

## Education stats show city of wise guys, gals

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By *BRIAN KATES*

NEW YORK is getting smarter.

Well, at least more of us are getting more education, says the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among New Yorkers 25 and older, 79% had at least graduated from high school in 2005, up from 72% five years ago. And 32% had a bachelor's degree or more, compared with only 27% in 2000.

Here's more good news: The percentage of high school-age dropouts in the city declined - from 11% in 2000 to 8% in 2005.

The city Education Department attributed rising graduation and lower dropout rates to an increase in programs devoted to keeping kids in school longer, including the Young Adult Borough Centers, targeting high school students who might be considering dropping out.

"The city's graduation rate has risen steadily over the past several years, and we're committed to increasing it further," said spokesman Andrew Jacob.

The number of New Yorkers 25 and older with college degrees increased in every ethnic group. The largest gains were made by Asians, whose 174,324 college grads are second only to whites.

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Census data show that 592,128 whites, 167,508 African-Americans and 129,273 Latinos had at least a bachelor's degree.

For many ambitious Asian youngsters, the striving begins by attending enrichment academies outside the regular classroom.

"In the Asian culture, schools like ours are the norm," said Amy Yoo, director of the Elite Academy in Flushing, Queens. "A lot of parents are very concerned that their children get into better colleges because they were not able to go themselves."

But, said Yoo, "Our students are becoming more and more diverse with increasing numbers of Hispanic and immigrant white kids. They see how well our Asian students are doing."