



West Virginia's Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

Questions and Answer Guide

**West Virginia Department of Education
Office of Information Systems
Office of Special Programs
Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development
and**

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities



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Reporting a Uniform, Comparable Graduation Rate

Beginning in School Year (SY) 2010–2011, states are required to report a uniform, comparable, and accurate graduation rate known as a “four-year adjusted cohort rate,” which measures the percent of students in a ninth grade cohort that graduate with a regular diploma in four years or less. This rate also must be used for determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) beginning in SY 2011–2012. The regulations require states to report and use a “four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate” based on the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{4\text{-Year}} \\ \mathbf{Adjusted} \\ \mathbf{Cohort} \\ \mathbf{Graduation} \\ \mathbf{Rate} \end{array} = \frac{\text{\# of cohort members who earned a regular high school diploma by the end of the 2009-2010 school year}}{\text{\# of first-time 9th graders in fall 2006 (starting cohort) plus students who transfer in, minus students who transfer out, emigrate, or die during school years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010}}$$

Impetus for a Uniform Rate

While the reporting of a standard metric for graduation reporting is new, the shift has been more than a decade in the making at the national level. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* first required states to report annually on graduation rates. State reporting of graduation rates under *NCLB* revealed a medley of calculations and data systems supporting these calculations. The disparate methods failed to provide meaningful comparisons of graduation rates across schools, districts or states. Consequently, all state governors signed a National Governors Association (NGA) compact in 2005, thereby compelling each state to work toward the use of a standard, cohort-based graduation rate. In 2008, the United States Department of Education (USED) specified the cohort calculation for all states and required the cohort reporting for AYP purposes beginning in school year SY 2011–2012. USED’s written guidance was used extensively by WVDE to construct the cohort and develop the WVDE guidance document. USED’s guidance is available online at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf>

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to assist West Virginia's 55 districts and two state-operated programs in understanding the new graduation calculation and reporting. Although primarily question and answer format, the document is comprised of three sections. The first section includes relevant definitions, most of which are specific to West Virginia and state educational policy. The second and third sections are question and answer format with concept questions first followed by WVEIS coding and data questions.

All questions were submitted by district, Regional Education Service Agencies and WVDE representatives during the SY 2010-2011. Questions were answered by WVDE staff from the Office of Information Systems, Office of Special Programs, and Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, as well as by Dr. Julia Wilkins from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities. Moreover, the USED's written guidance was incorporated to the maximum extent possible.

DEFINITIONS

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort: A group of students, who begin as first-time ninth graders in a particular school year and who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less. The cohort is “adjusted” by adding any students transferring into the cohort and by subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during the years covered by the rate.

Cohort Subgroups: Subgroups disaggregation is required for graduation reporting. The subgroups are economically disadvantaged students, students from the major race/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students (LEP). —

Regular High School Diploma: *WV Policy 2510* defines a regular high school diploma as the diploma districts shall award to every student who has completed the **standard** graduation requirements.

Modified Diploma: *WV Policy 2510* states that an eligible student with disabilities who has been determined by an IEP team to be unable, even with extended learning opportunities and significant instructional modifications, to meet state and county standard graduation requirements, may receive a modified diploma. The modified diploma is formal documentation and recognition that an eligible student has met the modified diploma requirements specified on the student’s IEP.

General Educational Development (GED®) Diploma: *WV Policy 2444.4* defines the GED diploma as the diploma issued based upon satisfactory scores earned on the GED Tests. It is important to note that students in West Virginia have multiple options regarding the GED Tests and two of these options can result in the receipt of a regular high school diploma.

