



**For Immediate Release:** September 29, 2015

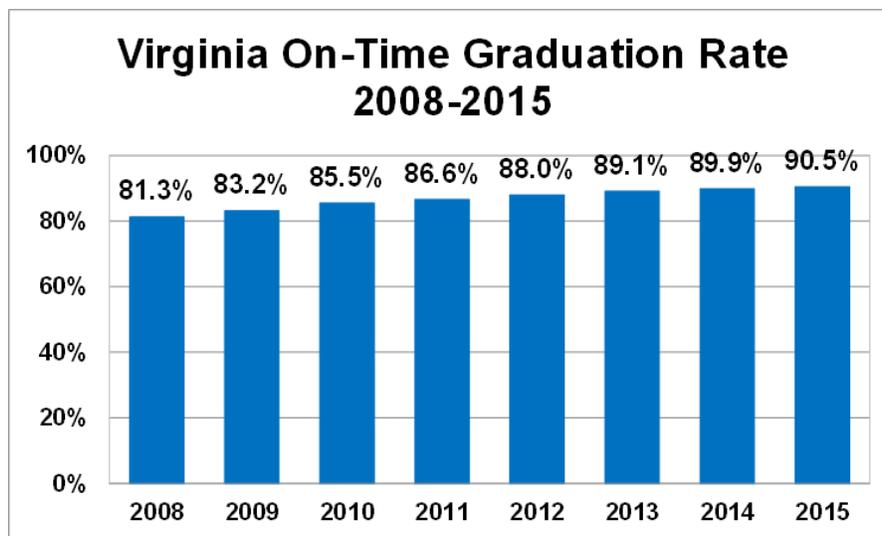
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## **Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate Tops 90 Percent** *Graduation Up Despite Challenging New Standards and Tests*

Nine out of ten students who entered the ninth grade in 2011 earned a diploma within four years and more than half graduated from high school with an Advanced Studies Diploma, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) reported today.

Of the 93,064 students in the class of 2015, 90.5 percent earned a Board of Education-approved diploma, compared with 89.9 percent of the 2014 cohort. The dropout rate for the class of 2015 was 5.2 percent, compared with 5.4 percent for the previous cohort.

“The students who graduated in May and June began high school just as the commonwealth was introducing challenging, new assessments in mathematics, English and science,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. “That we’ve seen another rise in the graduation rate — despite a significant increase in the expectations for high school students — indicates the hard work and professional expertise of the teachers, principals and other educators in the commonwealth’s high schools are making a real difference.”

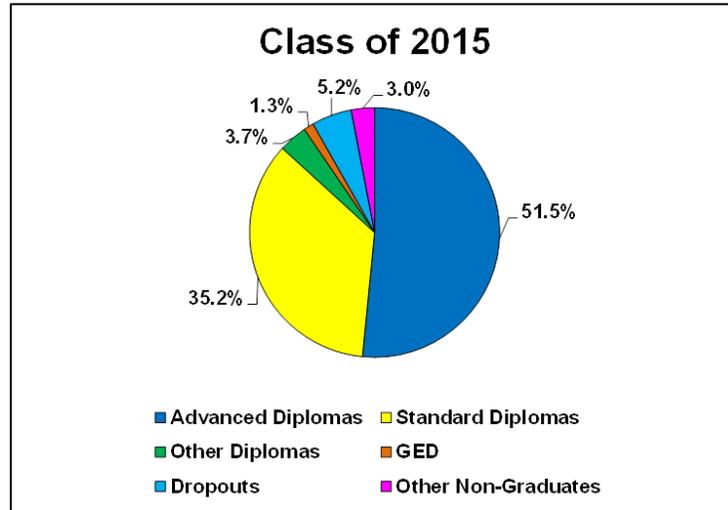


Of the students who entered high school as first-time ninth graders in 2011:

- 47,923, or 51.5 percent, earned an Advanced Studies Diploma (including International Baccalaureate), compared with 50.6 percent of the previous cohort.
- 32,803, or 35.2 percent, earned a Standard Diploma.
- 1,467, or 1.6 percent, earned a Modified Standard Diploma.
- 1,998, or 2.1 percent, earned a Special Diploma.
- 1,218, or 1.3 percent, earned a GED.
- 4,876, or 5.2 percent, dropped out.

*(more)*

Students who earn GED certificates or complete high school without earning a diploma are not included as graduates in calculating graduation rates. Special Diplomas are available only to students with severe cognitive disabilities. The Modified Standard Diploma, which is also limited to students with disabilities, is being phased out.



State and local efforts to increase graduation rates among minority students continued to show results:

- The graduation rate for black students increased 0.8 point to 86.2 percent, while the dropout rate fell by one point, from 7.6 percent, to 6.6 percent.
- The graduation rate for Hispanic students increased by 0.6 point to 84 percent, while the dropout rate declined by one-tenth of a point, to 11.8 percent.
- The graduation rate for students with disabilities increased by 1.4 points to 88.4 percent and the dropout rate declined 0.7 point to 9.1 percent.

Of Virginia’s 329 high schools and combined schools with graduating classes, 197 achieved graduation rates higher than the state rate of 90.5 percent and 132 were lower. Of the 131 school divisions with high schools, 71 had graduation rates higher than the state’s, and 60 had rates that were lower.

The dropout rates of 201 schools were lower than the statewide rate, and the dropout rates of 128 schools were higher. Seventy-three school divisions had dropout rates lower than the state as a whole, and 58 divisions had dropout rates that were higher than the statewide rate.

Since 2011, high schools have had to meet an annual benchmark for graduation and completion to earn full accreditation under Virginia’s Standards of Learning 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.

On-time graduation has increased by 9.2 points since 2008, the first year VDOE reported accurate graduation rates based on longitudinal student data fully accounting for student mobility, retention and other factors. During this same period, the state dropout rate fell to 5.2 percent, compared with 8.7 percent in 2008.

### Five-Year Class of 2014 Graduates

VDOE also released new data for the class of 2014 showing that 879 students earned diplomas after returning for a fifth year of high school. Their achievement resulted in a Class of 2014 five-year graduation rate of 90.1 percent compared with a four-year rate of 89.9 percent.

[High school cohort reports for schools, school divisions and the commonwealth](#) are available for viewing and downloading on the VDOE website.