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Graduation and Dropout Statistics Annual Report

March 2016

Authorizing legislation: [RCW 28A.175.010](#)

(<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.175&full=true#28A.175.010>)

Assessment and Student Information

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Executive Summary

Graduation and dropout rates are important indicators of the status of K–12 education in Washington. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) prepares an annual graduation and dropout report that includes information for all students as well as the sub-categories of students represented within the Washington State Report Card.

Graduation rates are calculated using the “adjusted cohort rate” methodology. Students are placed in a group—or cohort—based on the year they enter 9th grade for the first time. The calculation adjusts for students who transfer into a Washington public high school for the first time and join a cohort. Students are removed from the cohort if they transfer out of public school in Washington.

The adjusted cohort method tracks individual students over time and does not rely on estimates. It generally aligns with what most people think of as a graduation rate: Among a group of students who started high school together, what percent graduated in four (or five) years?

This methodology is mandated by the U.S. Department of Education. Results are produced for both 4-year and 5-year cohorts of students.

Washington’s 4-year graduation rate is 78.1 percent for students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2011–12. We commonly call this the Class of 2015. The rate is an increase of almost one percent from the Class of 2014, which had a 4-year graduation rate of 77.2 percent.

The 5-year graduation rate, for students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2010–11 is 81.1 percent. This is an increase of 1.2 percent from the previous year; the 5-year rate for 2014 was 79.9 percent.

Following are Washington’s current 4- and 5-year graduation rates, listed by student group:

Student group	4-year	5-year
All Students	78.1%	81.1%
American Indian	56.4%	58.2%
Asian	87.8%	89.5%
Pacific Islander	67.0%	70.1%
Black	68.8%	73.8%
Hispanic	69.6%	72.9%
White	80.9%	83.7%
Two or More Races	77.9%	79.9%
Special Education	57.9%	64.6%
Limited English	55.8%	63.3%
Low Income	68.0%	71.7%
Migrant	64.4%	70.7%
504 Plan	76.3%	79.8%
Homeless	51.9%	55.9%
Foster Care	42.8%	49.2%
Female	81.6%	84.3%
Male	74.7%	78.0%

Introduction

Purpose

Under the guidelines of state law, RCW 28A.175.010, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to report annually on the educational progress of public school students in grades 7–12. Federal guidelines provided by the U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf>, issued under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), require all states to determine adjusted cohort graduation results for students. To meet the state and federal reporting requirements, the OSPI prepares an annual report summarizing the enrollment activity of students in school grades 7–12 and adjusted cohort results for students.

Definitions

Adjusted Cohort: A group of students identified as beginning 9th grade in a specified year. Students are included in the cohort based on when they first enter 9th grade, regardless of their expected graduation year. The cohort of entering 9th graders is “adjusted” for transfers in and out of high school through the next four and five years.

Graduate: A student who earns a high school diploma, a high school diploma with modifications allowed under a student’s Individualized Education Plan, or an associate degree from a community or technical college.

Dropout: A student who leaves school for any reason, except death, before completing school with a high school diploma or transferring to another school with a known exit reason. A student is considered a dropout regardless of when dropping out occurs (i.e., during or between regular school terms). A student who leaves during the year but returns during the reporting period is not considered a dropout.

For information about data collection, calculations, and verification, please see the 2011–12 report which details the graduation formulas.

Graduation Rates

Results for Adjusted 4-Year Cohort

The adjusted 4-year cohort graduation rate is calculated using the group of students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2011–12 and who are reported as graduates by the end of 2014–15.

Table 1: Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (4-year)

Student Group	<i>Received High School Diploma</i>	<i>Graduated w/ Associates Degree</i>	Total All Graduates	Adjusted Cohort	Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Rate
All Students	62,164	434	62,598	80,157	78.1%
Amer. Indian	722	3	725	1,286	56.4%
Asian	5,329	18	5,347	6,093	87.8%
Pacific Islander	493	2	495	739	67.0%
Black	2,597	1	2,598	3,778	68.8%
Hispanic	10,215	35	10,250	14,729	69.6%
White	39,212	353	39,565	48,887	80.9%
Two or More Races	3,596	22	3,618	4,644	77.9%
Special Education	5,521	2	5,523	9,535	57.9%
Limited English	2,529	7	2,536	4,547	55.8%
Low Income	27,819	130	27,949	41,113	68.0%
Migrant	1,431	9	1,440	2,236	64.4%
504 Plan	3,107	8	3,115	4,080	76.3%
Homeless	2,138	3	2,141	4,128	51.9%
Foster Care	297	0	297	694	42.8%
Female	31,795	276	32,071	39,285	81.6%
Male	30,369	158	30,527	40,872	74.7%

Of the 62,598 students reported as graduates in the 4-year cohort, 536 students were reported as graduating in fewer than four years¹.

