurs when a student has not made progress in a prescribed course of study. A pupil is considered retained if:

- v a pupil needs an additional year to complete a prescribed program
- v a pupil in grades kindergarten through eight must repeat a grade
- v a pupil in high school (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior years) does not have enough credits equal to or more than one-seventh of the district's high school requirement

Retentions are reported for grades kindergarten through 12. Calculation of the retention rate is attained by dividing the number of retentions by the total K-12 enrollment, and expressing the quotient as a percentage. The statistical data for this white paper was based on data obtained for the 2002-03 academic year.

**Analysis:** A review of the statistical data shows that when the Madison School District is compared against all Wisconsin school districts, the Madison retention rate for high school students is nearly double that of the state-wide school district rate for high schools (11.84% vs. 6.019%). In comparison to Racine, a district of similar size, Madison's overall retention rate (all grades) is higher than that of Racine (4.350% vs. 3.350%). Only Milwaukee (4.932%), Kenosha (5.230%) and Green Bay (5.500%) have higher overall retention rates than to Madison. Comparative data can be reviewed by referring to the attached graphs: "% of Students Not Advanced," "Comparative Retention Rates of Total Enrollments" and "Comparative Performance Results."

## Questions to Consider upon Reviewing the Data:

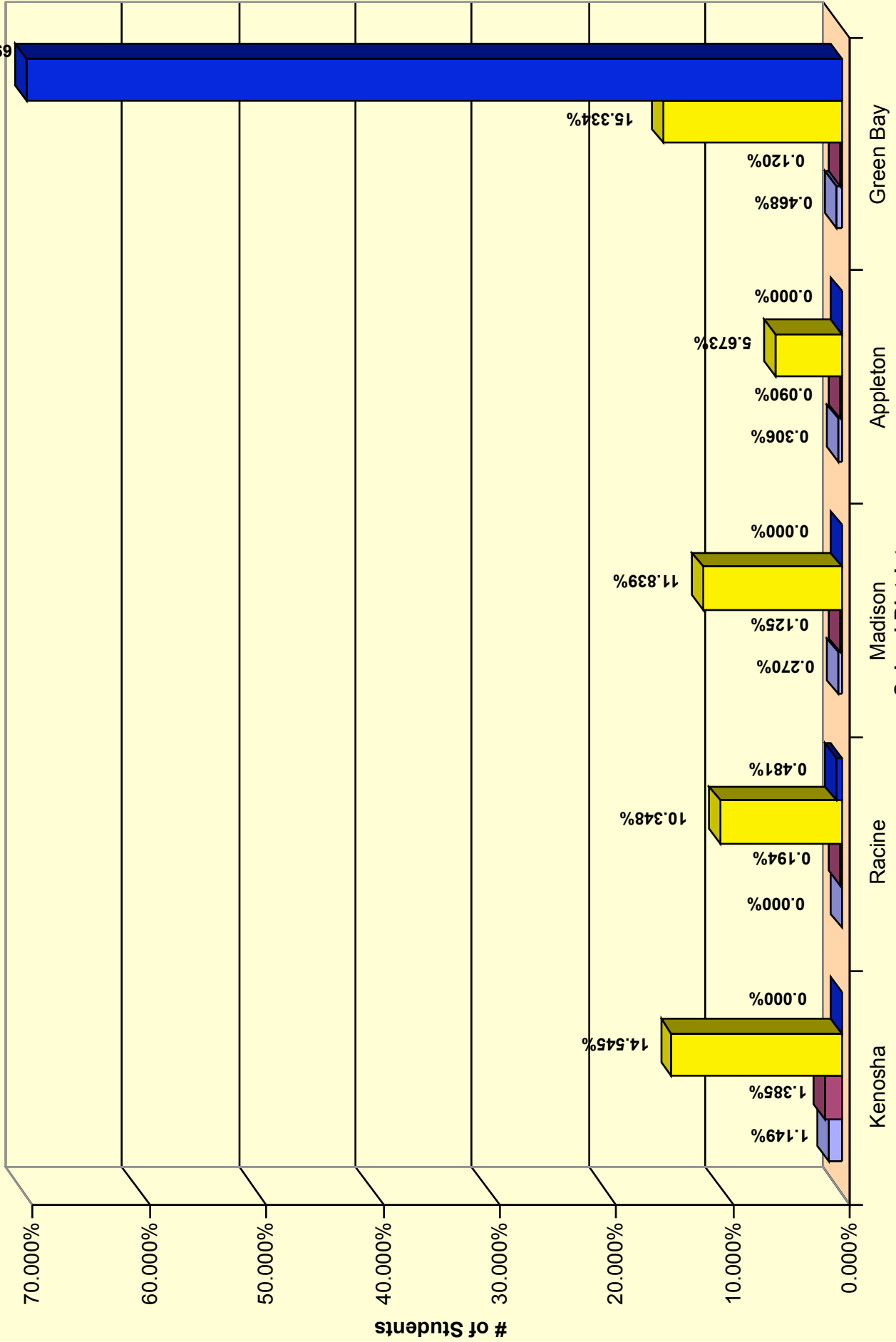
- How does MMSD make grade advancement decisions?
- How do grade advancement requirements compare to those of other schools or districts?
- Why do pupils not advance?
- What can be done to ensure all students advance?
- What happens when a pupil does not advance?
- What success do retained pupils have in the remediation process and after ultimate promotion?
- How do grade advancement policies consider students with special needs?

