



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.

###