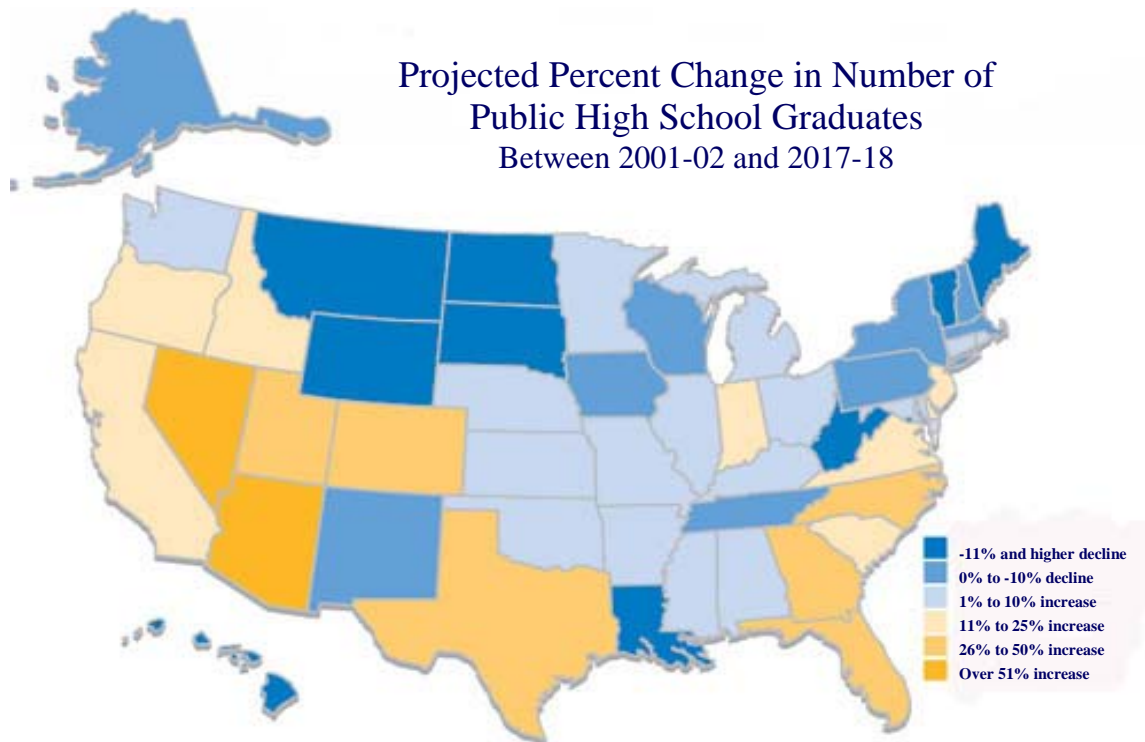


Synopsis: The number of high school graduates nationwide is projected to peak in 2008-09, with 3.2 million students earning a high school diploma. After that, there will be a slow but steady decline in high school numbers and graduates in most parts of the country. However, South Dakota's decline will be more pronounced. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, in a study just published, estimates a 16.5 percent reduction in high school graduates in South Dakota between 2001-02 and 2017-18.

While the graduating class of 2009 nationwide is expected to be the largest in history, South Dakota faces quite a different challenge. Although South Dakota's population increased by 8.5 percent between 1990 and 2000, the state is projected to see fewer high school graduates in 2017-18 than it had in 2001-02, according to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). WICHE recently issued its study based on updated data from state and federal sources.

As South Dakota faces declining numbers of high school graduates and a corresponding decline in the traditional college-age (18-24) population, the challenges are many. What are the implications for the state's public education system—both K-12 and higher education?

