Building a Grad Nation:

Progress and Challenge in Raising High School Graduation Rates

2017 Annual Update

A Report By:

Civic Enterprises

Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University

Lead Sponsor: AT&T

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Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University

In Partnership with:

Alliance for Excellent Education

America's Promise Alliance

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Letter from General and Mrs. Powell

One sentence in this report speaks volumes: *"Progress since 2001 in raising high school graduation rates has resulted in 2.8 million more students graduating from high school rather than dropping out."*

Thanks to countless caring adults – parents and family members, educators, counselors, mentors, policymakers, clergy, nonprofit and business leaders – 2.8 million more young people have had a chance to reach for their American dream.

If you have had a hand in that, if you have been a part of the GradNation campaign, congratulations and thank you. This work is changing lives.

Still, we have much more to do to make the promise of America real for all young people. We have reduced the number of failing schools and the disparities in graduation rates for students from low-income families, students of color, students with disabilities, and English-language learners. But failing schools and sobering gaps remain.

We must hold to our goal – a national graduation rate of 90 percent by 2020 – and work faster, more collaboratively, and more effectively to reach it. Thankfully, we have the tools we need at hand.

Using better data, it is now possible to pinpoint educational problems by school district, school, and student, focusing help exactly where it is most needed. A richer array of nonprofits and other organizations are involved in this work, guided by better research than ever before. Advances in neuroscience have opened new windows into how children learn and have underscored the importance of early childhood. And scientific breakthroughs on the impact of adversity, high levels of stress, and trauma have told us why some students struggle and how they might be helped.

We do not need to reinvent the wheel. We need to summon the will.

We have seen enough success to prove to ourselves and others that big goals produce big results and that progress is indeed possible. Let us recommit to making more progress for more children and youth more quickly. Our nation's young people are counting on us. Our nation's future hangs in the balance.

General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.)
Founding Chair, America's Promise Alliance

Alma J. Powell
Chair, America's Promise Alliance

Executive Summary

This year signifies two key milestones in the GradNation campaign to raise high school graduation rates. First, the release of the 2015 federal graduation rate data marks five years since states began reporting the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). The ACGR, for the first time, created a common formula for collecting graduation rate statistics across states and provides data on individual student subgroups down to the school and district levels. With five years of ACGR data, it is clearer than ever before where progress is being made and where it is not, which students continue to graduate at higher and lower rates and how this varies by state, and where graduation rate gaps are closing and persisting between student subgroups. Second, there are now just five years of federal graduation rate data reporting between now and the culmination of the GradNation goal to raise high school graduation rates to 90 percent by the Class of 2020. We have made remarkable progress as a nation, but need to accelerate our progress to reach our goal.

These milestones are significant not simply because we are halfway to the endpoint of a 10-year campaign to bring greater attention to the state of high school graduation in our country, but also because they mark an opportunity to learn from the progress and challenges of the first five years of ACGR and to renew our commitment to graduating more students ready to move successfully into the postsecondary or career path of their choice. Since the 2010-11 school year, the national high school graduation rate is up more than four percentage points, rising from 79 percent to a record high of 83.2 percent in 2015. Over this five-year period, graduation rates have increased in almost every state and for every student subgroup. Progress since 2001 in raising high school graduation rates has resulted in 2.8 million more students graduating from high school rather than dropping out.

This progress, however, is tempered by slowing gains, stubborn graduation rate gaps for historically underperforming subgroups, and the significant number of students who still attend low-graduation-rate high schools. The nation needs to nearly double its rate of progress in boosting high school graduation rates in the coming years in order to reach its 90 percent goal by the Class of 2020. Questions also continue to be raised over the validity of increasing graduation rates and the alternative pathways that are being created for the students who fall off track to graduation. In this year's *Building a Grad Nation* report, we examine areas of concern in high school graduation rate reporting, including measurement errors, cases of schools and districts gaming the system, and issues around lowering diploma standards, as well as other areas of progress and remaining challenges on the path to 90 percent.

Where We Stand: High School Graduation in the 2014-15 School Year

The good news is that about half of all states reported high school graduation rates of 85 percent or more in 2015 and are on track to reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020. There are, however, a substantial number of states still graduating less than 80 percent of students in four years and several others with graduation rates in the lower 80s that have remained stagnant for years. The state-level data also show wide variation across states in the graduation outcomes for different subgroups of students with both positive and concerning trends. For every key subgroup of students, there are states where significant progress has been made, and others where gaps remain wide and recent improvements have been minimal. Thus, just as more authority and responsibility for educational improvement are being given to states through the Every Student Succeeds Act, there is growing evidence that beneath continued national progress, we are trending toward a divide between states that are pushing forward in boosting high graduation rates for all and those that are not:

- Ten states reported graduation rates for Hispanic/Latino students below 70 percent and another 22 states had Hispanic/Latino graduation rates between 70 and 80 percent.
- The graduation rate for Black students was less than 70 percent in 12 states and between 70 and 80 percent in 25 other states.
- In 11 states, the graduation rate for low-income students was below 70 percent, and in 28 other states, between 70 and 80 percent of low-income students graduated on time.
- In 33 states, English Language Learners (ELLs) graduated at rates less than 70 percent, and in five of those states, less than 50 percent of ELLs graduated on time.
- Thirty-three states graduated less than 70 percent of their students with disabilities (SWDs), and in four of those states, less than 50 percent of SWDs graduated on time.
- In contrast, 33 states reported graduation rates for White students at 85 percent or more and 43 states graduated 85 percent or more of non-low-income-students.

America must do far more to close its equity gap by focusing on the states, districts, and remaining low-performing schools where students still graduate in low numbers. Fortunately, there are growing numbers of states, districts, and schools from which the nation can learn what has worked.

The GradNation Five Drivers

As we move into the latter stages of the GradNation campaign, it is becoming more evident that the nation will be unable to meet its goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate for *all* students without doubling down on efforts to reach the students who have historically faced the greatest challenges – low-income students, Black and Hispanic/Latino students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners – and improve the low-graduation-rate high schools that disproportionately enroll many of the most vulnerable students. Because of these gaps, we return our focus this year to examining the data on the student subgroups and schools that have the greatest distance to travel.

Low-Income Students

Nearly half of the country's class of 2015 cohort – 48.2 percent, a slight increase from 2014 – came from low-income families. Nationally, the gap between low-income students and their middle- and upper-income peers now stands at 13.7 percentage points, a slight decrease from last year. Behind this national average, however, there is great variation across states. The graduation rate gap between low-income and non-low-income students ranges from a high of 24.2 percentage points in South Dakota to a low of 4.5 percentage points in Indiana. In nearly half of all states, the gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers is 15 percentage points or greater, and in 18 additional states the gap is at least 10 points. Yet, in nine states the low-income/non-low-income gap is less than 10 percentage points, indicating that some states are learning how to mitigate the impacts of poverty on graduation rates.

Black and Hispanic/Latino Students

Black and Hispanic/Latino students made the greatest gains – 9 and 15 percentage points, respectively – in high school graduation rates (as measured by the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate) between 2006 and 2012. These gains have continued in the ACGR era, with graduation rates for Black students increasing by 7.6 percentage points and rates for Hispanic/Latino students increasing by 6.8 percentage points since 2011. The gains made by Black and Hispanic/Latino students and the corresponding narrowing of the graduation gaps between these students and their White peers are significant, but these students still have graduation rates in the 70s and the Black-White and Hispanic/Latino-White graduation rate gaps remain far too large.

Across the nation, Black and Hispanic students comprised 38.5 percent of the 2015 cohort but made up 54 percent of the students who failed to graduate on time. Conversely, White students were 52.7 percent of 2015 cohort but just 38.9 percent of all non-graduates.

States vary considerably in the rate of progress for Black and Hispanic/Latino students and in the absolute graduation rate levels achieved. Here again we see evidence of a growing divide between those states that are significantly closing gaps and raising levels and those that are not.

Students with Disabilities

In all, 33 states reported high school graduation rates for special education students below 70 percent, and nearly half of those 33 had graduation rates for students with disabilities below 60 percent. Four states – South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Nevada – graduated less than half of their special education students.

The graduation rate gaps between students with disabilities and those without show how stark the contrast truly is. Nationally, the gap now stands at 21.1 percentage points. In 29 states, students in the general education population graduate at rates of 20 percentage points or more than their special education peers. In another 18 states, the gap between students with disabilities and those without is between 10 and 20 percentage points. In only three states is the graduation gap less than 10 points.

English Language Learners

The number of ELL students in America's public schools is climbing, increasing from 8.8 percent (an estimated 4.2 million students) in 2003-04 to 9.2 percent (an estimated 4.5 million) in 2013-14. ELL students are concentrated heavily in six states, five of which are in the west. The District of Columbia and six states – Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas – had 10 percent or more of their public school students as English Language Learners.

In states with significant populations of ELL students, graduation rates for this demographic remain low. In Arizona and New York, barely a third of ELL students are graduating on time, while Hawaii, Maryland, and Virginia graduate less than half of their ELL students. The 10 states with the highest proportion of ELL non-graduates comprised 66 percent of all ELL non-graduates in the country, while over one-third of English Language Learners who failed to graduate on time are located in California alone. In California and New Mexico, over one-third of the students who failed to graduate on time were English Language Learners.

Low-Graduation-Rate High Schools

Since the start of our reporting on high school graduation rates, we have identified large high schools (enrolling 300 or more students) that have either failed to promote more than 60 percent of their students from the 9th grade to the 12th grade, or in the ACGR era, graduate fewer than two-thirds of their students on time. Given their significant student populations, these schools play major roles in raising state graduation rates and are, in many cases, home to large numbers of disadvantaged students. Since 2002, the number of large, low-graduation-rate high schools has been cut in half and there are now fewer than 900,000 students enrolled in them – down from 2.5 million.

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are required to identify high schools enrolling 100 or more students that graduate less than two-thirds of students on time for intervention and support. Altogether, based on the ESSA definition, there were 2,249 low-graduation-rate high schools in 2015, making up just 12 percent of all public high schools enrolling 100 or more students. Fifty-six percent of low-graduation-rate high schools were in large to small cities and 25 percent were in suburban areas, while just 8 and 10 percent were found in small towns and rural areas, respectively.

For the purposes of this year's report, we break down low-graduation-rate high schools into two broad types – regular and alternative – due to both the distinct school

missions presupposed by the NCES definition of these school types and because these schools make up the majority of high schools in the country. District-operated brick-and-mortar high schools make up 91 percent of all regular high schools and 60 percent of all regular low-graduation-rate schools. Regular brick-and-mortar charter schools comprise eight percent of all regular high schools and 29 percent of all regular low-graduation-rate schools.[i] For comparison's sake, 75 percent of regular district-operated brick-and-mortar high schools are high-graduation-rate high schools – graduating 85 percent or more of students. Fifty-three percent of regular brick-and-mortar charter schools are high-graduation-rate schools. Virtual schools still make up a small percentage of all public schools in the country, but despite their small numbers and presence in less than half of all states, they still amount to roughly one in ten regular low-graduation-rate schools.

Alternative schools and programs, defined by the US Department of Education as "designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools,"[1] have become a hot-button issue as more of these schools open to serve students who have fallen off track to graduation. Though alternative schools make up roughly six percent of all high schools enrolling 100 or more students, they account for 30 percent of all low-graduation-rate high schools. Sixty percent of alternative schools and programs graduate fewer than 67 percent of their students in four years. Alternative high schools served just under 300,000 students in 2015. Compared to the student population in all high schools, Black and Hispanic/Latino students (59 percent versus 52 percent) and low-income (71 percent versus 46 percent) students are over-represented in alternative high schools.

In this year's report, we also explore the major issues surrounding alternative schools and programs, particularly in regards to inconsistencies in the data on these schools and the challenges that have arisen in establishing appropriate accountability systems for them. Though the number of these schools is small, the growth in the sector, especially of for-profit alternative schools, has led to serious concerns about their quality and whether they are capable of providing a meaningful learning experience and diploma to the nation's most vulnerable students. Though the challenges posed by alternative schools are far too complex to be examined fully here and do warrant further study, we lay out some of the concerns that have been brought to light to help bring greater attention to this issue.

Policy Recommendations

As the GradNation campaign moves into its final phase, we urge adoption and implementation of the following policies and practices to continue raising graduation rates and ensure students are prepared to succeed as they move on to postsecondary education and employment:

- **Create high-quality ESSA implementation plans and maintain accountability for underserved students.** To ensure that states create high-quality ESSA implementation plans, we urge states to adhere closely to the statute on identifying low-graduation-rate high schools as those with graduation rates of 67 percent or less, continue to use the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate in this determination, and give substantial weight to graduation rates in state accountability plans.

i Regular brick-and-mortar district schools and regular brick-and-mortar (B&M) charter schools tend to serve different student populations, particularly given that charter schools tend to be located in urban areas. When comparing all regular B&M district and charter schools, charter schools serve a more disadvantaged student population; however, low-graduation-rate B&M district schools serve a more disadvantaged student population than low-graduation-rate B&M charter schools. For complete demographic breakdowns, please see Appendix M.

