The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate

An Accurate Graduation Rate for Virginia

- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is a graduation rate based on individual student-level data tracked over time that fully accounts for student mobility and retention patterns. Estimated graduation rates do not account for these factors.
- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate will be reported in October 2008 for students who entered the ninth grade for the first time during the 2004-2005 school year.
- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is calculated by dividing the number of students earning a diploma in 2008 by the number of students who entered the ninth-grade for the first time in 2004-2005 (plus transfers in minus transfers out).
- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate recognizes the achievement of students who earn a diploma approved by the Board of Education (Advanced Studies, Standard, Modified Standard, Special and General Achievement).
- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate includes adjustments for students who under federal and state law may take longer than four years to earn a diploma and still count as “on-time” graduates by assigning these students to the appropriate ninth-grade cohorts. For example, a student with disabilities who entered the ninth grade for the first time in 2004-2005 and graduates in June 2009 would be assigned to the 2005-2006 ninth-grade cohort and counted as an on-time graduate.
- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is disaggregated by student group to enhance public understanding and accountability.
- Students who earn a GED or a certificate of completion are not dropouts but are not counted as graduates when calculating the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate.

Benefits of the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate

- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate provides a more accurate picture of what happens to high school students as they move toward graduation.
- Accurate graduation data for schools, school divisions and the state support decisions, policies and programs to improve educational outcomes for all students.
- The longitudinal data used to calculate the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate allows schools, school divisions and the state to identify students who graduate in four years and students who require additional time and instruction to earn a diploma.

Legislative and Policy Background of the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate

- The 2004 General Assembly approved funding for the development and implementation of the commonwealth’s longitudinal student data system, known as the Educational Information Management System (EIMS).
- Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, all individual student records in EIMS were assigned a unique number known as a state-testing identifier to stay with each student’s record throughout his or her K-12 career.
- A 2005 National Governors Association (NGA) task force report recommended that all states adopt a graduation rate to measure on-time graduation, with most students expected to earn a diploma in four years.

(more)
The 2006 Virginia General Assembly directed the Board of Education to collect, analyze, and report high school graduation data using a formula reflecting the recommendations of the NGA task force, beginning in the fall of 2008.

To meet the requirements of the General Assembly, the Board of Education in July 2006 established a committee on graduation and dropouts. The committee studied seven widely-discussed graduation rate formulas, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each.

In November 2006, the Board of Education adopted the NGA formula as the basis for the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate.

The graduating class of 2008 is the first high school cohort for which there are four years of longitudinal data. The records of students who entered the ninth-grade for the first time in 2004 were linked to their records four years later to determine their graduation or completion status and calculate the 2008 Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate for schools, school divisions and the commonwealth.

**Dropout Definition and Cohort Dropout Data**

- The dropout rate is not the inverse of the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate.
- A dropout is a former student who:
  - Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year, or
  - Was not enrolled on October 1 of the previous school year although expected to be in membership; and
  - Has not graduated from high school or completed an approved educational program and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
    - Enrolled in another public school district, private school or approved education program;
    - Temporarily absent due to suspension or illness;
    - Deceased.
- Students who have been retained in grade but are still in school are not dropouts.
- The Virginia Department of Education will calculate cohort dropout rates after school divisions submit dropout data for the 2007-2008 academic year. VDOE expects to report this information in early 2009.

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