



For Immediate Release

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Virginia's On-Time Graduation Rate Rises to 86.6 Percent More Students Earn Advanced Diplomas as Dropout Rate Again Falls

Virginia's on-time high school graduation rate rose one point this year to 86.6 percent, and the statewide dropout rate fell one point to 7.2 percent, according to data reported today by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Fifty-five percent of the diplomas earned by 2011 graduates were Advanced Studies Diplomas.

The 2011 on-time graduation rate expresses the percentage of students who were first-time ninth graders during the 2007-2008 school year and earned a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years. On-time graduation has increased by 4.5 points since 2008, the first year VDOE reported graduation rates for the state, school divisions and high schools based on student-level data that fully account for student mobility, promotion and retention.

"A one-point increase in the graduation rate means that nearly 1,000 more young Virginians are beginning their adult lives with the diploma they need to pursue further education and training or an entry-level job," Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. "The progress our schools have made in raising graduation rates is due the efforts of hundreds of teachers, counselors, principals and other educators across the commonwealth who refused to give up on even the most challenging students."

The percentage of Virginia students graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma again increased, and the number of advanced diplomas awarded exceeded the number of Standard Diplomas. Of the 97,865 students in the 2011 cohort, 84,742, or 86.6 percent, earned a Board of Education-approved diploma.

- 46,318, or 47.3 percent, earned an Advanced Studies Diploma (including International Baccalaureate), compared with 45.7 percent of the 2010 cohort and 44.2 percent of the 2009 cohort.
- 34,646, or 35.4 percent, earned a Standard Diploma.
- 1,669, or 1.7 percent, earned a Modified Standard Diploma.
- 2,108, or 2.2 percent, earned a Special Diploma.

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

The graduation rates of black and Hispanic students continued to improve. The rate for black students increased 1.4 points to 80.3 percent, and on-time graduation for Hispanic students increased 3 points to 79.1 percent. The on-time graduation rate for black students has risen 6.3 points, and the rate for Hispanic students has risen by 7.9 points since 2008, the first year VDOE reported cohort graduation rates.

High schools must now meet an annual benchmark for graduation and completion to earn full accreditation under Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) accountability 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. The ratings announced last month were the first to include this new accountability factor for high schools.

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"Virginia has shown that it is possible for a state to raise diploma standards without a negative, long-term impact on high school graduation rates," said Board President Eleanor B. Saslaw. "The Board of Education will continue to hold high schools accountable for graduation as the commonwealth implements even more rigorous standards in English and mathematics designed to increase college-and-career readiness."

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 "adequate yearly progress" rating under the federal No Child Left Behind education law.

2011 Cohort Report: State Summary

Subgroup	Adjusted Cohort	% Graduated	% GED	% Certificate	% Still Enrolled	% Dropout	% Long-term Absence
All Students	97,865	86.6%	3.1%	0.2%	2.3%	7.2%	0.7%
Female	47,665	89.5%	2.4%	0.2%	1.6%	5.7%	0.6%
Male	50,200	83.9%	3.8%	0.2%	2.9%	8.6%	0.7%
Black	25,500	80.3%	3.3%	0.3%	3.9%	10.9%	1.3%
Hispanic	8,778	79.1%	2.1%	0.4%	2.8%	14.9%	0.7%
White	54,863	89.7%	3.4%	0.1%	1.5%	4.8%	0.4%
Asian	5,272	94.7%	0.7%	0.3%	0.9%	3.3%	0.2%
American Indian	359	82.7%	4.2%	0.3%	4.5%	7.5%	0.8%
Native Hawaiian	128	86.7%	1.6%	0.0%	3.9%	7.0%	0.8%
Two or more races	2,828	94.0%	1.1%	0.0%	2.5%	2.0%	0.4%
Students with Disabilities	11,353	83.9%	3.1%	0.4%	n/a	11.5%	0.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	28,895	79.9%	4.4%	0.4%	4.0%	10.4%	1.0%
Limited English	6,643	77.2%	1.4%	1.0%	0.9%	18.9%	0.7%
Homeless	998	70.9%	3.2%	0.4%	6.2%	15.7%	3.5%

Of Virginia's 329 high schools and schools with graduating classes, 192 achieved graduation rates higher than the state rate of 86.6 percent, two schools equaled the state rate and 135 were lower. Sixty-seven school divisions had graduation rates higher than the state's, two divisions equaled the state rate, and 62 divisions had graduation rates that were lower.

The statewide dropout rate fell by one point. Of the 97,865 students in the 2011 graduating cohort, 7.2 percent dropped out, compared with 8.2 percent for the 2010 cohort.

The dropout rates of 194 schools were lower than the state rate, four schools equaled the state rate, and the dropout rates of 131 schools exceeded the state rate. Sixty-seven school divisions had dropout rates lower than the state, two had rates equal to the state rate, and 62 divisions had dropout rates that were higher than the statewide rate.

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Five-Year Class of 2010 Graduates

VDOE also released new data for the class of 2010 showing that 1,176 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 2010 of 87 percent compared with a four-year, on-time rate of 85.5 percent.

"I congratulate these students for their perseverance," Wright said. "And I congratulate the educators who encouraged them to stay in school and accomplish their goals."

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).

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