- **Create evidence-based plans to improve low-graduation-rate high schools.** With the ESSA requirement that states identify and intervene in high schools graduating fewer than two-thirds of students, we urge states and school districts to adopt evidence-based practices, including implementing early warning systems to identify and support students who are off track based on their attendance, behavior, and course performance records; making social and emotional learning a part of the curriculum; and providing students with high-quality postsecondary and workforce engagement opportunities.
- **Get the cohort rate right.** The four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) remains the "gold standard" measure for collecting and reporting on high school graduation rates, but there is still room for improvement that would provide even greater uniformity and transparency. Issues of variability in determining cohort graduation rates reduce accuracy and comparability across states, and we recommend taking steps to resolve these issues and strengthen ACGR.
- **Report extended-year graduation rates.** Requiring states to report extended-year graduation rates for students graduating in five and six years would achieve two important goals. First, it would create a policy incentive (and often, financial incentive) for schools and districts to keep off-track students in school and re-engage those who may have left the system. Second, in last year's *Building a Grad Nation* report, we found, using data from states already reporting extended-year graduation rates, that when extended-year graduation rates were included, the national average would be raised by roughly four percentage points and could provide a clearer picture of how many students ultimately earn a high school diploma.
- **Strengthen accountability for non-traditional high schools.** Alternative schools are intended to provide a differentiated learning environment to students whose needs are not met in a traditional high school, and given their student populations, accountability measures pose a complicated challenge. While some states and districts have created high-quality alternative accountability systems, far too many alternative schools and programs, with some of the poorest academic outcomes of any school, are skirting accountability. To ensure young people have access to the best possible alternative options, greater efforts must be made to strengthen accountability for these schools.
- **Convene a next generation Governors' summit on high school and postsecondary completion.** In 1989, President George H.W. Bush convened the nation's governors to establish a set of national goals to be achieved in K-12 education by 2020. One of the key goals to come out of the *Goals 2020* report was to raise the high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent, which President Bush and the next three presidents adopted as a central part of their education platform. Then, in 2005, all 50 state governors agreed to voluntarily implement the common, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate formula, with all states committing to reporting graduation rates using this metric by 2010. Together, *Goals 2020* and the National Governors Association Graduation Rate Compact made raising high school graduation rates a key national priority and developed a reliable, common metric with which to measure them. Now, with ESSA putting power back into the hands of state educational officials and lawmakers, we call for a third governors' summit to set a new direction for raising high school graduation rates and measuring progress, and creating a plan of action for ensuring more students graduate high school ready for postsecondary and the increasing demands of the workforce.

Introduction

For three decades, from the mid-1970s until the turn of the century, the nation's high school graduation rate remained in the low 70s. This stagnation occurred despite the fact that raising those rates had often been a presidential priority and highlighted as a sign of progress over the last century in the seminal report, *A Nation at Risk*. After steady increases in high school graduation rates from 1870 through 1970, the nation experienced 30 years of flat-lining rates and more than one million students dropping out of high school every year. The nation took a positive turn, as high school graduation rates began to rise in 2002, reaching a historic milestone of 80 percent in 2012. This year, the national graduation rate hit 83.2 percent, another record high. Over the last 15 years, these gains have translated into 2.8 million more students graduating from high school, rather than dropping out, resulting in important consequences to the individual students, the economy, and our society. In addition, there are now roughly 1,000 large, low-graduation-rate high schools – schools producing the most significant numbers of non-graduates – and less than 900,000 students attending them, down from more than 2,000 such schools and 2.5 million students enrolled in them in 2002.

As graduation rates have risen, there has been both applause and apprehension. Better data; reforms at the school, district, state, and federal levels that followed evidence of effectiveness; accountability for progress; and ramped up supports for students and teachers all signaled the gains were real. At the same time, concerns emerged about the collection and reporting of data, the increase in the number of alternative schools with lower standards for graduation, multiple high school diplomas with varying standards of excellence, and whether increasing high school graduation rates were actually translating into gains in postsecondary enrollment and attainment. Equity gaps in graduation rates between students of various backgrounds both closed in some areas of the country and persisted in others, causing further hope and alarm.

Each year, the *Building a Grad Nation* report presents both the progress made and challenges that remain toward meeting the 90 percent graduation rate goal by the Class of 2020 set by the campaign and adopted by President Barack Obama. Although the high school graduation rate continues to be a hope spot for the nation, those gains have slowed and the momentum of the past decade has been met with intense scrutiny over the legitimacy of these gains. A healthy skepticism helps to ensure increasing graduation rates nationwide translate into more students leaving high school prepared for college and career success. Accordingly, in this report we take an objective look at the facts about progress to date, acknowledge the hard questions that have risen, provide answers where available, and highlight ongoing, legitimate concerns.

Calculation of the High School Graduation Rate Has Improved

Improvements in the graduation rate are due in large part to major policy changes over the last fifteen years, one of which was improving how the high school graduation rate is calculated. Previous efforts to calculate the high school graduation rate – such as the Cumulative Promotion Index generated by Chris Swanson for Diplomas Count at Education Week Research Center, a division of Editorial Projects in Education; the approach of Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute; the Promoting Power Index of Johns Hopkins University; and the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate, or AFGR reported by the National Center for Education Statistics – were each estimates. Today, thanks to a 2005 Graduation Rate Compact by all 50 Governors and the National Governors Association, and a 2008 federal regulation that adopted and improved that calculation, all 50 states report the same four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). The ACGR is no longer an estimate, but a calculation that accounts for every single student with an individual student identifier. This increased the nation's confidence in its ability to measure progress and challenge across schools, districts, and states.

The four-year ACGR is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently adjusted by adding any students who transfer into the cohort over the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during that same period. ACGR is the first graduation rate that adjusts the size of a cohort, which allows for an accurate calculation of the percentage of students who are graduating from high school on time.

In terms of being able to examine long-term trends, it is reassuring that for the years when we have both ACGR data and graduation rate data based on the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (which was the best estimate of high school graduation rates before ACGR accounted for the progress of individual students) in the majority of states, and for the nation as whole, the two measures have found similar results. We have seen consistent gains in graduation rates under each measure, with the national AFGR less than one percentage point higher than the ACGR by last count.

Since 2001, nearly three million more students have graduated from high school rather than dropping out – with benefits to individuals, the economy, and the nation. Thanks to the rising tide of graduation rates, 2.8 million more students have graduated from high school rather than dropping out. Based on what is known about the benefits of high school graduation, this signifies an additional 2.8 million Americans who:

- Are more likely to be employed and earn a higher income than their peers who dropout;
- Are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or require social services;
- Have better health and higher life expectancy; and
- Are more active citizens, in terms of higher rates of voting and volunteering.

What's more, increasing the high school graduation rate translates into widespread economic benefits to the nation. According to research from the Alliance for Excellent Education, reaching a 90 percent high school graduation rate for just one cohort would increase national annual earnings by $72.1 billion and lead to a $1.1 billion increase in federal tax revenue.[2]

High School Graduation is Not the Final Goal

Graduation from high school, of course, must not be an end but rather one point on the path toward adult success. As the 21st Century economy continues to become more demanding, a high school diploma is not enough for recent graduates to find long-term employment. Currently, 59 percent of jobs require some postsecondary education, and research by Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce indicates that by 2020, that portion of jobs will grow to 65 percent.[3]

Fortunately, the rise in high school graduation rates has been equally matched by promising advances in students accessing postsecondary education. Today's 25- to 34-year-olds have the highest postsecondary attainment rates in the nation's history. Including high-quality certificates, nearly half of current 25- to 34-year-olds have postsecondary credentials, a substantial increase from the one-third of 25- to 34-year-olds in the 1960s and 70s that earned at least an associate's degree.[4] But half the young adult population is clearly not adequate to meet the labor market demand, so our national postsecondary attainment goals must be stretched.

While significant achievement and attainment gaps remain among students of various subgroups, progress in both high school graduation rates and postsecondary attainment have been driven by Black and Hispanic/Latino students. Hispanic/Latino students have seen their high school graduation rate increase by 6.8 percentage points over the past five years and postsecondary enrollment double from 2000 to 2014. High school graduation rates for Black students increased by 7.6 percentage points since 2010, and their postsecondary enrollment rates nearly doubled from 2002 to 2014.[5] As a result, the 25- to 34-year-olds of 2025 are on track to be the first cohort of young adults in recent history to experience both gains in postsecondary attainments and closing of opportunity gaps.

The credit for the progress to date is owed to the remarkable energy of students, families, and teachers at schools across the nation, as well as efforts by key leaders at the federal, state, and district levels. Effective reforms include working to increase teacher quality; raising expectations by adopting an "every-student-counts culture;" implementing Early Warning Data Information and Intervention Systems that used chronic absenteeism, behavioral problems, and course performance in reading and math to identify and intervene with students at-risk of dropping out; marshaling communities through action-forcing summits to get good data on their high school dropout challenges and develop concrete plans of action to address them; catalyzing community-based organizations to mobilize more boots on the ground to provide the necessary supports in and after school to off-track or otherwise vulnerable students; eliminating disciplinary practices that disproportionately impact Black and Hispanic/Latino students; and prompting heightened expectations and school accountability thanks to the reforms of No Child Left Behind in 2001 and later federal regulations to get schools, districts, and states to focus on the problem, set graduation rate goals and hold themselves accountable over time for achieving them.

Skepticism Over the Authenticity of Graduation Gains

Rising graduation rates have triggered both celebration of notable social progress and skepticism over its authenticity. The skepticism has been fueled by both measurement errors and instances in which some have attempted to game the system, both perhaps inevitable circumstances of introducing new measurement systems and increased accountability. The key question is not whether this has occurred – it has – but rather the extent and impact on the reported graduation rate improvements. A third concern expressed is that the reason more diplomas have been awarded is that the bar for achieving one has been lowered and, as a result, while we may have more high school graduates, we have fewer students prepared for postsecondary success, making the graduation rate gains less meaningful. Here the evidence is clear that such fears are over-stated. We turn now to look at each of these concerns in more detail.

Measurement Error

While the 2008 US Department of Education regulations that required all states to use the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (which measures how many first time freshmen graduate four years later, adjusting for transfers in and out of the school) presented states with a clear and common means to measure graduation rates, it left several key definitions up to states to decide. Thus, calculating ACGR presented states with choices that could have led to possible variations in how states calculate their high school graduation rates. These issues ranged from how to define first-time 9th graders and when four years is up to flexibility provided to states to define the requirements for a diploma, how to treat special education students, and how to account for alternative schools that awarded both GEDs and diplomas and students who shifted to home schooling late in their high school progression. We have identified about a dozen issues with the National Center for Education Statistics that merit careful attention in terms of improving data collection among districts and states. These issues, moreover, can occur systematically at the state level or lead to reporting errors from individual school districts and schools.

There are two main ways systematic measurement errors, which would be the most concerning in terms of impact on national and state level graduation rates, could operate. First, they could lead to states inappropriately removing students more likely to drop out from the cohort. If this were occurring, data would show cohort sizes shrinking disproportionately to enrollment as classes progressed through high school. Analysis from the 2016 *Building a Grad Nation* report compared the size of the ACGR cohorts for the classes of 2011 and 2014 with the size of the cohorts' actual ninth grade enrollments in 2007-08 and 2010-11 (the years those two cohorts entered ninth grade), making it possible to compare the count of ninth grade students with the adjusted cohort for that grade. By doing so, it is possible to see if states are wrongfully removing students from their data to boost graduation rates by shrinking cohorts over time. The data, however, showed that cohort sizes shrank at a rate comparable to decreases in ninth grade enrollment, as the overall number of high school students declined nationwide. In 34 states, changes in the ACGR cohort over time were similar to concurrent changes in ninth grade enrollment. In an additional nine states, the ACGR cohorts actually grew in size or shrank at a much slower rate than the rate ninth grade enrollment was decreasing. It is only in six states that cohorts shrink at a more substantial rate than the overall ninth grade enrollment. Thus, while inappropriately removing students from cohorts may be a cause of inflated graduation rates in some individual school districts, it is likely not an issue for the national trend of rising graduation rates.

Within the past year, two state-level examples emerged of diplomas being awarded to students who did not fully meet state graduation requirements. The first example is Alabama, which was brought to attention through a federal audit. In this case, some local school districts were not following or misinterpreted state guidelines in awarding high school diplomas to special education students (which in a single year, led to a substantial rise in the graduation rates of special education students), and in ensuring students had the correct distribution of high school credits to graduate. In Tennessee, the state department of education self-reported about 20 percent of their students graduated with the correct number of credits but did not meet proper course requirements (e.g., students were missing either the two foreign language credits or the specific required social studies courses specified by state policy). Neither state has found evidence of systematic cheating on the part of teachers and school administrators, but in both cases, these measurement and reporting issues are of sufficient scale that they likely led to a modest inflation of graduation rates in two states, which have otherwise shown significant improvement in graduation rates, over time, and in both cases these gains predated the recent measurement errors.[6]

Gaming the System

More recently, an in-depth investigation by National Public Radio brought to light serious concerns about states and school districts gaming the system in order to artificially boost their graduation rates. Others have pointed to practices such as the over usage of credit recovery programs and schools pushing at-risk students into alternative schools or homeschooling to argue that some high school graduation rate improvement is more illusion than reality.

While mounting evidence shows that fears over at-risk students being moved off their high school's books into alternative or virtual schools, removed from the cohort entirely by being pushed into homeschooling or coded as moving into the adult education system, are legitimate, these efforts are much more problematic in terms of district- and school-level graduation rates than state or national rates. In most cases, the graduation rates of the alternative or virtual schools students transfer into are counted in calculating the state's high school graduation rate. The exceptions are homeschooling and when alternative schools can remove students from their books by coding that they have transferred into adult education programs. In these cases, students can be removed from state graduation cohorts as well. Thus, this is an area for careful monitoring. At the present time, however, these sectors are not large enough on a national level to have significant impact on national graduation rates. Only 296,193 students attended alternative schools with an enrollment of 100 or more students that reported ACGR in 2015, which is fewer than two percent of all the students enrolled in such schools across the country. In addition, according to NCES, just 2.5 percent of all 9th to 12th grade students in the United States were homeschooled in 2012, the last year for which data is available.[7]

Lowering the Bar to Receive a Diploma

The concerns that while more diplomas are being awarded, they may mean less than they once did are rooted in two data points. First, the fact that within the past two years, some states have created alternative paths to earning a high school diploma, with different course-taking and testing requirements, and second, that assorted measures of college readiness have not shown the same gains as high school graduation rates.