## Notes:

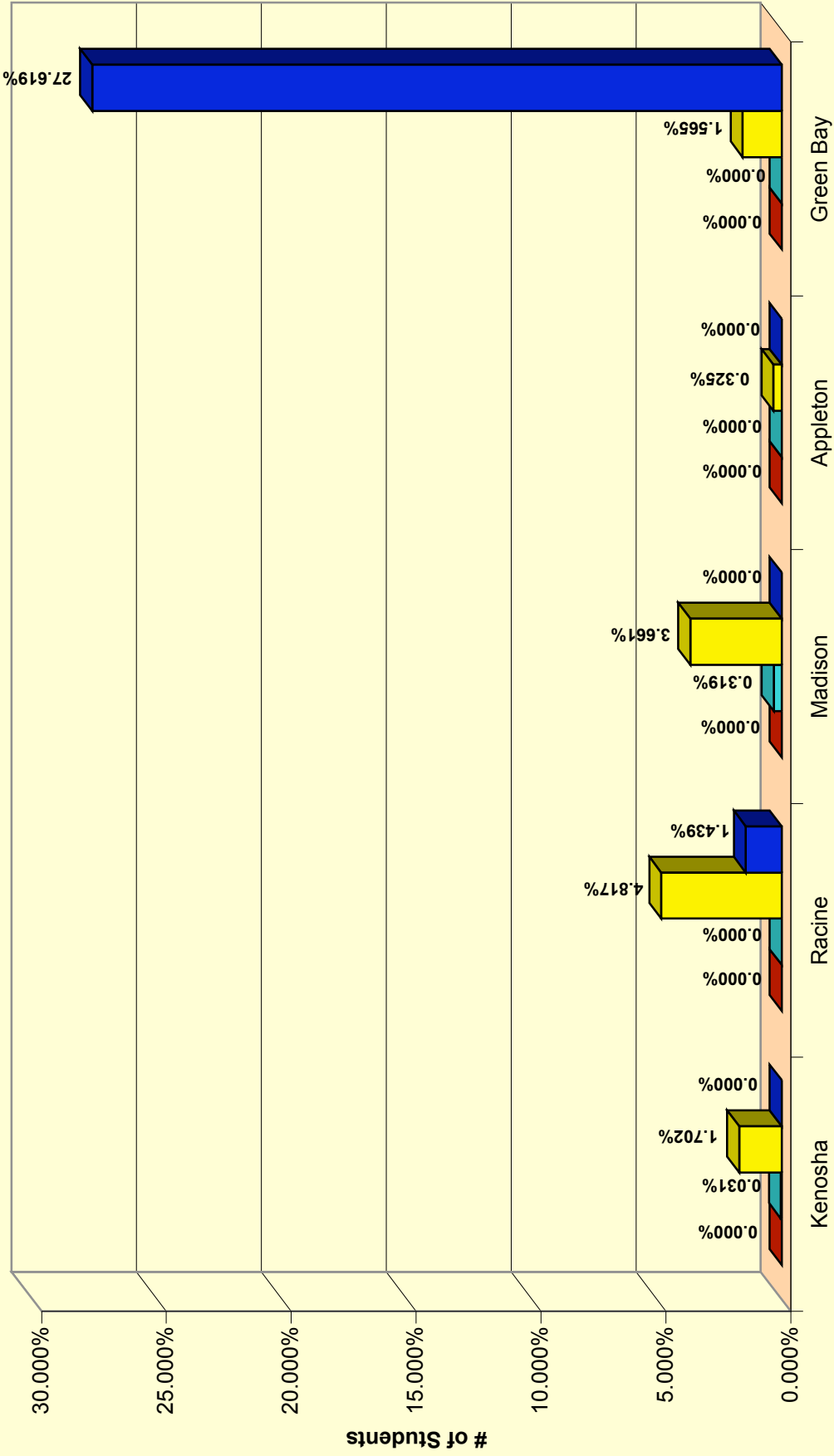
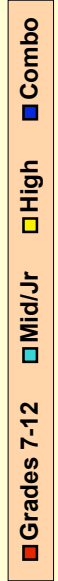
1. Statistical data was obtained from the web site of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The data is compiled by the DPI as reported to them on a standard form by the school districts of Wisconsin. The address for the DPI web site is <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/>. Specifically, data analysis was obtained from the web site using the resource referred to as "Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sig/index.html>. Additional data was obtained from School Facts 03 published by the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance.
2. Active Citizens for Education (ACE) is a Madison based non-profit, non-partisan organization committed to identifying, analyzing and presenting reliable information about issues concerning curriculum, instruction, administration and operation of the Madison Metropolitan School District. It is expected this information will assist in stimulating wide-spread public debate and increasing enlightened decision-making by the public and policy-makers to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and performance of the Board of Education, administration, staff and pupils of the District. Contact: ACE, Don Severson, President at P.O. Box 2153, Madison, WI 53701; 608/238-8300; [donleader@aol.com](mailto:donleader@aol.com)
3. For further information please refer to these additional documents by Active Citizens for Education:
  - a. "Comparative Performance Results" chart of academic test results.
  - b. "District Administration Costs & Administration Staffing Levels" comparing MMSD with four peer districts.
  - c. "Community Service Fund (80)" describes community service programs and financial issues.
  - d. "Per Pupil Costs" comparing MMSD with four peer districts.