GED Option I: Option I is a blending of the GED Tests with a Career Technical Education (CTE) pathway. This pathway provides an opportunity for high school students to remain in school, take the GED Tests, and graduate on time with a regular high school diploma. In order for the student to become an Option student, he/she must be: (1) behind her/his ninth grade cohorts at least one year in credits, (2) significantly behind his/her kindergarten cohort grade, or (3) at risk of dropping out of school. The student must be recommended by a teacher, counselor, or principal to the GED Option Team. Written consent from the parent must be obtained before placement into the program. A student successfully achieving all of the following requirements will receive a regular high school diploma:

- Attended GED preparation classes
- Passed the GED Tests
- Completed a 21st Century job preparation “21st Century Global Skills” program
- Completed the four (4) required core courses in a CTE skilled pathway concentration or any program of study resulting in a certification
- Met standards on the WorkKeys® job skills assessment
- Reached or exceeded the cut score set by WVDE on the End-of-Concentration Performance Assessment, if applicable.

DEFINITIONS (CONTINUED)

GED Option II: Option II provides a senior student who is not projected to graduate with his/her ninth grade cohort an opportunity to recoup credit in a content area by taking GED preparation classes in the deficient content area. If the student continues to attend and maintain passing grades in all other classes and is able to pass the content area GED Test, then he/she will earn a regular high school diploma.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How is a student who graduates in more than four years counted in the four-year graduation rate?

A student who graduates in more than four years is not counted as a graduate in the four-year graduation rate. Such a student must be included in the denominator of the four-year graduation rate and may not be included in the numerator because the student did not graduate in four years or less with a regular high school diploma.

Do summer school graduates count as four-year graduates?

Yes, the regulations define “students who graduate in four years” as “students who earn a regular high school diploma at the conclusion of their fourth year, before the conclusion of their fourth year, or *during a summer session immediately following their fourth year.*”

States have the option of including summer graduates in the four-year graduation rate; it is not a requirement. In West Virginia, the four-year graduate cohort will include students who complete graduation requirements in the summer session immediately following their fourth year.

How will out-of-state transfers be counted in our districts when these students are transferring in with fewer credits than needed to graduate within the four year timeline?

A student who transfers into a school should be assigned to the cohort in which the student started ninth grade for the first time. The number of credits a student has does not affect their membership in a particular cohort. Although these students may negatively impact graduation rates in your district, under section 1111(h) of the ESEA, states and LEAs may include in their annual report cards additional information about graduation rates.

Will part-time home school students be part of a district’s cohort?

Students enrolled part time in high school to receive an advanced course or specialty course such as drivers’ education will not be included in the district’s cohort.

During SY 2009-2010, fewer than 10 part-time home school students were enrolled in West Virginia. Moreover, the primary responsibility of these students’ educational programs is with the home school, not the public school district.

Are students ever removed from the cohort? If permitted, what evidence does the county need to provide WVDE?

Students can only be removed from a cohort under three circumstances: (1) if they transfer out and enroll in another school or in an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma, (2) if they emigrate to another country, or (3) if they die. Unless a school or LEA can confirm in writing that a student has transferred out, emigrated to another country, or is deceased, the school or LEA must consider the student to be in the adjusted cohort for purposes of calculating the four-year graduation rate.

To confirm that a student transferred out, a school or LEA must have “official written documentation.” In the case of a student who moves to another public school within the state, a record from the state’s data system would be sufficient. Other examples of official written documentation include: a request for student records from a receiving public or private high school or an educational program, or a written record of a

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response from an official in the receiving school or program acknowledging the student's enrollment. In the case of home schooled students, any written documentation accepted in the state to verify a child is home schooled is acceptable.

If a student emigrates to another country, the school or LEA does not need to obtain "official" written documentation. For example, if a parent informs a school administrator that the family is leaving the country, it would be acceptable for the school administrator to document this conversation in writing and include it in the student's file.

It is both the school and district's responsibility to maintain all written documentation with the student's records for auditing purposes. WVDE may specifically request this documentation to verify removing a student from a graduation cohort.

How will our graduation rate be impacted by a student who enrolls in high school but fails to attend even one day of school?