In the first case, while the movement by some states to create multiple pathways to high school diplomas bears watching, it is not itself evidence that the bar has been lowered. In some cases, these efforts have been driven by desires to elevate career and technical education by allowing students to substitute a series of linked career preparation classes for other graduation requirements. There is evidence that students who complete both a core college prep curriculum and a CTE pathway fare the best in the labor market. Second, these changes to diploma requirements come after a decade-long push to raise graduation requirements in many states. All of the rapid gains in graduation rates occurred in an era when it got harder, not easier, to obtain a high school diploma. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has tracked states' course requirements and exit exam requirements for a standard high school graduation from 2008-13. Rather than seeing evidence of states easing graduation standards, NCES found that the vast majority of graduation requirements remained unchanged and that in a significant number of states, graduation requirements actually increased. The data show that while one state (Illinois) made it easier to receive a diploma, 13 states actually increased their graduation requirements over that period of time.[8] With some exceptions like the Grand Canyon Diploma in Arizona and past issues with the overuse of "evidence-based graduation waivers" in Indiana, we do not see much evidence that more students are graduating because of lower standards.

Moreover, if additional students were graduating high school because states and schools were lowering standards, as more of these graduates went on to take the ACT and SAT, one would expect test scores to decline as graduation rates increase. Once again, however, the evidence does not support this. Scores on the ACT College and Career Readiness Benchmark have either held steady or increased slightly since 2009, even as the percentage of graduates taking the ACT exam has continued to rise, from approximately 40 percent in 2005 compared to approximately 59 percent in 2015.[9] SAT scores have remained similarly consistent: in 2009, 44 percent of students who took the SAT met the College Board's College and Career Readiness Standards, and in 2015, 42 percent still met those same standards.[10] While this does not demonstrate increased rigor, it also does not substantiate claims that standards are being lowered to allow more students to reach graduation.

Advance Placement course taking is also used as another indicator for college readiness, as AP courses are typically considered to have the rigor of a college-level course and a score of 3 or higher on an AP exam can be used for college credit. Since 2004, however, the total number of graduates taking an AP course has increased from 558,993 in 2004 to more than 1 million in 2013. The number of students passing at least one AP course has risen in tandem, from 351,647 in 2004 to 607,505 in 2013.

This trend holds true for low-income students as well, who historically take AP courses and exams at far lower rates than their non-low-income peers.[11]

As we reported in detail in our recent report on college readiness and postsecondary attainment trends, two things are true. With more low-income and minority students graduating high school than ever before - even with flat college readiness outcomes - it means even as the population of high school graduates becomes less advantaged, more of them are graduating high school prepared for postsecondary success than in decades prior when high school graduates were more advantaged. At the same time, it is also true that about 17 percent of the graduating cohort is not prepared for postsecondary success, and that also means that as more students graduate high school, the overall number of students who graduate high school unprepared to continue their education is growing as well.

In short, there is no evidence to support the fear that more diplomas have been awarded because of widespread lowering of the bar to obtain a diploma. In reality, more diplomas have been earned in an era when it became harder to receive them, and by a less advantaged student population. At the same time, however, there are more students who have earned a high school diploma who are not ready to succeed in postsecondary schooling in an era where that is more paramount than ever.

In Sum

High school graduation should not be treated as an end point. It is just one indicator along the sequence to adult success. Schools must be preparing students for post-secondary education and employment. For this reason, it is important to take any concerns with graduation rates and the value of diplomas seriously.

In addition, to paint a more accurate picture of the high school graduation landscape, more states should report extended year graduation rates. Research shows that it is important for students to graduate within four years and that failing to do so increases a student's risk of never completing high school. Yet, not all students have ideal circumstances and some students require an additional year or two. Currently, 31 states report five-year graduation rates, and just 13 report six-year rates.[12] On average, an additional year of schooling led to a three percentage point increase in overall graduation rates, while the sixth-year increase shows an additional gain of one percentage point. Completing high school is always preferred to students dropping out, even if it takes longer than the typical four years.

While ongoing issues in states like Tennessee and Alabama demand further investigation and credit recovery and alternative schools must be scrutinized to ensure they are not being utilized as a means to shirk accountability, the evidence is clear: high school graduation rates and postsecondary enrollment and achievement are overwhelming hope spots for the nation.

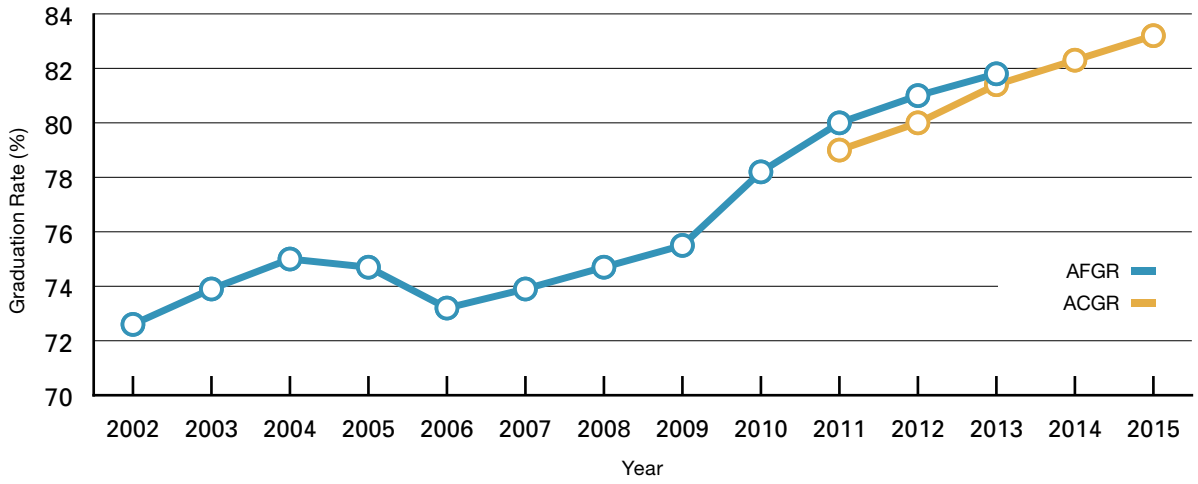
Where We Stand: High School Graduation in 2015

High school graduation rates began to grow in the early 2000s after 30 years of relative stagnation, and the percentage of students graduating on time nationwide rose more than 10 percentage points between 2002 and 2015. The national high school graduation rate hit 83.2 percent in 2015 – the highest rate ever recorded – but for the second year in a row, graduation rates rose by less than one percent. To reach a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020, the nation will need to achieve and maintain an annual rate of growth of 1.36 percentage points for each of the next five years.

The good news is that state-level 2014-15 Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) data show that about half of states reported high school graduation rates of 85 percent or more and are on track to reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020. Many of these states are in that position after a decade or more of hard work to increase their graduation rates. It is in the other half of states that currently are not on track to reach 90 percent by 2020 that the greatest challenges remain. A substantial number of states still graduate less than 80 percent of students on time, despite several of these states showing substantial progress over the past decade. There are also several states with graduation rates in the lower 80s that have stagnated in recent years. The state-level data also continue to show concerning trends in many states for key student subgroups, even as other states have shown it is possible to achieve considerably higher outcomes for these students:

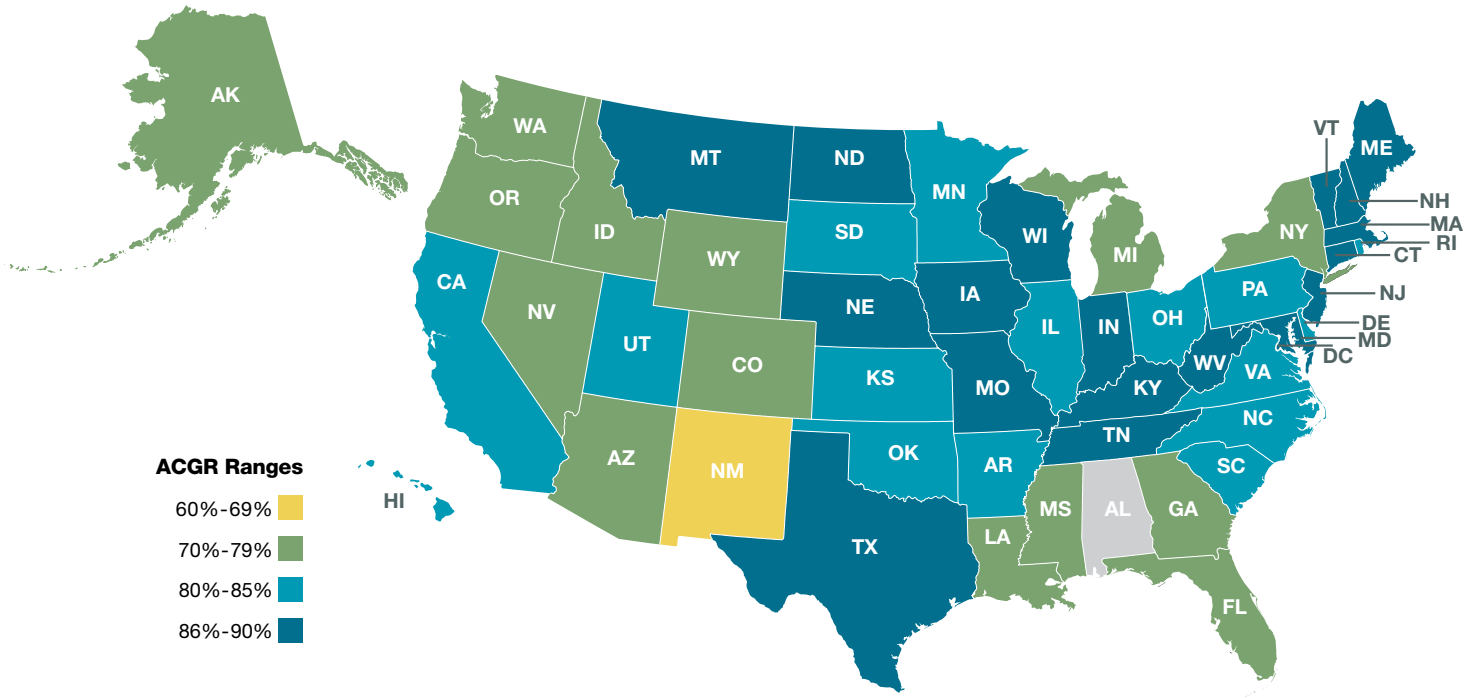
- Ten states reported graduation rates for Hispanic/Latino students below 70 percent and another 22 states had Hispanic/Latino graduation rates between 70 and 80 percent.
- The graduation rate for Black students was less than 70 percent in 12 states and between 70 and 80 percent in 25 other states.
- In 11 states, the graduation rate for low-income students was below 70 percent, and in 28 other states, between 70 and 80 percent of low-income students graduated on time.
- In 33 states, English Language Learners (ELLs) graduated at rates less than 70 percent, and in five of those states, less than 50 percent of ELLs graduated on time.
- Thirty-three states graduate less than 70 percent of their students with disabilities (SWDs), and in four of those states, less than 50 percent of SWDs graduated on time.

Figure 1. Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), 2002-2015



Sources: Stetser, M. & Stillwell, R. (2014). Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School Years 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2014-391). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Department of Education (2013). Provisional Data File: SY2012-13 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Figure 2. US ACGR Ranges by State, 2014-15



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

In the sections that follow, we dig deeper into these sub-groups to illuminate where progress is being made and challenges remain.

Driver 1: Low-Income Students

Nearly half of the country's class of 2015 cohort – 48.2 percent, a slight increase from 2014 – came from low-income families. There were vast disparities in the percentages of low-income students found across states, ranging from a low of 26 percent in North Dakota to a high of 67.2 percent in California. Overall, nearly two-thirds of states have student populations that are at least 40 percent low income and 16 states have student populations that are at least half low income. If the country is going to reach a 90 percent graduation rate for all students, this is clearly a population of students that must be supported.

- Across nearly all states non-low-income students graduate at relatively high rates. Twenty-six states graduate 90 percent or more of their non-low-income students. An additional 17 states graduate between 85 and 90 percent of their non-low-income students. Only four states – Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Oregon – have non-low-income graduation rates below the national average for all students.
- These statistics are in stark contrast to those of low-income students. Five states – Tennessee, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, and Texas – have low-income graduation rates above the national average of 83.2 percent, and in so doing, show that better outcomes for low-income students are possible. An additional five states graduate more than 80 percent of these students. Thus, in only about one in five states do low-income students currently have at least a four in five chance of graduating from high school.
- Eleven states graduate less than 70 percent of their low-income students, while another nine states graduate less than 75 percent of their low-income students. What is revealing about the states with the lowest graduation rates for low-income students is that it contains both states in which a high percentage of high school students are low income like Nevada and New Mexico and states where low-income students are a more modest percentage of all students like South Dakota and Minnesota. In both cases, there are other states with both higher and lower percentages of low-income students, such as California and Kentucky, which have been able to achieve greater success with low-income students, challenging any notions that low outcomes for low-income students are inevitable.

Table 1. States with a Low-Income Graduation Rate Below 70 Percent, 2014-15

STATE	Percent of Low-Income Students in the Cohort	Low-income ACGR
Alaska	35.8%	66.6%
Colorado	46.0%	65.5%
Michigan	42.0%	67.5%
Minnesota	36.5%	67.2%
Nevada	61.1%	63.7%
New Mexico	58.2%	63.5%
Ohio	40.7%	68.7%
Oregon	56.3%	66.4%
South Dakota	30.1%	67.0%
Washington	51.2%	68.1%
Wyoming	39.6%	66.0%

- The graduation rate gap between low-income and non-low-income students ranges from a high of 24.2 percentage points in South Dakota to a low of 4.5 percentage points in Indiana. In nearly half of all states, the gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers is 15 percentage points or greater, and in 18 additional states the gap is at 10 least points. In nine states, however, the low-income/non-low-income gap is less than 10 percentage points.

