



For Immediate Release September 30, 2010

Contact: Charles Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
 Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate Rises Two Points to 85.5 Percent ***Black & Hispanic Graduation Rates up Nearly Five Points Since 2008***

More than 85 percent of the students in the class of 2010 graduated on time with a diploma, according to data reported today by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

The commonwealth's 2010 "Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate" of 85.5 percent expresses the percentage of students who were first-time ninth graders during the 2006-2007 school year and earned a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years. The 2010 graduation rate is more than two points higher than the four-year rate of 83.3 percent for the class of 2009 and more than three points higher than the four-year rate of 82.1 percent for the class of 2008.

"The success of Virginia schools in raising graduation rates is the result of a sustained student-by-student effort focused on the young people in our schools who are most challenged by the commonwealth's minimum diploma standards and who are the most susceptible to the pressures that cause students to drop out," Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. "I congratulate the thousands of teachers, counselors and administrators whose dedication to the students behind the statistics is making this progress possible."

For a sixth consecutive year, the number of Virginia students graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma increased, and the number of advanced diplomas awarded exceeded the number of Standard Diplomas. Of the 98,027 students in the 2010 cohort, 83,768, or 85.5 percent, earned a Board of Education-approved diploma:

- 44,802, or 45.7 percent, earned an Advanced Studies Diploma (including International Baccalaureate), compared with 44.2 percent of the 2009 cohort's four-year graduates and 43.6 of 2008's four-year graduates.
- 35,054, or 35.8 percent, earned a Standard Diploma
- 1,745, or 1.8 percent, earned a Modified Standard Diploma
- 2,161, or 2.2 percent, earned a Special Diploma

Modified Standard Diplomas and Special Diplomas are available only to students with disabilities.

The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is a cohort graduation rate calculated by tracking individual students from year to year using the commonwealth's longitudinal student data system. The calculation accounts for student mobility and retention. This is the third year VDOE has reported cohort graduation rates for the state, school divisions and schools.

Data presented in the 2010 cohort reports for the commonwealth, school divisions and schools include on-time graduation rates and cohort dropout rates disaggregated by student subgroup.

The graduation rates of black and Hispanic students continued to improve. The rate for black students increased 3.2 points to 78.9 percent and on-time graduation for Hispanic students increased 3.8 points to 76.1 percent. The on-time graduation rates for black and Hispanic students have each risen by 4.9 points since 2008, the first year VDOE reported cohort graduation rates.

(more)

2010 Cohort Report: State Summary

Subgroup	Adjusted Cohort	% Graduated	% GED	% Certificate	% Still Enrolled	% Dropout	% Long-term Absence
All Students	98,027	85.5%	3.4%	0.3%	2.4%	8.2%	0.3%
Female	47,892	88.1%	2.7%	0.3%	1.8%	6.7%	0.3%
Male	50,135	82.9%	4.0%	0.3%	2.9%	9.6%	0.4%
Black	26,258	78.9%	3.1%	0.5%	4.4%	12.4%	0.7%
Hispanic	7,264	76.1%	2.5%	0.6%	2.3%	18.3%	0.2%
White	57,366	88.9%	3.8%	0.1%	1.5%	5.4%	0.2%
Asian	5,190	93.9%	1.1%	0.3%	0.9%	3.7%	0%
American Indian	320	82.2%	4.7%	0%	2.8%	10.3%	0%
Native Hawaiian	92	90.2%	2.2%	0%	1.1%	6.5%	0%
Other	7,139	91.6%	1.7%	0.3%	1.4%	5.0%	0.1%
Students with Disabilities	11,680	82.6%	3.6%	0.5%	n/a	13.2%	0.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	26,147	77.6%	4.9%	0.6%	4.3%	12.2%	0.4%
Limited English (Anytime)	6,141	76.3%	1.4%	1.1%	0.7%	20.4%	0%
Migrant	34	67.6%	0%	0%	0%	32.4%	0%
Homeless	727	71.4%	4.3%	0.7%	6.7%	16.4%	0.6%

Of Virginia's 324 high schools, 183 achieved graduation rates higher than the state rate of 85.5 percent, two schools equaled the state rate and 139 were lower. Sixty-five school divisions had graduation rates higher than the state's, one division equaled the state rate and 65 divisions had rates that were lower.

Of the 98,027 students in the 2010 graduating cohort, 8,018, or 8.2 percent, dropped out (including students whose status in previous years would have been reported as undetermined); 341, or 0.3 percent, were reported as being on long-term medical/family leave or expelled for one year with the potential of returning to school.

The dropout rates of 196 schools were lower than the state rate, three schools had dropout rates equal to the state, and the dropout rates of 125 schools exceeded the state rate. Sixty-eight school divisions had dropout rates lower than the state, three had rates equal to the state rate and 60 divisions had dropout rates that were higher.

"No two high schools or school divisions are identical in the challenges they face but a diploma must be our goal for all students — regardless of where they live or their economic circumstances," said Board of Education President Eleanor B. Saslaw. "This is why the board has set aggressive objectives in the commonwealth's accountability program for raising graduation rates."

Starting this year, high schools must meet an annual benchmark for graduation and completion to earn full accreditation under the Standards of Learning (SOL) program. Schools receive full credit for students who earn diplomas and partial credit for students who remain enrolled, earn GEDs or otherwise complete high school.

(more)

“For some high schools, meeting this new standard will require planning and teamwork across grade spans to identify and support students at risk of repeating grades and not graduating,” Saslaw said. “While this does require an additional effort for school divisions during a challenging time, it is the right thing to do for young people, and I am grateful to the General Assembly for not delaying this new accreditation standard.”

The Board of Education also requires that at least 80 percent of students earn a standard or advanced diploma within six years of entering high school for a school or division to earn a positive accountability rating under federal education law.

Five-Year Cohort Report for Class of 2009

VDOE also released new data for the class of 2009 showing that 1,422 students returned for a fifth year of high school and earned diplomas. Their achievement resulted in a five-year graduation rate for the class of 2009 of 84.8 percent compared with a four-year, on-time rate of 83.3 percent.

“There is no final buzzer in education,” Wright said. “I hope these young men and women who persevered and accomplished their goals will inspire others to stay in the game and not leave the court until they have earned a diploma.”

High school cohort reports for schools, school divisions and the commonwealth are available for viewing and downloading in the Virginia School Report Card section of the VDOE Web site (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/cohort_reports/index.shtml).

###