The high school which initially enrolled the student has an obligation to follow up on the student. If the student has transferred within then the reporting burden will transfer with this student to the student's new school. If the student dropped out of school, prior to attending school even one day, then the school must produce evidence of the enrollment history / attendance records for the student in question so that a decision can be made on a case-by-case basis as to whether the student ever entered the cohort or to which school the drop should be credited.

How will students receiving a GED under the new GED option be reported?

Students who receive a GED under GED Options I and II will *graduate with a regular high school diploma* and will therefore be counted as graduates.

How are students attending Mountaineer Challenge Academy (MCA) counted?

If a MCA student participates in GED Option I, the MCA student will take and pass the GED Tests while at the academy and return to the county school to complete the CTE pathway. An MCA student passing the GED Tests and completing the CTE Pathway will receive a high school diploma. A MCA student deficient in one core subject may recoup credit in a content area by participating in Option II and taking GED preparation classes in the deficient content area. If the student continues to attend and maintain passing grades in all other classes and is able to pass the content area GED Test, then he/she will earn a regular high school diploma.

Otherwise, a student who attends MCA and receives a GED is counted as a dropout in the four-year adjusted cohort rate unless he/she reenrolls in a high school after exiting MCA.

Instructions for maintaining the WVEIS general enrollment records for students transferring to and exiting from MCA are available at the following link: http://wveis.k12.wv.us/wveis2004/documents/EnrollmentMountaineerChallengeAcademy_002.pdf

Please note that students receiving only GEDs and do not meet the guidelines for Option I and II through MCA are counted as completers, not graduates or dropouts, in the WV dropout statistic.

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With the new calculation, will a student who drops out multiple times negatively impact the cohort multiple times as in past years with the old graduation rate?

No. Students who return to school after dropping out are assigned to the cohort they were members of when they started ninth grade for the first time. As long as a student reenrolls before the state determines the four-year graduation rate for that student's cohort, the student will no longer be considered a dropout and the student record system should be adjusted accordingly.

If dropouts have returned to school, will they no longer be counted as drops?

If students who drop out return to school, they will no longer be counted as drops. The student record system should be updated when a student returns to school to reflect the fact that they have reenrolled. Every student enrolled in West Virginia public schools has a unique identification number that does not change as long as the student is enrolled in a West Virginia public school, which simplifies the process.

How do students entering and exiting our district impact graduation rates when the students continue to be enrolled in school?

Students who enter and exit the district are considered "transfers." A *transfer into* a cohort occurs when a student enrolls after the beginning of the entering cohort's first year in high school, up to and including grade 12. A student who transfers into a school should be assigned to the cohort in which he or she started ninth grade for the first time. West Virginia's longitudinal data system will provide this information for students who transfer between schools within the state. Schools and LEAs should make every effort to obtain this information for students who transfer from another state or country.

A *transfer out* of a cohort occurs when a student leaves a school and enrolls in another school or an educational program that culminates in the award of a *regular high school diploma*. Otherwise, the student may not be considered a transfer and must remain in the adjusted cohort for purposes of calculating the four-year graduation rate.

A cohort is "adjusted" by adding any students who transfer into the cohort during the 9th through 12th grades, and subtracting any students who transfer out during that same period. Graduation rates are not affected by transfers.

How will students graduating with modified diplomas be counted in the four-year adjusted cohort?

The graduation rate is defined as the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a *regular diploma* in the standard number of years. A student who receives a modified diploma will not be counted as graduating in calculating the four-year graduation rate.

I am concerned about the students who graduate with a modified diploma counting against our graduation rate. It is truly unfair to the schools. What can be done?

The aim of the Title I/ESEA regulations was to develop a uniform method of calculating graduation rates across states, thus engendering more reliable graduation rate data and meaningful comparisons across schools and districts. The regular diploma is the selected measurement for this uniform comparison per federal requirements. The purpose is to provide an incentive to ensure students are challenged to their highest potential, and the modified diploma is only used after careful consideration of individual student needs.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In contrast, the intent of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* is to provide students with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate education. Through IDEA and *WV Policy 2419*, students with disabilities are allowed educational services through age 21, thus acknowledging that some students with disabilities require extra time to complete their academic coursework and participate in transition services that will help them to achieve post school goals.