For the majority of states, much of the work to reach a 90 percent graduation rate remains with low-income students. In five states – Louisiana, West Virginia, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and California – more than 8 in 10 students who failed to graduate high school in 2015 were low income, and low-income students make up more than 70 percent of non-graduates in a total of 17 states. On the other end of the spectrum, low-income students make up less than half of non-graduates in just five states. Nationally, 68.5 percent of non-graduates are low-income students while 48.2 percent of students in the 2015 cohort were low-income students. What is informative about the low-income challenge is that it is faced by wealthy and poor states alike. Connecticut is among the wealthiest states and Mississippi among the poorest, yet they have

an identical percent of non-graduates who are low income (78 percent). It is also revealing that in states like California and West Virginia, which have among the best graduation rate outcomes for low-income students in the nation (both above 80 percent), we find that nearly all of the students in these states that are still not graduating are low income (over 80 percent). This tells us that collective and collaborative work to understand what it will take to graduate all low-income students will help states both close to and far from reaching their 90 percent goal.

Table 2. States with the Highest Proportion of Non-Graduates who are Low Income, 2014-15

STATE	Percent of Non-Graduates in the State who are Low-Income	Percent of Low-Income Students Within the 2015 Cohort	Low-Income ACGR
Louisiana	84.4%	65.0%	70.8%
West Virginia	84.1%	66.4%	82.9%
Rhode Island	83.6%	57.6%	75.6%
Tennessee	83.1%	60.9%	83.5%
California	82.1%	67.2%	78.0%
Kansas	79.5%	50.1%	77.3%
Vermont	79.1%	44.3%	78.0%
Connecticut	78.8%	41.9%	75.9%
Mississippi	78.2%	65.2%	70.5%
Nevada	77.3%	61.1%	63.7%

Driver 2: Black and Hispanic/Latino Students

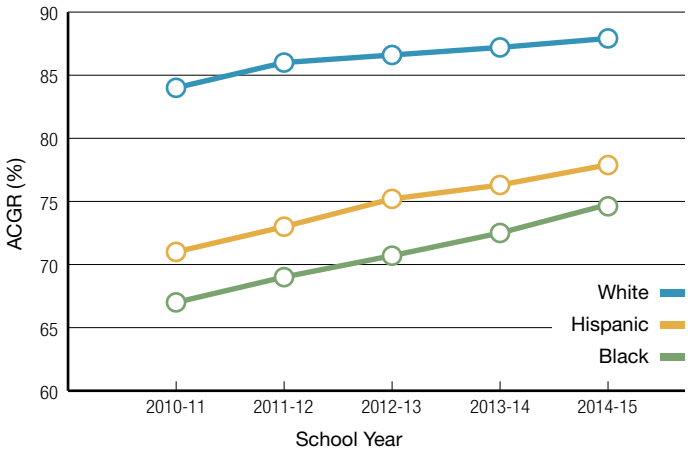
Black and Hispanic/Latino students made the greatest gains – 9 and 15 percentage points, respectively – in high school graduation rates (as measured by the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate) between 2006 and 2012. These gains have continued in the ACGR era, with graduation rates for Black students increasing 7.6 percentage points and rates for Hispanic/Latino students rising by 6.8 percentage points since 2011. In the ACGR era (2011 to 2015), graduation rates for Black students have risen roughly 1.5 percentage points per year, more than double the yearly rate of improvement for White students (0.72 percentage points), which has helped narrow the graduation rate gap from 17 points in 2011 to 13 points in 2015. The yearly rate of improvement for Hispanic/Latino students (1.36 percentage points) also nearly doubled that of White students, leading to a narrowing of the Hispanic/Latino-White graduation rate gap from 13 percentage points in 2011 to 10.9 points in 2015.

The graduation rate gains by Black and Hispanic/Latino students over time and the corresponding narrowing of the graduation race gaps between these students and their White peers are significant, but these students still have graduation rates in the 70s and the Black-White and Hispanic/Latino-White graduation rate gaps remain far too large. Though the gap reduction between these student subgroups can largely be attributed to the increases made by Black and Hispanic/Latino students, the slowing growth by White students also plays a role. Historically, however, White students graduate at much higher rates and are on track to reach a 90 percent high school graduation rate by 2020, unlike their Black and Hispanic/Latino peers.

How States Are Doing

Twelve states graduated fewer than 70 percent of their Black students in 2015. The good news is this is down from 17 states in 2014. The 2015 cohorts in these states range from about one percent Black to more than 20 percent, and they are found in every region of the country. This tells us that in states with both few and considerable numbers of Black students, graduation rates can remain very low. Though graduation rates for Black students in some of these states have risen steadily since 2011, the growth has not been enough to bring Black students above the 70 percent mark. Still, it is important to distinguish between states that have seen notable progress, like Florida and Michigan (even if they started from very low baselines), and states where progress has been minimal at best. In states like New York, Ohio and Wisconsin, with Black student cohorts of roughly 18, 16, and 10 percent, respectively, graduation rates for Black students have been virtually stagnant over the past five years.

Figure 3. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for Black, Hispanic/Latino, and White Students from 2010-11 to 2014-15



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/achievement-gap-narrows-high-school-graduation-rates-minority-students-improve-faster-rest-nation

Table 3. States Graduating Less than 70 Percent of Black Students, 2014-15

STATE	% of Black Students in Cohort	Black Student ACGR 2014-15	Change in Black Student ACGR 2011 to 2015
Colorado	4.90%	69.90%	4.9
Florida	22.90%	68%	9
Michigan	18.40%	67.30%	10.3
Minnesota	10%	62%	13
Nevada	10.60%	55.50%	12.5
New Mexico	2.30%	61%	1
New York	18.30%	66.50%	2.5
Ohio	15.70%	59.70%	0.7
Oregon	2.60%	63%	9
Washington	4.70%	68.80%	3.8
Wisconsin	9.50%	64.10%	0.1
Wyoming	1.30%	68%	10

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Table 4. States Graduating Less than 70 Percent of Hispanic/Latino Students, 2014-15

STATE	% of Hispanic/Latino Students in 2015 Cohort	Hispanic/Latino ACGR 2014-15	Change in Hispanic/Latino Student ACGR 2011 to 2015
Colorado	30.20%	67.60%	7.6
Minnesota	6.80%	65.60%	14.6
Mississippi	2.40%	68%	-7
Nevada	37.80%	66.70%	13.7
New Mexico	57.80%	67.20%	8.2
New York	21.60%	66%	3
Ohio	3.70%	69.90%	3.9
Oregon	19.70%	67.40%	9.4
Pennsylvania	8.70%	69.50%	4.5
Washington	18.40%	69.60%	6.6

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Table 5. States with the Highest Proportion of Non-Graduates who are Black, 2014-15

STATE	Percent of Non-Graduates in the State who are Black	Percent of Black Students Within the 2015 Cohort	Black ACGR
Mississippi	56.9%	50.0%	72.0%
Louisiana	56.0%	44.1%	71.4%
Maryland	48.7%	35.8%	82.3%
Georgia	44.9%	38.4%	75.2%
South Carolina	43.9%	37.1%	76.7%
Alabama	42.7%	35.2%	87.0%
Tennessee	40.7%	25.4%	80.6%
Delaware	38.1%	32.6%	83.2%
Virginia	34.6%	23.3%	78.8%
North Carolina	33.8%	27.3%	82.2%

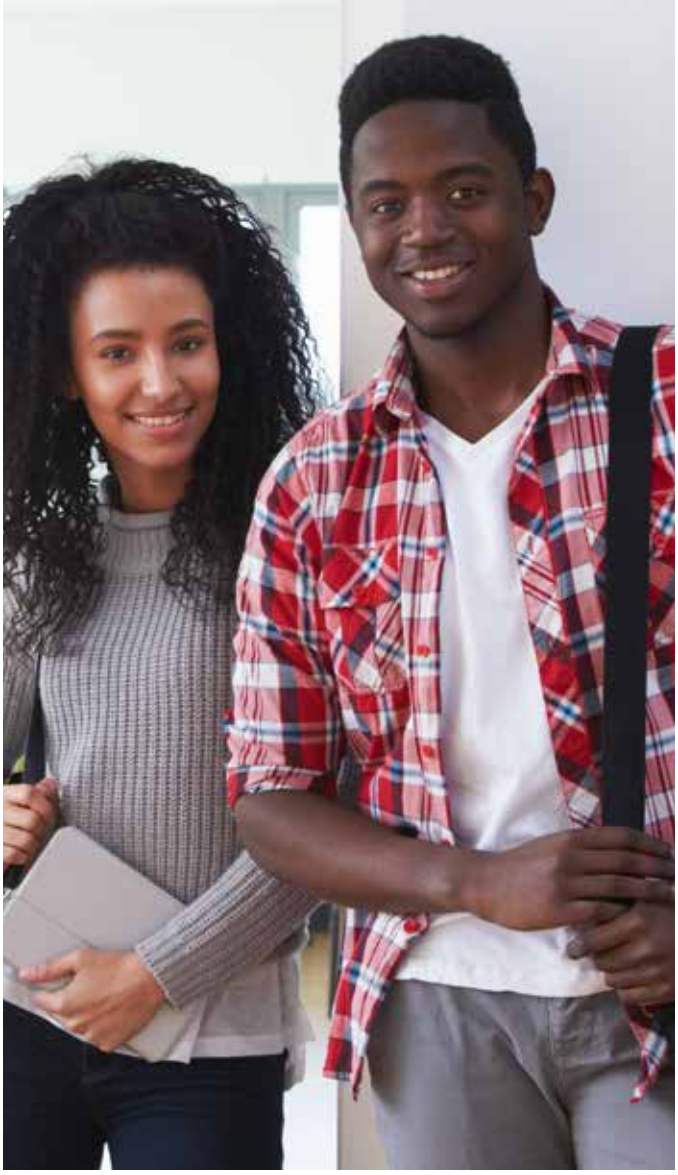
Ten states reported high school graduation rates below 70 percent for Hispanic/Latino students in 2015, down from 11 states in 2014. More than half of these states have significant Hispanic/Latino populations, including New Mexico, where Hispanic/Latino students comprised more than half of the 2015 graduating cohort, and Nevada, where more than one-third of the cohort was Hispanic/Latino. Though the graduation rate for Hispanic/Latino students in all but one of these 11 states has risen since 2011, the rate of growth, though substantial in some, has not been enough to push the Hispanic/Latino ACGR above 70 percent.

Across the nation, Black and Hispanic/Latino students comprised 38.5 percent of the 2015 cohort but made up 54 percent of the students who failed to graduate on time. Conversely, White students were 52.7 percent of 2015 cohort but just 38.9 percent of all non-graduates.

In Louisiana and Mississippi, more than half of the state's non-graduates were Black while in another five states, Black students were 40 percent of the state's non-graduates in 2015. States with high proportions of non-graduates tend to be concentrated in the South. Looking at the 10 states with the highest proportions of Black non-graduates, eight are Southern states. In all cases, the percentage of Black students among non-graduates is higher than the percent of Black students among the class of 2015 cohort, though this varies from just six percentage points in Mississippi to 13 percentage points in Maryland and 15 points in Tennessee.

Table 6. States with the Highest Proportion of Non-Graduates who are Hispanic/Latino, 2014-15

STATE	Percent of Non-Graduates in the State who are Hispanic/Latino	Percent of Hispanic/ Latino Students within the 2015 Cohort	Hispanic/Latino ACGR
New Mexico	60.4%	57.8%	67.2%
California	59.6%	51.1%	79.0%
Texas	59.5%	48.5%	86.5%
Arizona	51.0%	42.2%	72.7%
Nevada	43.8%	37.8%	66.7%
Colorado	43.1%	30.2%	67.6%
Connecticut	38.0%	19.3%	74.8%
New Jersey	35.8%	21.5%	82.8%
New York	35.3%	21.6%	66.0%
Massachusetts	33.3%	15.2%	72.2%



The vast majority of Hispanic and Latino students who fail to graduate from high school are concentrated in a few states. Four in 10 Latino non-graduates live in California and Texas while over 72 percent of Latino non-graduates are found in just nine states – Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, and Texas. In Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas more than half of the state's non-graduates are Hispanic or Latino. What is also revealing is that among the ten states with the greatest percentage of Hispanic/ Latino students among their non-graduates, four are in the Northeast – Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts – and have the largest disproportionalities, with Hispanic/Latino students making up about one-fifth of their class of 2015 cohort but one-third or more of their 2015 non-graduates.

Driver 3: Students with Disabilities

As noted in previous *Building a Grad Nation* reports, cross-state comparison of special education graduation rates is problematic for two reasons. First, there are great variations between states in their allowances for students with disabilities to receive a regular high school diploma, including reduced course requirements and substituted courses, which lower the requirements students must meet to earn a standard diploma. Second, under current federal guidelines, states can individually determine who gets counted as a special education student, which can result in significant inconsistencies in the number of students who are reported as having a disability in each state. These two issues complicate comparisons between states and make it difficult to accurately gauge how well states are doing in graduating special education students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed beyond high school.

Students with disabilities consistently make up about 12 to 13 percent of the graduating cohort each year, but in most states they graduate at rates lower than any other student subgroup. In all, 33 states reported high school graduation rates for special education students below 70 percent, and nearly half of those 33 had graduation rates for students with disabilities below 60 percent. Four states – South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Nevada – graduated less than half of their special education students.

The graduation rate gaps between students with disabilities and those without show how stark the contrast truly is. Nationally, the gap now stands at 21.1 percentage points. In 29 states, students in the general education population graduate at rates of 20 percentage points or more than their special education peers. In another 18 states, the gap between students with disabilities and those without is between 10 and 20 percentage points. In only three states is the graduation gap less than 10 points.

When we examine the states in which students with disabilities make up the greatest percentage of non-graduates, we find in New England states, all but one have overall graduation rates above the national average. These are states which by and large are identifying relatively high percentages of students as students with disabilities, and then graduating relatively low percentages of them, in some cases at rates 20 percent less than all other students. This tells us that some otherwise high-performing states will not be able to achieve 90 percent graduation rates unless they improve the outcomes for their students with disabilities.