¹Students who graduate prior to February of the fourth year are defined as graduating in fewer than four years.

Results for Adjusted 5-Year Cohort

The adjusted 5-year cohort graduation rate is calculated using the group of students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2010–11 and who are reported as graduates by the end of 2014–15. The table below shows the adjusted 5-year cohort rate as well as the 4-year rate for the same cohort. The difference between the two columns represents the percentage of the cohort who graduated in their fifth year of high school.

Table 2: Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (5-year)

Student Group	<i>Received High School Diploma</i>	<i>Graduated w/ Associates Degree</i>	Total All Graduates	Adjusted Cohort	Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Rate	(2014) Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Rate
All Students	63,555	375	63,930	78,850	81.1%	77.2%
Amer. Indian	768	1	769	1,321	58.2%	53.7%
Asian	5,366	26	5,392	6,022	89.5%	86.5%
Pacific Islander	468	0	468	668	70.1%	64.6%
Black	2,793	4	2,797	3,790	73.8%	67.8%
Hispanic	9,873	29	9,902	13,576	72.9%	67.3%
White	40,882	298	41,180	49,186	83.7%	80.5%
Two or More Races	3,405	17	3,422	4,285	79.9%	75.5%
Special Education	5,978	3	5,981	9,256	64.6%	55.7%
Limited English	2,749	6	2,755	4,352	63.3%	53.7%
Low Income	28,534	115	28,649	39,973	71.7%	66.4%
Migrant	1,430	3	1,433	2,027	70.7%	63.6%
504 Plan	2,984	5	2,989	3,744	79.8%	74.8%
Homeless	2,304	2	2,306	4,122	55.9%	46.1%
Foster Care	366	2	368	748	49.2%	41.5%
Female	32,293	256	32,549	38,632	84.3%	81.0%
Male	31,262	119	31,381	40,218	78.0%	73.6%

Of the 63,930 students reported as graduates in the 5-year cohort, 3,157 students were reported as graduating in the fifth year of the cohort.

Dropout Rates

Results for Adjusted 4-Year Cohort

Students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2011–12 and who are reported as dropouts within the 4-year timeframe are reported in the year in which they dropped out. For all students, the 2015 4-Year adjusted cohort dropout rate was 11.9%. This is a decrease of 0.4% from the 2014 4-Year rate of 12.3%. Across the various subgroups of students American Indian students had the highest 4-Year dropout rate, 24.5%. Asian students had the lowest 4-Year dropout rate, 5.3%.

Table 3: Adjusted Cohort Dropouts (4-year)

Student Group	Dropouts Year 1	Dropouts Year 2	Dropouts Year 3	Dropouts Year 4	Total Dropouts	(2015)
						Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Dropout Rate
All Students	481	996	2,140	5,894	9,511	11.9%
Amer. Indian	15	30	74	196	315	24.5%
Asian	28	44	59	191	322	5.3%
Pacific Islander	8	15	37	75	135	18.3%
Black	38	60	96	367	561	14.8%
Hispanic	140	242	570	1,460	2,412	16.4%
White	234	550	1,192	3,261	5,237	10.7%
Two or More Races	18	55	112	343	528	11.4%
Special Education	47	164	413	1,084	1,708	17.9%
Limited English	79	126	263	564	1,032	22.7%
Low Income	305	729	1,667	4,540	7,241	17.6%
Migrant	23	58	106	258	445	19.9%
504 Plan	9	35	88	301	433	10.6%
Homeless	38	90	253	812	1,193	28.9%
Foster Care	2	12	51	152	217	31.3%
Female	236	442	897	2,346	3,921	10.0%
Male	245	554	1,243	3,548	5,590	13.7%

Results for Adjusted 5-Year Cohort

Students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2010–11 and who are reported as dropouts within the 5-year timeframe are reported in the year in which they dropped out. The 2015 5-Year adjusted cohort dropout rate was 15.5%. This rate decreased 0.7% from the 2014 5-Year rate of 16.2%. Females had a 5-Year dropout rate of 12.8%. Males had a 5-Year dropout rate of 18.0%.