While conflict regarding graduation seems inherent in IDEA and ESEA, an important point to remember is that ESEA mandates only how the uniform graduation rate should be calculated by states. In practice, if an IEP team believes that a student will require a modified diploma and/or longer than four years to complete coursework or participate in transition services, then it is imperative under IDEA that the student receives the additional time and services.

How is a student with a disability who has an individualized education program (IEP) that includes a plan to complete graduation requirements in more than four years included in the four-year graduation rate?

The IEP does not override students' inclusion in the four-year graduation rate. Any student who takes more than four years to graduate, *regardless of the reason*, must be included in the adjusted cohort for the four-year graduation rate (the denominator). Only students who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less may be included in the numerator of the four-year graduation rate.

Does a student have to be a SWD when entering high school to be counted in the SWD subgroup?

In West Virginia, any students receiving special education services at any time during high school will be reported under the SWD's subgroup. The SWD subgroup then includes: (1) students who entered high school with special education services and later returned to regular education, (2) students who were identified for special education services after entering ninth grade, and (3) students who transferred into a district receiving special education services that were later discontinued. It is important to note that a student transferring in from another state with an IEP must go through WV eligibility and would not count as SWD if the student did not meet WV criteria for a student with a disability.

Are students receiving speech only services (i.e., not as a related service) part of the SWD subgroup?

Yes. Students receiving speech only services will be reported in the SWD subgroup as long as they received special education services at some point during high school.

When a student's reported race/ethnicity changes during high school (e.g., parent changes youth's race/ethnicity from African American to Multiracial), how does this impact subgroup reporting of the race/ethnicity groups?

Membership in any race/ethnicity cohort is determined by the student's race/ethnicity of record when the student **exits** high school.

For districts to obtain accurate race/ethnicity data it is required that districts ask parents/students two questions:

1. Do you associate yourself with the Hispanic/Latino? Yes / No

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2. Please indicate your race (check all that apply).

- a. Asian
- b. Black
- c. Hispanic
- d. American Indian/Alaskan
- e. Pacific Islander
- f. White

If two or more races are selected above and “Hispanic” is not “Y” then the race field will be populated as Multiple Races.

How are the low socioeconomic status (SES) and the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) subgroups defined in the cohort?

Membership for the low SES subgroup is defined similar to the special education subgroup. A student with low SES (via free or reduced lunch status) **at anytime during high school** will be reported in the low SES subgroup. Likewise, a student reported as LEP during anytime in his/her high school career will be reported in the LEP subgroup.

Will second month enrollment continue to be checked against dropouts from the prior year or 10th month report?

Yes, dropouts in the prior year will be cross-checked against second month enrollment for possible reentry into school. This procedure may reduce the number of dropouts in both the cohort reporting for graduation rate and the grades 7-12 event dropout statistic.

Why will the cohort data be lagged?

A state may lag its graduation rate data in order to include summer graduates in AYP determinations. Using lagged graduation rate data in AYP determinations means that the four-year graduation data from the previous academic year will be used in AYP determinations with the assessment results and participation rate for the current academic year.

The graduation rate data will be lagged for one year beginning with the 2010-2011 accountability calculations. The 2009-2010 graduation class cohort will be used for August 2011 accountability determinations in order to include summer graduates.

With the change in graduation rates, will there also be a cohort dropout statistic reported? Or will WV continue to report the 7-12 dropout rate event statistic?

The regulations do not require states or LEAs to report dropout data on their report cards. However, states must annually report a disaggregated state level dropout rate as part of their Consolidated State Performance Plan. West Virginia will continue to report dropout rates calculated using the annual event school dropout rate for students leaving school in a single year.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

When will the four-year adjusted cohort rate reporting begin and for what range of years?