Table 7. States with the Highest Proportion of Non-Graduates who are Students with Disabilities, 2014-15

STATE	Percent of Non-Graduates in the State who are Students w/ Disabilities	Percent of Students with Disabilities Within the 2015 Cohort	Students With Disabilities ACGR
Massachusetts	45.3%	19.1%	69.9%
Rhode Island	44.6%	23.4%	68.0%
New Hampshire	39.6%	17.4%	73.0%
Connecticut	38.4%	14.3%	65.6%
Virginia	38.2%	11.5%	52.6%
Vermont	37.1%	16.3%	72.0%
Maine	35.2%	16.9%	74.0%
New York	34.0%	15.0%	52.9%
New Jersey	33.0%	15.4%	78.0%
West Virginia	32.7%	14.3%	69.0%

It is critical to note that the majority of students who are identified under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) to receive special education services have been diagnosed with either a specific learning disability (perceptual disabilities, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, dysgraphia, and developmental aphasia), speech or language impairment (impaired articulation, language impairment, or voice impairment that adversely affects a child's academic performance), or other health impairment (asthma, attention deficit or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, heart conditions, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, or Tourette syndrome).[ii] These students, and so many others who are identified with a disability, can meet regular diploma requirements with the right supports in place. In fact, advocates within the field estimate that 85 to 90 percent of special education students should be able to meet the same standards as all other students.[iii]

ii National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *The condition of education. Retrieved from* https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp

iii Graduation requirements for students with disabilities: Ensuring meaningful diplomas for all students. National Center on Educational Outcomes and Achieve; 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.achieve.org/SpecialEducationGradReqs

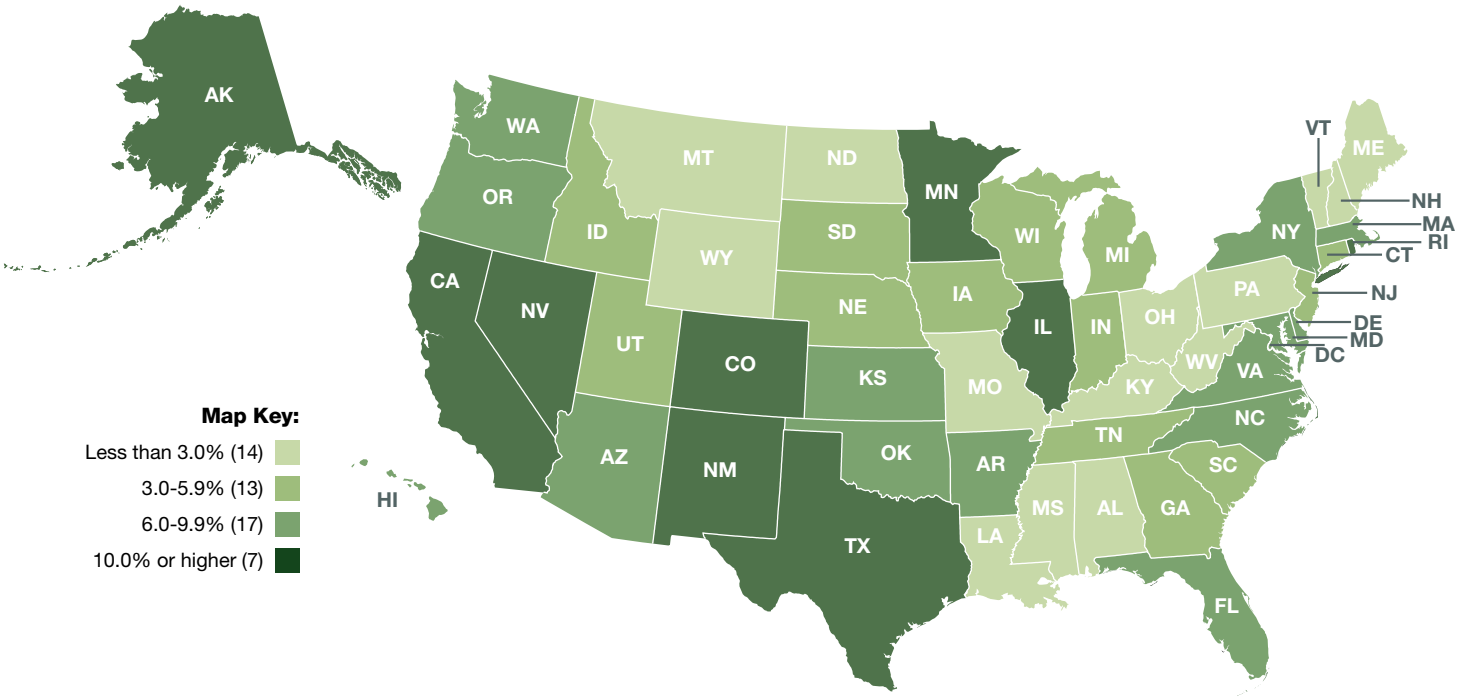
Driver 4: English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELL) are defined by the U.S. Department of Education as students served in programs of language assistance, such as English as a second language, high-intensity language training, and bilingual education. While the most commonly reported home language of ELL students is Spanish (76.5 percent), this demographic is highly diverse, representing dozens of cultures and languages from around the world. The Minnesota Department of Education, for example, estimated that ELL students in their state represented more than 200 languages.[iv] Children growing up in homes where a language other than English is spoken are also more likely to live in poverty than children in homes where only English is spoken (28 percent versus 19 percent in 2013).[v]

The number of ELL students in America's public schools is climbing, increasing from 8.8 percent (an estimated 4.2 million students) in 2003-04 to 9.2 percent (an estimated 4.5 million) in 2013-14.

While the total number of ELL students has risen, it has not been a uniform increase across the country. Kansas, for example, has seen the largest percentage point increase, rising 4.6 points from 2003-04 to 2013-14, while Arizona has seen a large decrease, dropping 9.8 percentage points between 2003-04 and 2013-14.[vi]

Figure 4. Percentage of Public School Students who were English Language Learners, by State, 2013-14



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2013–14. See Digest of Education Statistics 2015, table 204.20.

iv Ranks of English learners swelling in Minnesota schools. Mike Zitlow. December 12, 2012. Minnesota Public Radio. Retrieved from http://www.mprnews.org/story/2012/12/13/teaching-minnesota-elloverview

v Child Trends Data Bank. "Dual Language Learners." Retrieved from https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/dual-language-learners/

vi National Center for Education Statistics. "English Language Learners in Public Schools." Accessed at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

ELL students are concentrated heavily in six states, five of which are in the west. The District of Columbia and six states – Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas – had 10 percent or more of their public school students as English Language Learners. At the other end of the spectrum, 14 states had less than 3 percent ELL students in public schools, with West Virginia having the lowest at just 0.7 percent.

In addition, the percentage of ELL students is generally higher in urban areas than suburban or rural. In 2013-14, ELL students in cities on average made up 14.1 percent of total public school enrollment. In suburban areas, the average was 8.7 percent of enrollment, and in rural areas just 3.5 percent.[vii]

In states with significant populations of ELL students, graduation rates for this demographic remain low. In Arizona and New York, barely a third of ELL students are graduating, while Hawaii, Maryland, and Virginia graduate less than half of their ELL students.

The 10 states with the highest proportion of ELL non-graduates comprised 66 percent of all ELL non-graduates in the country, while over one-third of English Language Learners who failed to graduate on time are located in California alone. In California and New Mexico, over one-third of the students who failed to graduate on time were English Language Learners.

NAEP assessments show ELL students falling off track long before they reach high school. In 2013 at the national level, only 31 percent of ELL students scored at the basic level for reading at fourth grade, as compared to 72 percent for non-ELL students. For the eighth grade math assessment, 31 percent of ELL students scored at the basic level, as compared to 75 percent of non-ELL students.[viii]

ELL students must contend with the challenges of learning a new language, new and different cultural expectations, and often with the challenges of poverty. Together, these factors can make it difficult for ELL students to succeed academically and socially. This is a demographic that is rising quickly within our public schools, and it is essential that we work to find better ways to engage them in the classroom, and to help them learn and succeed.

Table 8. ACGR for All Students and English Language Learners, 2014-15

STATE	2014-15 ACGR for All Students	2014-15 ACGR for ELL Students
Arizona	77.4	34.0
California	82.0	69.0
Colorado	77.3	61.1
Delaware	85.6	69.0
Florida	77.9	59.5
Hawaii	81.6	46.0
Illinois	85.6	72.0
Kansas	85.7	77.0
Maryland	87.0	49.0
Massachusetts	87.3	64.0
Minnesota	81.9	63.1
Nevada	71.3	32.0
New Mexico	68.6	64.0
New York	79.2	36.0
North Carolina	85.6	58.0
Oklahoma	82.5	60.0
Oregon	73.8	51.0
Rhode Island	83.2	77.0
Texas	89.0	73.3
Virginia	85.7	44.6
Washington	78.2	55.8

Table 9. States with the Highest Proportion of Non-Graduates who are English Language Learners, 2014-15

STATE	Percent of Non-Graduates in the State who are ELL	Percent of ELL Students Within the 2015 Cohort	ELL Student ACGR
California	32.9%	19.1%	69.0%
New Mexico	30.4%	26.5%	64.0%
Nevada	19.7%	8.3%	32.0%
Colorado	19.4%	11.3%	61.1%
Massachusetts	19.2%	6.8%	64.0%
Texas	17.5%	7.2%	73.3%
New York	16.5%	5.4%	36.0%
Virginia	15.8%	4.1%	44.6%
Rhode Island	15.6%	11.4%	77.0%
Nebraska	13.9%	3.4%	55.0%

vii National Center for Education Statistics. "English Language Learners in Public Schools." Accessed at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

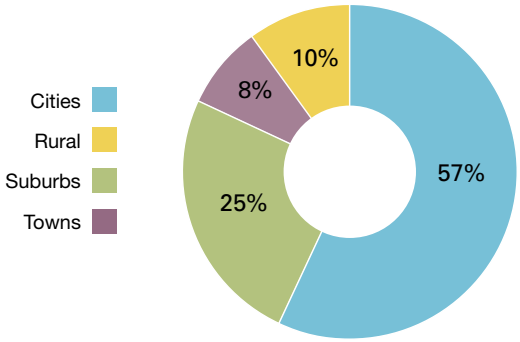
viii Child Trends. The Academic Achievement of English Language Learners: Data for the U.S. and Each of the States. Retrieved from https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2014-62AcademicAchievementEnglish.pdf

Driver 5: Low-Graduation-Rate High Schools

In 2015, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Schools Act* (ESEA), was signed into law and established a shift back to states in setting accountability goals and systems. Under ESSA, states will still have to identify low-performing schools for intervention, and at the secondary level, this will include all high schools that enroll 100 or more students and have a four-year graduation rate of 67 percent or less ("low-graduation-rate high schools," or "ESSA high schools"). Using this metric allows for an examination of the extent of low-graduation-rate schools in each state, where within each state these schools can be found, the demographics of the students attending low-graduation-rate schools, and the types of schools that tend to fall into the parameters of a low-graduation-rate school.

Altogether, there were 2,249 ESSA low-graduation-rate high schools in 2015, just 12 percent of all public high schools enrolling 100 or more students. Fifty-six percent of low-graduation-rate high schools were in cities and 25 percent were in suburban areas, while just 8 and 10 percent were found in small towns and rural areas, respectively.

Figure 5. Percentage of ESSA High Schools with a Graduation Rate of 67 Percent or Below by Locale Type, 2014-15



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

The percentage of low-graduation-rate high schools in each state varies widely, but it is evident in almost all cases that a high percentage of low-graduation-rate schools is correlated with a lower overall state graduation rate. New Mexico, which has the highest percentage of low-graduation-rate schools (44 percent) among all of its high schools also has the lowest overall graduation rate of any state. The next nine states with the highest percentage of low-graduation-rate high schools all have overall graduation rates in the 70s, and while some of these states are nearing the 80 percent mark, others like Nevada and Oregon still have a long way to go.

Table 10. States with Highest Percentage of Low-Graduation-Rate High Schools and Overall State ACGR, 2014-15

STATE	% of High Schools Enrolling 100 or More Students with ACGR of 67% or Less	State ACGR 2014-15
New Mexico	44%	68.6%
Arizona	28%	77.4%
Florida	26%	77.9%
Nevada	26%	71.3%
Alaska	25%	75.6%
Colorado	24%	77.3%
Oregon	23%	73.8%
Michigan	21%	79.8%
New York	21%	79.2%
Washington	21%	78.2%