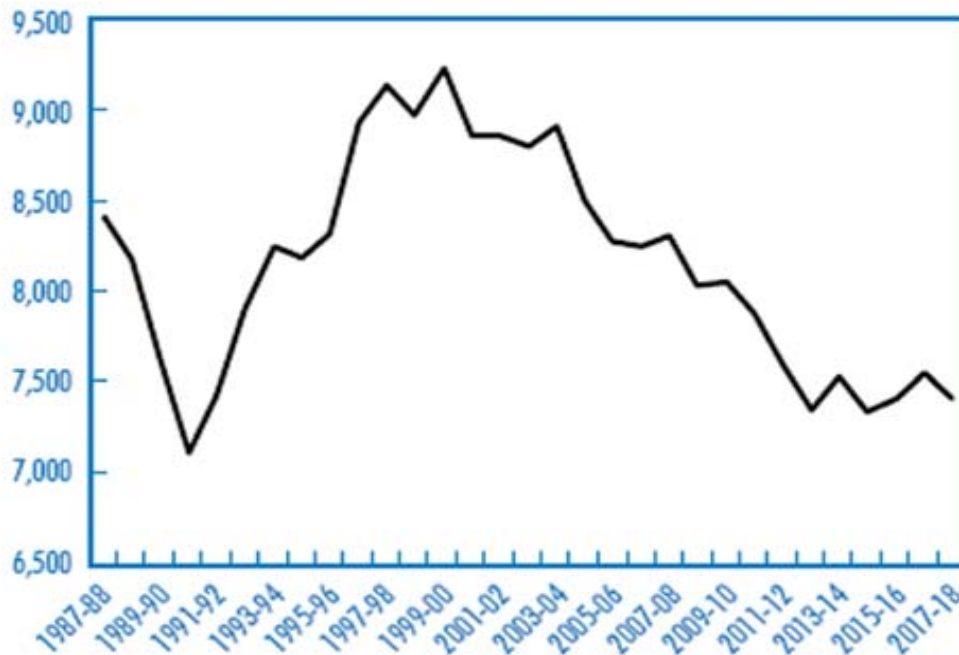


Source: WICHE, December 2003

The number of public high school graduates in South Dakota is projected to decrease to 7,404 in 2017-18, a 16.5 percent decline over 2001-02. Taking a look at South Dakota,

education analysts predict “the years from 2002-03 through 2017-18 will see low growth or losses in the number of public high school graduates, with annual reductions of 2 to 3 percent in many years” (WICHE, Knocking at the College Door, December 2003).

South Dakota Public High School Graduates
1987-88 to 2001-02 (actual), 2002-03 to 2017-18 (projected)



Source: WICHE, December 2003

Projected Public High School Graduates - Midwestern States

	1987-88 Graduates	2001-02 Graduates	Percent change from 1987-88 to 2001-02	2017-18 Graduates	Percent change from 2001-02 to 2017-18
Illinois	119,090	116,600	-2.09	126,213	8.24
Indiana	65,013	56,156	-13.62	63,245	12.62
Iowa	35,461	33,789	-4.72	31,512	-6.74
Kansas	27,036	29,509	9.15	29,685	0.60
Michigan	103,918	93,653	-9.88	99,269	6.00
Minnesota	51,266	57,440	12.04	58,135	1.21
Missouri	51,316	54,301	5.82	54,790	0.90
Nebraska	18,372	19,387	5.52	19,152	-1.21
North Dakota	8,438	8,084	-4.2	5,613	-30.57
Ohio	124,503	107,576	-13.6	108,820	1.16
South Dakota	8,415	8,865	5.35	7,404	-16.48
Wisconsin	58,438	60,575	3.66	58,109	-4.07

Source: Prepared by Midwestern Higher Education Compact Office, February 2004

For the foreseeable future, South Dakota faces a “numbers” dilemma. This trend calls for careful planning by state policymakers, business, and community leaders.

The state’s 2010 Initiative, announced by Gov. Mike Rounds, is a series of specific goals for economic growth and visitor spending in the state by the year 2010, yielding opportunity and economic development for South Dakota. The state also must educate a greater proportion of high school graduates and the adult working population, while increasing its postsecondary retention and graduation rates.

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