In August 2011, West Virginia will use and report the four-year adjusted cohort rate for AYP requirements. The rate reported will be derived from the cohort that entered ninth grade in school year 2006-2007 and was expected to graduate May 2010, as illustrated in the table below.

Four-year graduation rates included in AYP determinations based on assessments administered in 2010-2011			
Rate	First-time 9th graders	Cohort population	Regular high school diploma recipients
Four-year graduation rate	2006-2007	First-time 9th graders in 2006-2007 plus all students who transfer into the cohort minus students who transfer out, emigrate, or die by the end of the 2009-2010 school year.	All students in the cohort population who receive a regular high school diploma in four years or less by the end of the 2009-2010 school year.

Adapted from *High School Graduation Rate: Non Regulatory Guidance*, U.S. Department of Education, Dec. 2008.

Some states are reporting a 5-year cohort rate in addition to the 4-year rate? Will districts in WV receive credit for 5-year graduates?

Federally, WV will report the 4-year rate and districts/schools will not receive credit for 5-year graduates for AYP.

WV will, however, also report a 5-year cohort rate for local and state purposes. The 5-year rate acknowledges that some students require additional time and personalized supports to meet the standard graduation requirements. The 5-year rate will provide schools and districts another method to evaluate their success in graduating students with regular diplomas.

Is the graduation target changing to 90% for ESEA/NCLB? How will this impact our SPP/APR targets?

Yes, a single, statewide goal of 90% will be used for the four-year cohort graduation rate. This goal will be used in the 2010-2011 accountability year. The annual AYP targets to be met by each school that falls below the 90% four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate will be to improve annually by one-tenth the distance to the state goal or show over a three year average that the distance is reduced by at least one-tenth per year. Each high school and district will have individual targets based on their starting point of the current graduation rate.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Example Calculation Based on Improvement

Please note that (a) 90% is used as the base number for the improvement calculation since the state graduation goal is 90%; and (b) the improvement calculation is **not** based upon a percent change [i.e., $(year2-year1)$ divided by $year1*100$].

County	School	2009 cohort rate	2010 cohort rate
County	High School	75.44%	$86 / 113 = 76.11\%$
County Totals		73.12%	$320 / 415 = 77.11\%$

The county above demonstrated at least 10% improvement to meet AYP, although the example school did not and failed to meet AYP for graduation rate.

County calculation to show 10% improvement:

$$77.11 \text{ (2010 cohort rate)} - 73.12 \text{ (2009 cohort rate)} = \mathbf{3.99}$$

$$90.00 \text{ (the base number that is used for passing)} - 77.11 / 10 = \mathbf{1.3}$$

This means that the overall county would have had to have had at least a **1.3** increase in their graduation rate to improve. The county went up by 3.99 so they passed.

School calculation to show 10% improvement:

$$76.11 \text{ (2010 cohort rate)} - 75.44 \text{ (2009 cohort rate)} = \mathbf{.67}$$

$$90.00 \text{ (the base number that is used for passing)} - 76.11 / 10 = \mathbf{1.4}$$

This means that the overall school would needed to have had at least a 1.4 increase in their graduation rate to improve. The school only went up by 0.67 so they would not have passed.

WVEIS CODING QUESTIONS

What WVEIS codes will be used to “adjust” the cohort?

The following WVEIS enrollment codes will be used to “adjust” the cohort. Students who transfer into the school will be added to the cohort. Students who transfer out to another school or educational program culminating in a standard diploma will be subtracted from the original cohort, as well as deceased students.

T2 – Transferred out of county (*Please note that students who have T2 codes but have not been enrolled by another county in WVEIS will remain in the cohort unless sufficient documentation is provided to the Office of Information Systems.*)

T3 - Transferred out of state

T4 - Transferred out of the United States

T5 - Deceased student

TB - In-county non-public education

TH - In-county home school

TX - Withdraw a foreign exchange student

What special education status/exit code should I use for a student who receives a GED?