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

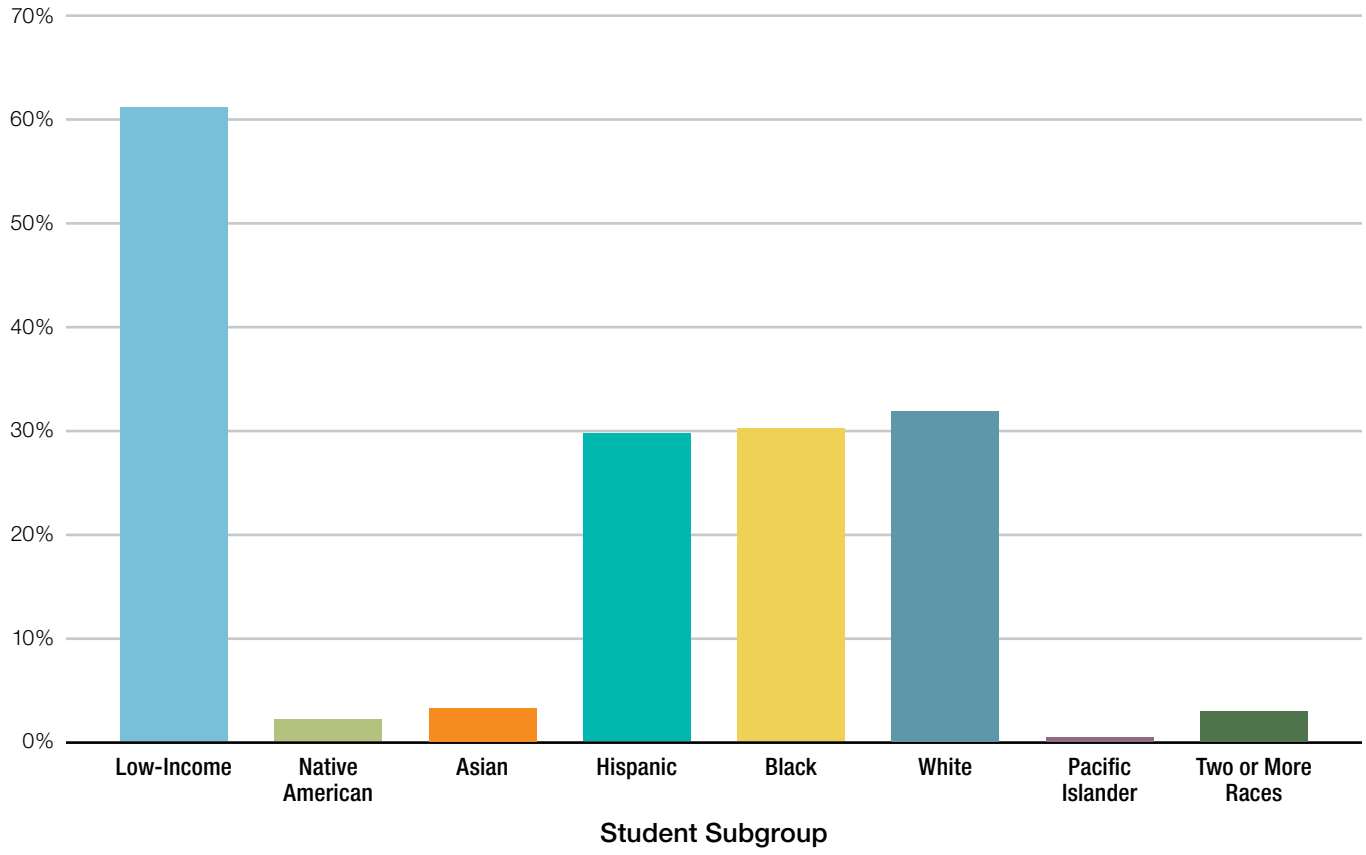
Student Demographics in Low-Graduation-Rate High Schools

Two out of three students in ESSA low-graduation-rate high schools are Black and Hispanic/Latino students. Six in ten students in low-graduation-rate high schools qualified as being low-income in 2015. Thus, ESSA low-graduation-rate high schools educate high numbers of low-income and minority students.

These national numbers, however, mask even greater disparities at the state level in who attends low-graduation-rate high schools and who does not.

- In 12 states, Black students comprised 50 percent or more of students in low-graduation-rate high schools. In five of these states – Maryland (67 percent), Mississippi (89 percent), Missouri (79 percent), New Jersey (68 percent), and Tennessee (82 percent) – more than two-thirds of students in low-graduation-rate high schools were Black, and in the case of Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, the concentration of Black students in low-graduation-rate high schools was much higher.
- In 30 states there were significant disparities between the percentage of Black students in the class of 2015 cohort and the percentage enrolled in low-graduation-rate high schools. For example:
  - In Arkansas, the class of 2015 cohort was 22.1 percent Black, but their enrollment in Arkansas' low-graduation-rate high schools was 63 percent.
  - In Missouri, Black students made up just 16.7 percent of the class of 2015 cohort, but 79 percent of the cohort in the state's low-graduation-rate high schools.
  - Black students made up 16.7 percent of the class of 2015 cohort in New Jersey, but 68 percent of the cohort in the state's low-graduation-rate high schools.
  - In Tennessee, Black students comprised about one-quarter of the class of 2015 cohort, but more than three-quarters of the cohort in the state's low-graduation-rate high schools.
  - Just one in ten students in Wisconsin's class of 2015 cohort were Black, but in their low-graduation-rate high schools, that number jumped to more than five in ten.

Figure 6. Students in High Schools with 100 or More Students and ACGR of 67 Percent or Less, 2014-15



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

- In nine states – Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, and Texas – more than 40 percent of students in the class of 2015 cohort in low-graduation-rate high schools were Hispanic/Latino. In two of these states – New Mexico and Texas – Hispanic/Latino students comprised more than six in ten students in low-graduation-rate high schools.
- In several states there are large disparities between the overall population of Hispanic/Latino students in the class of 2015 cohort and those in low-graduation-rate high schools. For example:
  - In Connecticut, Hispanic/Latino students made up slightly less than 20 percent of the class of 2015 cohort, but nearly half of students in low-graduation-rate high schools.
  - In Massachusetts, 15.2 percent of students in the class of 2015 cohort were Hispanic/Latino, but in the state's low-graduation-rate high schools, that number jumped to 49 percent.
  - Hispanic/Latino students made up fewer than one in ten students in Pennsylvania's class of 2015 cohort, but nearly four in ten students in the graduating cohorts in low-graduation-rate high schools.
  - White students comprised 50 percent or more of students in low-graduation-rate high schools in 13 states. The states with substantial populations of White students in their low-graduation-rate high schools are largely located in the Midwest and West and tend to have wide swaths of rural lands.
  - In 40 states the cohorts in low-graduation-rate high schools were 50 percent or more low income. In the majority of these states, low-income students were significantly over-represented in low-graduation-rate high schools.

What this data makes clear is that in a significant number of states, a 90 percent graduation rate for all students cannot be achieved without making significant progress in improving their low-graduation-rate high schools. This is particularly true in the states where these schools are disproportionately attended by low-income Black and Hispanic/Latino students. In these states, the route to low-graduation-rate outcomes for Black, Latino, and low-income students goes directly through their over-representation in low-graduation-rate high schools.

Low-Graduation-Rate High Schools by Type

For the purposes of this year's report, we break down low-graduation-rate high schools into two broad types – regular and alternative – due to both the distinct school missions presupposed by the NCES definition of these school types and because these schools make up the majority of high schools in the country. Regular schools – defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as any high school that does not fall into the category of alternative, special education, or vocational education – make up the overwhelming number of schools across the country and serve no specific student population. Of the more than 18,000 high schools reporting ACGR and enrolling 100 or more students in 2015, 92 percent were considered regular schools. Regular high schools can then be further categorized into district-operated, charter, and virtual schools, though virtual schools can fall into either the district-operated or charter school category. Because of this overlap, our analysis focuses first on the more traditional brick-and-mortar regular schools, whether district- or charter-operated, which exist in greater numbers than virtual schools.

Regular ESSA High Schools

District-operated brick-and-mortar high schools make up 91 percent of all regular high schools and 60 percent of all regular high schools enrolling 100 or more students with an ACGR of 67 percent or less. Among all regular district-operated high schools, six percent of these schools are low-graduation-rate schools. Regular brick-and-mortar charter schools comprise eight percent of all regular high schools and 29 percent of all regular low-graduation-rate schools. Twenty-nine percent of

Table 11. ESSA Regular District-Operated and Charter Brick-and-Mortar High Schools, 2014-15

SCHOOL TYPE	% of Total Regular High Schools	% of School Type that are ESSA High Schools	% of Total Regular ESSA High Schools
District-Operated (non-virtual)	91%	6%	60%
Charter (non-virtual)	8%	29%	29%

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

regular brick-and-mortar charter schools graduated 67 percent or less of students.[ix] For comparison's sake, 75 percent of regular district-operated brick-and-mortar high schools are high-graduation-rate high schools – graduating 85 percent or more of students. Fifty-three percent of regular brick-and-mortar charter schools are high-graduation-rate schools.

Virtual schools still make up a small percentage of all public schools in the country, but despite their small numbers and presence in less than half of all states, they still amount to roughly one in ten regular low-graduation-rate schools. Regular charter virtual schools comprise a larger percentage of both these schools in total and those that graduate 67 percent or less of students. While making up less than one percent of all regular schools reporting ACGR in 2015, 9.2 percent of regular charter virtual schools are low-graduation-rate schools, and 60 percent of all regular charter virtual schools qualify as ESSA high schools. Among the small number of regular district-operated virtual schools, about one in five is a low-graduation-rate school.

Though the overall number of virtual schools is small, many of these schools serve large numbers of students and have much larger graduating cohorts than most brick-and-mortar schools. Eleven of the virtual schools reporting ACGR in 2015 had graduating cohorts of more than 500 students and five of those had cohorts of more than 1,000 students. Of these eleven schools, only two graduated more than 70 percent of students, while the other nine had graduation rates ranging from 16 to 58 percent.

Within states there is a significant divide between those whose virtual schools tend to be charter-operated or district-operated. In California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, each of which have between 10 and 24 virtual schools, all or nearly all of these schools are charter-operated. In California, the state with the greatest number of virtual schools enrolling 100 or more students with 24, all but three have graduation rates below 67 percent. Similarly, in Ohio, all but one of the state's virtual schools graduated fewer than 67 percent of students, and in Pennsylvania, all but three are low-graduation-rate schools.

In Colorado and Florida, which have 17 and 16 virtual schools respectively, all of the virtual schools are operated by public school districts. In Colorado, 12 of the state's 17 virtual schools are low-graduation-rate high schools. Five of the virtual schools in Florida, an early adopter of virtual education, are low-graduation-rate schools. Florida, unlike other states, began its virtual education under the state-run Florida Virtual School (FLVS), which now franchises out its online content to individual school districts within Florida, as well as other states, and has one of the best track records in four-year graduation rates. In Colorado, like many of the other states where virtual schools fall under the purview of individual school districts, many districts have chosen to contract with external vendors, including the for-profit education conglomerates K12, Inc. and Pearson's Connections Academy, for their curriculum.

Table 12. ESSA Regular Virtual Schools, 2014-15

SCHOOL TYPE	% of Total Regular High Schools	% of School Type that are ESSA High Schools	% of Total Regular ESSA High Schools
District-Operated Virtual Schools	91%	6%	60%
Charter Virtual Schools	8%	29%	29%

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Alternative ESSA High Schools

Alternative schools and programs, as defined by the US Department of Education, are "designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools."[13] The definition also states that, "students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically at risk of educational failure (as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school)." Alternative schools have been a part of the education landscape for decades, largely within public school districts that have struggled to meet the needs of certain students in a traditional school setting.

Today, there are 1,135 alternative high schools reporting ACGR and enrolling 100 or more students – roughly six percent of all such high schools – in 31 states. Alternative high schools served just under 300,000 students (2 percent) in 2015. Black and Hispanic/Latino students (59 percent versus 52 percent) and low-income (71 percent versus 46 percent) students are over-represented in alternative high schools compared to the student population in all regular high schools.

ix Regular brick-and-mortar district schools and regular brick-and-mortar charter schools tend to serve different student populations, particularly given that charter schools tend to be located in urban areas. When comparing all regular B&M district and charter schools, charter schools serve a more disadvantaged student population; however, low-graduation-rate B&M district schools serve a more disadvantaged student population than low-graduation-rate B&M charter schools. For complete demographic breakdowns, please see Appendix M.

Eighty-five percent of alternative schools are overseen by a school district and 15 percent are charter schools; however, the management of a number of district alternative high schools are contracted out to charter operators. Florida has the greatest number of charter-operated alternative schools that exist within public school districts, though there are also several in Colorado, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Though alternative schools make up roughly six percent of all high schools enrolling 100 or more students, they account for 30 percent of all low-graduation-rate high schools. Sixty percent of alternative schools and programs graduate fewer than 67 percent of their students in four years. Of the 676 total low-graduation-rate alternative high schools, approximately 80 percent are district schools and 20 percent are charter schools. When looking at individual school types within the alternative schools category, 56 percent of all district alternative schools graduate fewer than 67 percent of their students, while 80 percent of all alternative charter schools report graduation rates of 67 percent or below.

With the rise in both the number of alternative schools and students enrolled in them, significant accountability, data reporting, and management issues have come to light. Though some of these problems have always been of concern in the alternative schools space, the changing nature of alternative education over the past 15 years has brought further complications and challenges to the table. Following is a discussion of some of the most significant issues with alternative schools.

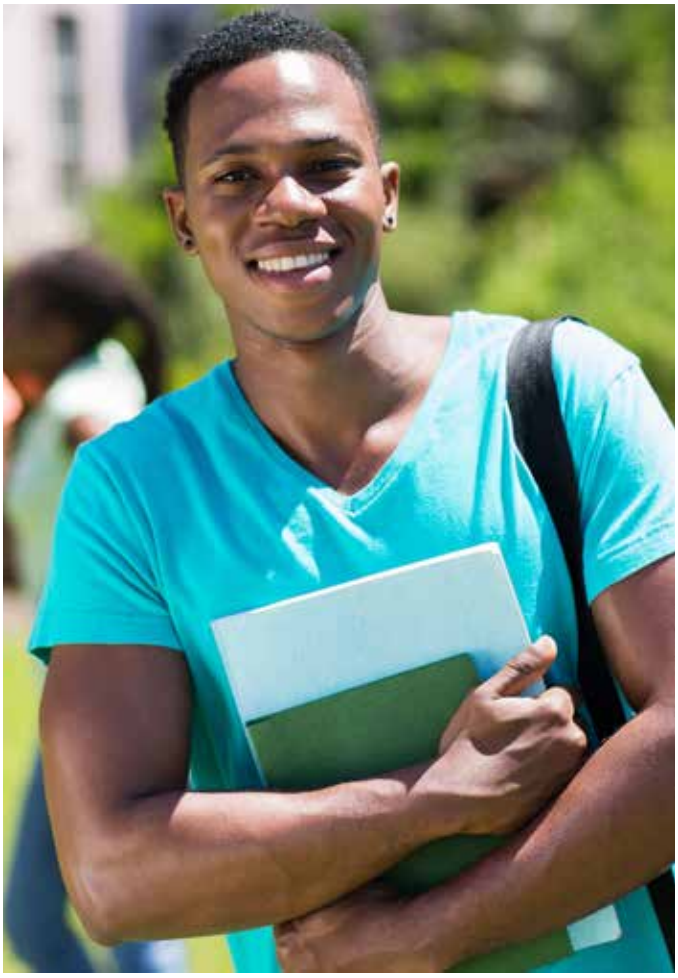
Issues with Alternative School Definitions

The current definition from the US Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics states that an alternative school is:

> *A public elementary/secondary school that (1) addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, (2) provides nontraditional education, (3) serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or (4) falls outside the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education.*

This broad definition of alternative schools provides states with the flexibility to determine what qualifies as an alternative school or program, but at the same time, creates an opening for misidentification and inconsistencies across states. This is especially true in regards to credit and dropout recovery programs – sectors that have experienced significant growth in recent years and, as discussed later, whose lack of clear quality metrics has led to major challenges. Some of these programs, for example, exist within the same charter management chain and are defined in one state as alternative in federal data reporting but considered to be regular schools in other states. Additionally, many states that have a wide swath of dropout and credit recovery programs are listed as having no alternative schools despite these schools often promoting themselves to students who have not been successful in more traditional high schools.