Table 4: Adjusted Cohort Dropouts (5-year)

Student Group	Dropouts Year 1	Dropouts Year 2	Dropouts Year 3	Dropouts Year 4	Dropouts Year 5	Total Dropouts	(2015) Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Dropout Rate
All Students	588	1,035	2,047	4,654	3,863	12,187	15.5%
Amer. Indian	20	48	90	162	153	473	35.8%
Asian	34	48	67	175	133	457	7.6%
Pacific Islander	9	12	23	67	52	163	24.4%
Black	48	59	98	279	276	760	20.1%
Hispanic	144	247	492	1,118	1,006	3,007	22.1%
White	311	571	1,130	2,570	2,024	6,606	13.4%
Two or More Races	22	50	147	282	219	720	16.8%
Special Education	64	162	363	816	778	2,183	23.6%
Limited English	94	121	208	479	386	1,288	29.6%
Low Income	319	743	1,547	3,476	3,134	9,219	23.1%
Migrant	12	39	95	206	152	504	24.9%
504 Plan	15	25	89	240	233	602	16.1%
Homeless	16	56	208	561	638	1,479	35.9%
Foster Care	5	19	61	105	102	292	39.0%
Female	282	471	837	1,839	1,520	4,949	12.8%
Male	306	564	1,210	2,815	2,343	7,238	18.0%

Results for Annual Dropouts Grades 7–12

The table below represents students who were enrolled in grades 7–12 during the 2014–15 school year and whose final status after that year was dropout. Note that the annual dropout data below is based on students’ reported grade levels and not on graduation cohorts since those are not established until students enter 9th grade for the first time. This dropout rate is an annual snapshot for the 2014–15 school year for all students, rather than a look over multiple years for a specific group of students. Students reported in grades 7–12 with an expected year of graduation of 2015 or later, are included in this dropout rate.

Table 5: Annual Dropout Rates

Student Group	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
All Students	1.6%	2.3%	2.4%	3.4%	4.5%	7.8%
Amer. Indian	3.0%	4.2%	5.5%	8.1%	10.4%	15.8%
Asian	1.2%	1.8%	1.2%	1.9%	2.0%	3.4%
Pacific Islander	3.7%	4.5%	2.6%	5.5%	6.2%	11.3%
Black	3.5%	6.2%	3.9%	5.3%	5.5%	10.2%
Hispanic	1.9%	2.5%	3.5%	4.3%	6.0%	10.8%
White	1.3%	1.9%	1.9%	2.9%	4.1%	7.0%
Two or More Races	1.9%	3.0%	2.7%	3.7%	5.1%	7.7%
Special Education	1.8%	2.7%	2.7%	4.5%	5.8%	11.5%
Limited English	2.0%	2.7%	4.2%	6.5%	7.9%	15.9%
Low Income	2.0%	2.9%	3.4%	4.8%	6.4%	11.3%
Migrant	1.5%	3.1%	2.7%	4.6%	6.9%	9.4%
504 Plan	1.0%	2.0%	1.7%	2.6%	3.1%	4.8%
Homeless	5.6%	10.2%	7.5%	9.5%	12.8%	19.6%
Foster Care	6.0%	9.3%	9.0%	12.0%	15.8%	25.1%
Female	1.6%	2.4%	2.2%	3.1%	4.0%	6.3%
Male	1.7%	2.3%	2.5%	3.6%	5.0%	9.2%

Table 6 shows the number of students associated with each dropout reason, by grade. It also shows the percent of dropouts overall with that given reason code. The most common categories associated with dropouts are unknown and unconfirmed transfers.