The special education Status Code is contingent upon the GED option pursued.

1. If a SWD leaves high school to pursue GED preparation classes, then the appropriate exit code is 90 (i.e., dropout).
2. If a SWD passed the GED Tests in high school while receiving special education services and GED preparation classes, then the student will exit with a Status Code 50 if he/she opts to leave school without meeting all other standard graduation requirements or pursuing a GED Option resulting in a regular diploma.
3. A special education Status Code of 40 (i.e., Received Regular Diploma) should be entered when a student fulfills the requirements outlined in WV Policy 2444.4 for GED Option I or II.

Should status code 50 be entered in the special education record for SWDs who receive their GEDs at MCA?

No. Students who leave the district to attend MCA no longer receive special education services. Because these students are not receiving special education while attending MCA, Status Code 50 is inappropriate. When a SWD physically leaves the district to attend MCA, then the special education office or designee should enter Status Code 35 (i.e., no longer receives special education services) in the special education record.

Please note that all students who transfer to MCA actually remain enrolled in the home district in WVEIS through their enrollment record while physically attending MCA. Registration screen instructions at the school level for students enrolling at MCA are available at the following link: http://wveis.k12.wv.us/wveis2004/documents/EnrollmentMountaineerChallengeAcademy_002.pdf

WVEIS CODING QUESTIONS

How is a student who has passed the GED Tests--but did not pursue Option I or II--coded in the WVEIS registration/enrollment screen?

WV Policy 2444.4 outlines that “The State of West Virginia GED Diploma is earned and the student is counted as a completer but not a dropout or a graduate if the student passes the GED Tests prior to leaving the ‘regular’ high school.”

In WVEIS, these students are assigned a dropout code (1-20) in the WVEIS enrollment screen at the date of exit. However, these students should be removed from the Dropout List the following October with a code of 03 - Received GED Diploma.

Although completers are removed from the dropout list for the dropout statistic, completers are not counted as graduates in the four year adjusted cohort rate. Therefore, the term completer is only relevant to the dropout statistic not the graduation rate calculation

Students successfully completing Option I or II are not defined as completers but as students receiving a regular high school diploma.

Where can I find the graduation cohort data?

The SY 2009-2010 graduation cohort data will be available in the WVEIS NCLB Private Data. The link is entitled 2010 Cohort Graduation Rate for 2011 AYP Status. The data site will include 3 years of cohort data, as well as 2011 AYP status by school and county.



As illustrated in the sample below, principals will have access to the 2010 cohort list by student name, WVEIS number and other demographic variables. Enrollment and registration codes will be available in addition to a column delineating on time graduation status. Five-year graduates and students receiving modified diplomas will be flagged for administrator convenience.

WVEIS CODING QUESTIONS

SAMPLE COHORT LIST

ID	Name	Enr. Code	Reg. Code	Doc. Flag Cohort Year	Race	Sex	Low SES	Spec. Ed.	Grad On Time
640001111	SUZANNE	01	C11	2010	A	F	Y	N	No
830008171	CAMDEN	E8	C12	2010	W	M	N	N	No - 5 Year Grad
333000222	REBECCA	20	C11	2010	W	F	N	N	No
530010000	CHRIS	E8	C12	2010	W	M	Y	N	Yes
430010001	CRYSTAL	E8	C12	2010	W	F	Y	N	Yes
720000222	MONICA	E8	C12	2010	W	F	Y	N	Yes
100003336	RYAN	E8	C12	2010	W	M	Y	Y	No - Modified
040000111	JOE	T3	C09	I/Removed	W	M	N	N	No

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

If you have additional graduation questions for the Q&A guidance document please contact:

Sara Kitts
Data Coordinator
Office of Information Systems
sara.kitts@access.k12.wv.us

Or

Lanai Jennings, Ph.D.
Special Education Data Coordinator
Office of Special Programs
304.558.2696

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GLOBAL21

Students deserve it • The world demands it



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