Another issue with the data on alternative schools lies in how they are reported on at the federal and state levels. At the federal level, the graduation rates of alternative schools and programs are reported as individual entities, providing a clear picture of both the demographics of alternative schools and how well they do at graduating their students. In some states, however, the graduation rates of alternative schools or programs get credited back to a student's home school, or they are lumped into the overall district rate. Within state accountability systems, this is done for two core reasons. First, crediting graduation rates back to a student's home school helps minimize the incentive for schools to send off-track students to an alternative school in order to remove them from their cohort and help raise their graduation rates. Second, given that many alternative schools serve students who have fallen behind, reporting alternative school or program graduation rates at the district level reduces punitive accountability based on four-year graduation rates for the schools and programs that are least likely to graduate students in that time span.



Issues with Alternative School Accountability

The definitional and data divergences in how alternative schools are reported on at the federal and state levels may appear to be inconsequential, but how they are defined and ultimately held accountable, holds significant consequences, particularly when it comes to the new breed of alternative programs that have spread across the education landscape. Unlike the alternative schools and programs created by school districts to educate students outside of the traditional comprehensive high school, the new alternative schools have been an outgrowth of the school choice movement that market themselves as providing scheduling flexibility, a faster path to earning a diploma, or in some cases, an option as last resort for students who have been unsuccessful elsewhere. Many of these schools are run by for-profit charter management firms and can exist as standalone entities or under a school district that has contracted their services.

Though the new alternative schools are still small in number, their rapid growth has further complicated accountability for alternative education. States and districts have attempted to find ways to measure the quality the alternative schools and programs outside of standard accountability systems, though with varied levels of success. Colorado, for example, has been working for more than a decade to create both a strong definition and accountability system for alternative schools that provides a level of flexibility for the schools serving large populations of "high-risk" students.[14] Colorado has also been a leader in reporting extended-year graduation rates, which allow alternative schools and programs to gain credit for graduating students beyond four years – an incentive that also extends to traditional high schools as well. Other states and districts have implemented one-year graduation rates – only counting students who enter a school year as a senior credit-wise – for alternative schools and programs, though this can be problematic because it fails to account for large numbers of students who enroll in these schools but fail to advance.

On the other hand, some states have waived or reduced accountability for alternative programs and schools or inadvertently created loopholes that allow them to become dumping grounds for students other schools and districts no longer want to educate. A recent ProPublica report found that one for-profit alternative charter chain in Florida and the school districts they are located within have been exploiting one such loophole to encourage off-track students to enroll in an alternative program, which ultimately coded students who left as withdrawing

for adult education instead of dropping out.[15] This system benefitted both the public schools students left behind by raising their overall graduation rates and the alternative school, which was able to easily remove students from their graduation cohort count, and the report found initial evidence of this practice in states across the country. State education officials in Florida are now reviewing this practice to determine if schools are inappropriately pushing off-track students into alternative charter schools.[16] Accountability issues have also arisen around the funding of these schools based on student enrollment and attendance. Because students attending alternative dropout recovery programs can enroll throughout the year and are more likely to leave and re-enter programs, it is difficult to ascertain accurate attendance measures used to fund them. Much like in the virtual school space, this has led to dropout recovery programs receiving money for students who may have enrolled but never actually attended.[17][18]

In addition to the loopholes in accountability, alternative schools and programs have also raised serious questions over the quality of programs offering quick credit recovery and a fast track to graduation. In today's economy, completing high school is now simply the starting point to earning essential postsecondary degrees or workforce training and credentials, and the meaningfulness of a diploma is judged on how far it can take a young person in life. At the same time, students should be learning many skills in high school – teamwork, verbal and written communication, critical thinking – that are all but eliminated in some computer-based alternative schools. While credit recovery can play an integral role in helping students get back on track to graduation, there are legitimate concerns over it being used as an entire curriculum, the lack of evidence base around the packaged curricula being used widely in alternative education, and whether it can realistically prepare students for postsecondary or the workforce.

These are all critical issues to address given that alternative schools disproportionately enroll Black, Hispanic/Latino, and low-income students – who historically graduate high school and enroll in postsecondary at lower rates than their peers. The growth in the alternative school sector in recent years also poses new complications to a field that is already struggling to develop stringent but flexible accountability measures. And while a great number of schools and programs in the alternative space have provided real re-engagement opportunities to students who have fallen behind or dropped out, the ones that do not threaten to undermine their good work.

The Five Drivers: Summing Up

Analysis of the five drivers shows that whether the nation achieves its 90 percent graduation rate goal by 2020 will depend on each state solving its particular combination of challenges. For many states, the challenge is centered on low-income students. Both wealthier and poorer states, as well as states with higher and lower graduation rates, continue to struggle to find ways to ensure all their low-income students graduate. The encouraging news is that some states have been able to graduate their low-income students at relatively high rates and above the national average for all students, which shows it can be done. Other states need to understand and address why they struggle more than other states in graduating Black or Hispanic/Latino students. And in some of the states with the highest graduation rates, the challenge is with students with disabilities. These states both identify higher numbers of students than average as in need of additional special education supports, but then struggle to graduate them at high rates. Finally, a state like California, which does relatively well with low-income students, needs to continue to find ways to improve outcomes for English Language Learners.

Big Cities and State Capitals: Progress and Challenges

The 2015 ACGR data allow us to examine the current state of graduation rates and recent rates of progress in the nation's largest cities, as well as graduation rates in state capitals. Governors and state legislatures have been key actors in the graduation rate improvements over the past decade. From the National Governors Association's Graduation Rate Compact in 2005 to raising graduation requirements (and in some states establishing funding streams to support school improvement and dropout prevention), they have helped mobilize attention and resources for raising graduation rates and ensuring that all students graduate ready for college and career. Perhaps this in part stems from the fact that most governors and state legislators do not have to travel far to see the impact of students dropping out from high school on the economic and social welfare of the state. Many state capitals, despite often notable progress, still have graduation rates well below the national average and significant percentages of children living in poverty.

Table 13. Graduation Rate Levels, Number of Big Cities and State Capitals by Graduation Rate Range (%), 2014-15

	50-59%	60-69%	70-79%	80-89%	90-99%
Big Cities	1	10	20	18	1
State Capitals	1	10	20	18	1

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

The nation's progress in raising its high school graduation rates over the past decade or more can be seen in its big cities and state capitals. In the early 2000s, it was the norm for big cities with significant poverty rates to have high school graduation rates in the 30s, 40s and 50s. For most students in these locales, dropping out of high school was the norm. As seen in Table 13, it is no longer possible to find big cities with a high school graduation rate in 30s or 40s, and in 2015, only one single big city reported a high school graduation rate in the 50s. Today, most big cities have graduation rates in the mid-60s to upper 70s, with a good number reaching into the 80s. Overall, this represents a remarkable rate of progress in improving the life outcomes of young adults in locales that many once viewed as impervious to improvement.

Looking more closely at current rates of progress between 2011 and 2015 (Table 14), however, makes it clear that a significant number of big cities are in need of a second act in their efforts to improve graduation rates. Between 2011 and 2015 in 45 percent (n=30) of the 66 largest cities, the rate of growth has been below the national average. Five cities saw their graduation rates decline, and 25 more saw gains of less than one percentage point per year. This was counterbalanced by 28 percent of big cities (n=19) witnessing rates of growth that were double or more the national average, with eight of the cities reporting gains of 15 percentage points or more.

Table 14. Graduation Rate Improvement, Number of Big Cities and State Capitals by Change in Graduation Rates (percentage points), 2011 to 2015

	<0	0-4 pp	5-9 pp	10-14 pp	15-19 pp	20+ pp
Big Cities	5	25	18	11	7	1
State Capitals	4	17	14	8	3	2

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

The story is similar among state capitals. Forty-four percent (n=21) have seen rates decline, stay flat, or improve only minimally (below the national average) over the past five years. On the other end of the spectrum, 27 percent (n=13) have experienced graduation rate increases of 10 or more percentage points, doubling or better the national rate of improvement.

A closer look at the big cities and state capitals with large graduation rate improvements from 2011 to 2015 (Tables 15 and 16) provides some heartening news. The big cities and state capitals that have witnessed big improvements in recent years include districts with some of the highest rates of children living in poverty, as well as less challenged cities. They also include cities that had very low graduation rates in 2011 like Detroit, Harrisburg, and Trenton, which made limited progress in earlier years, and cities with higher rates in 2011 like Austin and Charlotte that found ways to continue to move forward. As such, they can serve as models to the cities in need of a second wave of reform and improvement.

Table 15. Big City School Districts with Large Graduation Rate Gains, 2011-2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	State	City	ACGR Change 2011 to 2015	% of Related Children aged 5-17 Living in Poverty	2015 ACGR
Birmingham City	AL	*Birmingham*	25	43	80
Atlanta Public Schools	GA	*Atlanta*	19	35	71
St. Louis City	MO	*St Louis*	18	41	72
Detroit City School District	MI	*Detroit*	17	51	77
Minneapolis Public Schools	MN	*Minneapolis*	17	31	64
Kansas City 33	MO	*Kansas City*	15	41	65
Duval	FL	*Jacksonville*	14	22	77
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	NC	*Charlotte*	14	19	88
District of Columbia Public Schools	DC	*Washington*	13	30	66
Clark County Schools	NV	*Las Vegas*	13	19	72
Portland SD 1J	OR	*Portland*	12	18	74
Salt Lake School District	UT	*Salt Lake City*	12	24	74
Fresno Unified	CA	*Fresno*	11	43	84
Los Angeles Unified	CA	*Los Angeles*	11	30	72
St. Paul Public School District	MN	*Saint Paul*	11	33	75
Richmond City Public Schools	VA	*Richmond*	11	40	70
Philadelphia City SD	PA	*Philadelphia*	10	36	65
Austin ISD	TX	*Austin*	10	28	90
Dallas ISD	TX	*Dallas*	10	38	87

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Table 16. State Capitals with Large Graduation Rate Gains, 2011-2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	State	City	ACGR Change 2011 to 2015	% of Related Children aged 5-17 Living in Poverty	2015 ACGR
Trenton Public School Districts	NJ	Trenton	21	38.2	69
Harrisburg City Schools	PA	Harrisburg	20	46.9	65
Leon	FL	Tallahassee	19	19.5	87
Atlanta Public Schools	GA	Atlanta	19	34.7	71
Capital School District	DE	Dover	16	22.7	83
Montgomery County	AL	Montgomery	13	27.1	79
District of Columbia Public Schools	DC	Washington	13	29.8	66
Salt Lake School District	UT	Salt Lake City	12	23.8	74
Lansing Public School District	MI	Lansing	11	35.5	62
St. Paul Public School District	MN	Saint Paul	11	33.4	75
Richmond City Public Schools	VA	Richmond	11	39.5	70
Santa Fe Public Schools	NM	Santa Fe	10	24.9	67
Austin ISD	TX	Austin	10	28.1	90

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Policy Recommendations

As the GradNation campaign moves into its final phase, we urge adoption and implementation of the following policies and practices to continue raising graduation rates and ensure students are prepared to succeed well after they have earned their high school diploma.

Create high-quality ESSA implementation plans and maintain accountability for underserved students.

As we go to press, Congress has voted to repeal the ESSA regulations set out by the Obama administration to guide states in the development of their implementation plans, just as many states are weeks away from submitting their plans to the Department of Education. It is expected that some level of guidance will be issued by the Department of Education, but state plans will now be reviewed solely against the statute, which is vague and unclear on several key accountability issues. The regulations provided critical guidance to states on how to weight graduation rates within accountability systems, set a clear definition on "consistently underperforming" student subgroups, and clarified that the ACGR should be the graduation rate metric states use to identify low-graduation-rate high schools. The repeal of ESSA rules gives states more leeway in how they choose to interpret the law, which many fear could lead to weakened accountability, particularly around how states track the progress of historically underserved students and intervene in low-performing schools.

To ensure that states create high-quality ESSA implementation plans, we urge states to adhere closely to the statute on identifying low-graduation-rate high schools as those with graduation rates of 67 percent or less, continue to use the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate in this determination, and give substantial weight to graduation rates in state accountability plans. States should also consider setting extended-year (five- and six-year) graduation rate goals, which must be higher than the four-year graduation rate goal, but can provide better insight into the number of students graduating from each cohort. It is also critical that states continue to use data to appropriately identify consistently underperforming student subgroups, measure their academic growth, and hold schools accountable for supporting these students and improving their educational outcomes. We also encourage states to use the flexibility provided by ESSA's "5th indicator" requirement to choose a measure of student quality or success that can provide a meaningful metric on student engagement or readiness.

Create evidence-based plans to improve low-graduation-rate high schools.

While ESSA does require states to identify schools graduating less than two-thirds of their students for support and intervention, unlike No Child Left Behind, it provides districts and states greater flexibility in determining the best strategy for improvement. States and districts should work together to thoughtfully consider the needs of the lowest performing high schools, particularly given that these schools tend to be in disadvantaged areas, have limited resources, and employ less experienced teachers. We believe schools should look to evidence-based practices, including implementing early warning systems to identify and support students who are off track based on their attendance, behavior, and course performance records, making social and emotional learning a part of the curriculum, and providing students with high-quality postsecondary and workforce engagement opportunities.

Get the cohort rate right.

