



Calculating Virginia’s On-Time Graduation Rate

Background

In 2005, National Governors Association (NGA) Task Force on State High School Graduation Data presented a report defining a graduation rate providing "... a measure of on-time completion, with most students, but not all, expected to finish in four years" (www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0507GRAD.pdf). The nation’s governors (led by then Virginia Governor Mark Warner) subsequently endorsed the formula.

As a result of the 2006 General Assembly’s approval of House Bill 19, sponsored by Del. William Fralin of Roanoke, the Virginia Board of Education adopted a graduation-rate formula — mirroring the recommendations of the NGA Task Force — that will uniformly assess and report high school graduation rates at the state, division and school levels. The formula is based on a count of students who enter the system, and follows those students’ progress in school.

House Bill 19 also requires VDOE to report the new cohort graduation rates beginning in 2008. State, division and school on-time graduation rates will be published for the first time in fall 2008 in the aggregate and disaggregated by student groups.

Basis for Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate

The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is based on four years of longitudinal student-level data in the commonwealth’s Educational Information Management System. Unlike estimates used in the past, the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate takes into consideration student mobility, changes in student enrollment, policy and instructional practices such as 9th-grade retention. The new formula also recognizes that some students with disabilities and limited English proficient (LEP) students are allowed more than the standard four years to earn a diploma and are still counted as “on-time” graduates.

Simply put, the graduation rate, as defined by the Board of Education equals [on-time graduates in year x] divided by [(first-time entering 9th graders in year x minus 4) plus (transfers in) minus (transfers out)]

OR

$$\frac{\text{On-time Graduates in Year x}}{[(\# \text{ of } 1^{\text{st}} \text{ time entering } 9^{\text{th}} \text{ graders in year } x - 4) + (\text{Transfers In}) - (\text{Transfers out \& deceased})]}$$

Graduates are defined as students who earn one of the following Board approved diplomas:

- Advanced Studies Diploma
- Standard Diploma
- Modified Standard Diploma
- Special Diploma
- General Achievement Diploma

On-time graduates are graduates who earn diplomas within four years of the first time they entered the 9th grade. Special education students and limited English students who have plans in place that allow them more time to graduate will be counted as graduates or non-graduates when they earn a diploma or otherwise exit high school. Deceased students will be counted as transfers out and incarcerated students will be counted as transfers as they leave and re-enter the system.

Who comprises the original cohort for the class of 2008?

- Students who were enrolled in Virginia public schools in 9th grade in the 2004-2005 school year and who were coded in the VDOE Student Record Collection as first-time 9th-grade students.
- Students who transferred into Virginia public schools in 10th grade during 2005-2006.
- Students who transferred into Virginia public schools in 11th grade during 2006-2007.
- Students who transferred into Virginia public schools in 12th grade during 2007-2008.

(more)

How are students in the cohort tracked?

- Each individual student's status is tracked over time and throughout the Virginia public school system using his or her unique state-testing identifier maintained through the commonwealth's Education Information Management System. The identifiers allow the state to follow students as they transfer in and/or transfer out of Virginia public schools.
 - Students who transfer out of Virginia public schools are removed from the cohort based on their exit codes.
 - Students who transfer in to Virginia public schools for the first time from outside the public school system are assigned to a cohort based on the year and grade in which they first entered a Virginia public high school (grades 9-12).
 - Students who are incarcerated will be counted as transfers as they leave and re-enter the system.
 - Incarcerated students who re-enter Virginia public schools will be assigned to a cohort based on the year and grade at the time of return to public school.
- The original graduation cohort of 2008 was defined using data from the end-of-year student record collection in 2004-2005. That was the first time Virginia collected unique identifiers for all students in the public school system. At that point in time, and during each subsequent data collection window (annually for fall, spring, end-of-year and summer), VDOE updates each student's status to record his or her most recent data, including the following for all students in the cohort:
 - Whether they are actively enrolled Virginia public schools;
 - The most recent division and school where enrolled;
 - The most recent subgroup data including race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, disadvantaged status and LEP status;
 - Students' graduation status, and — if applicable — year diplomas awarded;
 - Students' completion status, and — if applicable — year of alternative credentials;
 - Exit code and date — if applicable;
 - Whether the student has died; and
 - Transfer status — if applicable.
- To include summer graduates, the final status update for all students in the original cohort will take place after the summer 2008 data collection.
- At that point, VDOE will have documentation of the status for all students who were in the original graduating cohort of 2008.
- Students who graduate in fewer than four years are counted as on-time graduates and are included in the graduation rate calculated for their original ninth-grade cohort.

How will Virginia calculate the on-time graduation rate in 2008?

VDOE will adjust the cohort based on the final status of LEP students and students with disabilities. Once the final data from the summer data submission are verified, the following students will be moved into the cohort for the graduating class of 2009:

- Students who were identified as having disabilities at anytime since entering 9th grade, who were by definition in the 2008 graduating cohort, completed the full school year 2007-2008 and did not graduate with a Board of Education-approved diploma.
- Students who were identified as LEP at anytime since entering 9th grade, who were by definition in the 2008 graduating cohort, completed the full school year 2007-2008 and did not graduate with a Board of Education-approved diploma.

This adjusted cohort will be used to calculate Virginia's On-Time Graduation Rate for 2008 as follows:

Adjusted cohort students who earn a Board of Education approved diploma no later than summer 2008
[(Adjusted cohort based on first-time entering 9th graders in school year 2004-2005) + (Transfers In) – (Transfers out & deceased)]

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