Revised: 09/01/04

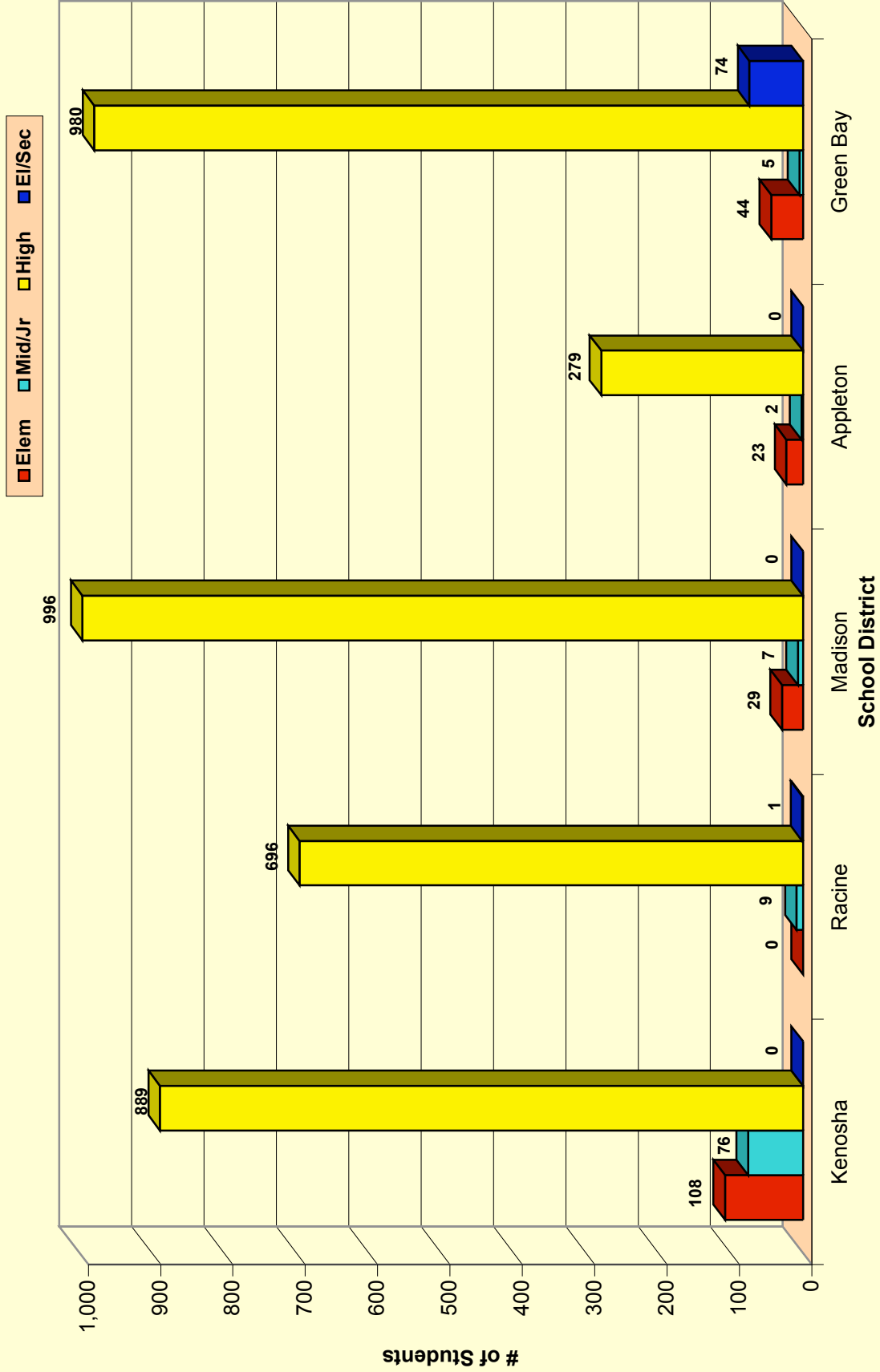
**% Students Not Advanced**



# Drop Out Rates - % by School District



# Students Not Advanced



# Total Enrollment - Not Advanced Comparison