Table 6: Annual Dropouts - Reasons for Dropping Out

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total Dropouts	Percent of Total
Attended School 4 Years, Did Not Graduate	0	1	3	2	24	786	816	4.7%
Lacked Progress or Poor Grades	2	5	101	188	319	596	1,211	7.0%
School Not for Me, Chose to Stay Home	32	46	124	191	359	607	1,359	7.8%
Married, Family Support, or Child Related	0	1	10	7	18	25	61	0.4%
Offered Training or Chose to Work	0	1	15	43	65	138	262	1.5%
Left to Take GED	0	1	11	33	80	140	265	1.5%
Expelled or Suspended	19	33	41	68	61	53	275	1.6%
Drug or Alcohol Related	0	3	1	9	6	4	23	0.1%
Unconfirmed Transfer	541	762	602	713	764	651	4,033	23.3%
Dropped for Other or Unknown Reason	674	1,009	1,049	1,486	2,014	2,784	9,016	52.1%
Total	1,268	1,862	1,957	2,740	3,710	5,784	17,321	

Conclusion

At the direction of the U.S. Department of Education, Washington uses the adjusted cohort graduation calculation to track a single cohort of students over four or five years. This report summarizes the graduation rates following the 2014–15 school year.

The adjusted cohort method yields a 78.1 percent 4-year graduation rate for the Class of 2015, students who first began 9th grade in 2011–12. This is slightly higher than the Class of 2014. An additional 3.9 percent of students in the Class of 2014 graduated during their fifth-year of high school (2014–15) for a total 5-year rate of 81.1 percent. The cumulative dropout rate, after four years, for students entering 9th grade in 2011–12 was 11.9 percent.

APPENDICES

Appendices A through I are available as electronic files under *Graduation and Dropout Statistics* at <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin>.

- Appendix A: State Level (2015 Adjusted Cohort 4-Year and 5-Year)
- Appendix B: County Level (2015 Adjusted Cohort 4-Year)
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Appendix J: Estimated Benefits from Changes in Washington State’s High School Graduation Rate

This appendix was prepared by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

Estimate prepared February 2016.

The 2010 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to “calculate an annual estimate of the savings resulting from any change compared to the prior school year in the extended graduation rate.”¹

To produce this estimate, WSIPP uses its economic model that assesses benefits and costs of public policies and outcomes. Monetary estimates are calculated for three perspectives: 1) benefits that accrue solely to high school graduates, 2) benefits received by taxpayers from having other people graduate from high school, and 3) any other measurable (non-graduate and non-taxpayer) monetary benefits. For technical details about the WSIPP model, visit <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/TechnicalManual/WsippBenefitCostTechnicalManual.pdf>.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) calculates a 5-year high school graduation rate, which includes students who take more than four years to graduate. In the 2013–14 school year, this graduation rate was 79.9 percent; in 2014–15, the rate was 81.1 percent, an increase of 1.2 percentage points, representing 929 additional graduates (see Exhibit 1).

¹ RCW 28A.175.010 (8)

Change in the Five-Year High School Graduation Rate in Washington State, 2013–14 to 2015–15

	Five-Year Graduation Rate	Students in Cohort	Graduates (Rate * Cohort)
Actual Graduates (2014–15 rate)	81.1%	78,850	63,930
Hypothetical Graduates (based on the 2013–14 rate)	79.9%	78,850	63,001
<i>Difference</i>	<i>+1.2%</i>		<i>+929</i>

Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Using WSIPP’s benefit-cost model, we estimate that the per-student monetary benefit associated with graduating from high school is \$564,952 (see Exhibit 2). The benefits accrue over an individual’s lifetime and the dollar amount is in net present value terms, in 2014 dollars.²

² To calculate net present value, we use a .035 discount rate.

The Value of Graduation from High School Per-Student Estimated Benefits, Lifetime, Net Present Value, 2013 Dollars

	Benefits to graduates	Benefits to taxpayers	Other beneficiaries	Total benefits
	\$276,536	\$156,444	\$131,972	\$564,952
Components of the benefits				
Higher earnings	\$285,887	\$121,941	\$150,896	\$558,724
Lower crime	\$0	\$596	\$1,712	\$2,308
Health care costs	(\$9,351)	\$33,908	(\$20,637)	\$3,920

Source: Washington State Institute for Public Policy Benefit-Cost Model.

Totals may not add due to rounding.

About half of the benefits go to the graduates themselves in the form of increased earnings, for which they pay taxes (represented as benefits to taxpayers). Graduating from high school is also associated with less crime. Additionally, individuals who graduate from high school are more likely to use private health care services but less likely to use publicly funded health care services.

For the 929 additional graduates in 2014–15, the total estimated monetary benefit is \$524.8 million.³

³ 929 x \$564,952 = \$524,756,087

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