The four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) remains the "gold standard" measure for collecting and reporting on high school graduation rates, but there is still room for improvements that would provide even greater uniformity and transparency. Though each state is expected to strictly follow the general formula set by the U.S. Department of Education in 2008 to calculate ACGR, the lack of clear definitions in the ACGR guidelines has led to discrepancies in how states remove students from their graduating cohort, define what counts as a "regular" diploma, and identify students within certain subgroups. States, for example, define credit requirements (total hours and required courses) to earn a diploma, so what it takes to earn a diploma in one state may be very different than in another. This is especially true as several states have moved to making a more rigorous, college-ready diploma the default for students rather than an academic pathway they must opt into. States also control how they place students into certain subgroups, most notably, students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Some

states may include students in these subgroups if they are identified in the 9th grade, while others may only include them if they remain in the subgroup all four years or are placed in during high school and remain within the subgroup through graduation.

These variations greatly reduce comparability across states – one of the key principles behind the creation of ACGR – and provides a significant challenge in understanding how states truly measure up on graduating high school students. As states begin to implement their ESSA plans in the upcoming school year and must begin to identify low-graduation-rate high schools and schools with high numbers of underserved student populations, it is critical that the US Department of Education and state education leaders work together to resolve these issues and strengthen ACGR.

Report extended-year graduation rates.

Standard reporting of graduation rates uses a four-year measure because the majority of students are expected to fulfill their course requirements within that time span. However, there are students who, due to extenuating circumstances, need more time to earn a diploma. Students may enroll in programs that allow them to earn associate's degrees or industry certifications while in school, but keep them in high school an extra year. Others may have fallen off track or simply need more time to succeed academically. Regardless of the reason, many students benefit from either being given extra time in school or from high-quality programs intended to re-engage students who return to school after a period away. ESSA allows states to report extended-year graduation rates, though four-year rates must be given extra weight in state accountability systems.

Placing a requirement on states to report extended-year graduation rates would achieve two important goals. First, as of now, there is little policy incentive (and often, financial incentive) for schools and districts to keep off-track students in school and re-engage those who may have left the system. Allowing five- and even six-year graduation rates to be given greater weight in accountability systems and giving schools and districts credit for graduating students outside of the four-year window would provide an important incentive to keep working with students even if they will not count towards the four-year graduation rate. Second, extended-year graduation rates provide a clearer picture of how many students ultimately earn a high school diploma. In last year's *Building a Grad Nation* report, we found, using data from states already reporting extended-year graduation rates, that when extended-year graduation rates were included, the national average would be raised by roughly four percentage points. This is significant both because it provides a more accurate gauge of the number of students who are earning a high school diploma and shows how many more students earn that diploma when given more time to complete it. With 31 states already reporting extended-year graduation rates, requiring all 50 states and the federal government to do so as well is a highly achievable goal.

Strengthen accountability for non-traditional high schools.

Accountability in education has been a double-edged sword: on one hand, it is a necessary and critical component in ensuring a high-quality education for *all* students, while on the other hand, it has in some cases brought about some serious unintended consequences, including exploiting loopholes to avoid being held accountable. This has become more evident with the growth of the non-traditional high school sector, particularly those schools that work in either the credit recovery or dropout recovery space. Because these schools are intended to serve students who are behind in their coursework, a few states and districts have created alternative accountability systems. Others have reduced or eliminated accountability measures for these schools altogether.

On one hand, there are high-quality models that exist to put off-track students back on track or re-engage students who have left school. These institutions play a vital role in helping students earn a diploma and connecting them to postsecondary and workforce opportunities. Alternative schools like these, with a proven track record of success, deserve an accountability system that takes into account the challenging student population they work with and allows for some flexibility, including using extended-year graduation rates, growth metrics, and credit for students earning postsecondary and workforce degrees and credentials.

On the other hand, the growth of the credit and dropout recovery space has led to many schools that are often no more than warehouses or storefronts, where learning consists of students taking courses online with little to no interaction with teachers or other students. Credit and dropout recovery programs in this vein promise students flexibility in their studies, but fail to actively engage students or provide a meaningful learning experience or credentials. These schools, often managed by for-profit operators, have shown little evidence of success and have, in many cases, become dumping grounds for more traditional schools wanting to get off-track students off

their books. In many states, schools that qualify as credit and dropout recovery programs are able to skirt accountability laws, but it is imperative that these schools be held accountable and that parents and students are aware of what alternative schools and programs truly offer.

Convene a next generation Governors summit on high school and postsecondary completion.

In 1989, President George H.W. Bush convened the nation's governors to establish a set of national goals to be achieved in K-12 education by 2020. This meeting, and its subsequent *Goals 2020* report, began the era of standards and accountability that is still evident today. One of the key goals to come out of the *Goals 2020* report was to raise the high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent, which President Bush and the next three presidents adopted as a central part of their education platform. At the time, high school graduation rates were overestimated, and the nation would later learn that about one-third of students across the nation were not graduating. Then, in 2005, all 50 state governors agreed to voluntarily implement the common, four-year adjusted graduation rate formula, with all states committing to reporting graduation rates using this metric by 2010. Together, *Goals 2020* and the National Governors Association's Graduation Rate Compact made raising high school graduation rates a key national priority and developed a reliable, common metric with which to measure them.

Now, with ESSA putting power back into the hands of state education officials and lawmakers, we call for a third governors summit to set a new direction for raising high school graduation rates and measuring progress, and creating a plan of action for ensuring more students graduate high school ready for postsecondary and the increasing demands of the workforce. Re-convening governors at this time would provide a critical outlet for state leaders to learn from the successes of one another and develop new strategies to overcome outstanding challenges in reaching 90 percent for all students.

Conclusion

Young people across the nation are graduating at higher rates than ever before and more students from all walks of life are on track for success in postsecondary and the workplace. Despite this achievement, however, there is still much to be done to ensure more students, especially those facing the greatest odds, earn a meaningful diploma and are given the tools they need to succeed long after their high school days are done. Black and Hispanic/Latino students, for example, are driving graduation rate gains, but they still graduate at rates that are far too low. Likewise, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and low-income students have all seen their graduation rates rise, but they remain well behind their peers. Many of the most disadvantaged students are also over-concentrated in a subset of high schools that are being asked to do the most with the very least. These schools, many in communities that have been left behind by changing economic and societal dynamics, and the students who continue to graduate at low rates pose a persistent challenge and a serious roadblock in continuing to raise high school graduation rates.

As states move forward with ESSA implementation plans, it will remain essential that they continue strong graduation rate accountability and develop evidence-based plans to support their lowest-performing schools. It is also critical that states ensure that expanding choice comes with greater accountability for the schools that serve the most disadvantaged students and that alternative pathways do not become a path to nowhere. Far too often, students are being offered options that put them further off track, and these options, whether alternative programs or virtual schools, have, in many cases, caused graduation rates in many states to have stagnated. We see too many schools and programs promising students access to an education that can empower them for their futures, but failing to provide meaningful educational experiences and outcomes. Rather than help states and the nation as a whole increase graduation rates – and do so equitably – these alternative pathways have become another barrier to guaranteeing all students have the opportunity, and we must use this knowledge moving forward and focus on what works to overcome this challenge.

As increased authority and responsibility for educational improvement is given to states with ESSA, states now become the lead actors in insuring that the nation reaches its goal of obtaining a 90 percent high school graduation rate for all students by 2020. The good news is that states are better positioned than ever to do this, especially if they can build mechanisms to learn from each other. For every challenge we have identified for a set of states, there are others that have achieved better outcomes. We are also heartened by how states are holding themselves accountable for accurately measuring graduation rates, as witnessed by recent actions in Tennessee and Florida.

Graduating high school is a vital first step in a young person's pursuit of further education and a meaningful career path, and it has significant consequences for the nation as well. When students fail to graduate from high school, especially in places where large numbers of students do not earn their diploma, the impact on the community can be far-reaching. We see this in urban neighborhoods, inner-ring suburbs, small towns, and rural communities alike, and though these places may appear very different on the outside, the results are often similarly devastating – lack of economic opportunity, civic engagement, and worse health and overall life outcomes. To change this, we must recommit ourselves to providing students with the resources and opportunities that can keep them on track or re-engage them when they have fallen off, and renew our investment in education and the evidence-based practices that have proven most effective in improving educational outcomes for all young people. If we fail to do so, we jeopardize the great gains that have already been made and endanger the economic and societal well-being of our great nation.

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Appendix A. Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2013

	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014%	2015 (%)	Average Annual Change in ACGR, 2011-2015 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2011-2015 (%)
All States													
AFGR	74.7	73.2	73.9	74.7	75.5	78.2	80.0	81.0	81.8	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	79.0	80.0	81.4	82.3	83.2	1.1	4.2
Alabama													
AFGR	65.9	66.2	67.1	69.0	69.9	71.8	76.0	75.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	65.1	—	72.0	75.0	80.0	86.3	89.3	4.3	17.3
Alaska													
AFGR	64.1	66.5	69.1	69.1	72.6	75.5	78.0	79.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	68.0	70.0	71.8	71.1	75.6	1.9	7.6
Arizona													
AFGR	84.7	70.5	69.6	70.7	72.5	74.7	79.0	77.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	74.6	69.9	73.4	74.9	76.1	75.4	77.9	76.0	75.1	75.7	77.4	-0.1	-0.5
Arkansas													
AFGR	75.7	80.4	74.4	76.4	74.0	75.0	77.0	78.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	68.0	80.5	80.7	84.0	84.9	86.9	84.9	1.1	4.2
California													
AFGR	74.6	69.2	70.7	71.2	71.0	78.2	80.0	82.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	74.7	76.3	79.0	80.4	81.0	82.0	1.4	5.7
Colorado													
AFGR	76.7	75.5	76.6	75.4	77.6	79.8	82.0	82.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	70.2	74.4	70.7	72.4	73.9	75.0	76.9	77.3	77.3	0.8	3.4
Connecticut													
AFGR	80.9	81.8	82.2	82.3	75.4	75.1	85.0	86.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	79.3	81.8	83.0	85.0	85.5	87.0	87.2	1.1	4.2
Delaware													
AFGR	73.1	76.3	71.9	72.1	73.7	75.5	76.0	77.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	75.8	78.5	80.0	80.4	87.0	85.6	1.8	7.1
District of Columbia													
AFGR	68.8	—	54.9	56.0	62.4	59.9	61.0	71.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	58.6	59.0	62.3	61.4	68.5	2.5	9.9
Florida													
AFGR	64.6	63.6	65.0	66.9	68.9	70.8	72.0	75.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	59.3	58.8	59.8	62.7	65.5	69.0	70.6	75.0	75.6	76.1	77.9	1.8	7.3
Georgia													
AFGR	61.7	62.4	64.1	65.4	67.8	69.9	70.0	70.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	58.6	64.0	67.5	70.0	71.7	72.5	78.8	2.8	11.3
Hawaii													
AFGR	75.1	75.5	75.4	76.0	75.3	75.4	74.0	78.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	80.0	81.0	82.4	81.8	81.6	0.4	1.6

Appendix A. Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2013

(continued)

	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014%	2015 (%)	Average Annual Change in ACGR, 2011-2015 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2011-2015 (%)
Idaho													
AFGR	81.0	80.5	80.4	80.1	80.6	84.0	83.0	84.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	77.3	78.9	—	—
Illinois													
AFGR	79.4	79.7	79.5	80.4	77.7	81.9	80.0	82.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	83.8	82.0	83.2	86.0	85.6	0.4	1.8
Indiana													
AFGR	73.2	73.3	73.9	74.1	75.2	77.2	80.0	80.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	81.5	84.1	85.7	86.0	87.0	87.9	87.1	0.3	1.4
Iowa													
AFGR	86.6	86.9	86.5	86.4	85.7	87.9	89.0	89.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	88.8	88.3	89.0	89.7	90.5	90.8	0.6	2.5
Kansas													
AFGR	79.2	77.6	78.9	79.1	80.2	84.5	87.0	89.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	80.7	83.0	85.0	85.7	85.7	85.7	0.7	2.7
Kentucky													
AFGR	75.9	77.2	76.4	74.4	77.6	79.9	81.0	82.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	86.1	87.5	88.0	—	—
Louisiana													
AFGR	63.9	59.5	61.3	63.5	67.3	68.8	71.0	72.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	64.8	66.3	66.0	67.3	67.2	70.9	72.0	73.5	74.6	77.5	1.7	6.6
Maine													
AFGR	78.6	76.3	78.5	79.1	79.9	82.8	86.0	87.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	80.4	82.8	83.8	85.0	86.4	86.5	87.5	0.9	3.7
Maryland													
AFGR	79.3	79.9	80.0	80.4	80.1	82.2	84.0	84.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	82.0	82.8	84.0	85.0	86.4	87.0	1.0	4.2
Massachusetts													
AFGR	78.7	79.5	80.8	81.5	83.3	82.6	85.0	86.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	79.9	80.9	81.2	81.5	82.1	83.4	85.0	85.0	86.1	87.3	1.0	3.9
Michigan													
AFGR	73.0	72.2	77.0	76.3	75.3	75.9	75.0	77.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	75.5	75.5	75.2	76.0	74.3	76.0	77.0	78.6	79.8	1.4	5.5
Minnesota													
AFGR	85.9	86.2	86.5	86.4	87.4	88.2	89.0	88.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	74.8	75.2	74.8	74.3	74.3	75.5	76.9	78.0	79.8	81.2	81.9	1.3	5.0
Mississippi													
AFGR	63.3	63.5	63.6	63.9	62.0	63.8	69.0	68.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	70.8	73.8	72.0	71.6	71.4	73.7	75.0	75.5	77.6	75.4	0.4	1.7

Appendix A. Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2013

(continued)

STATE	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014%	2015 (%)	Average Annual Change in ACGR, 2011-2015 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2011-2015 (%)
Missouri													
AFGR	80.6	81.0	81.9	82.4	83.1	83.7	85.0	86.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	81.3	86.0	85.7	87.3	87.8	1.6	6.5
Montana													
AFGR	81.5	81.9	81.5	82.0	82.0	81.9	84.0	86.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	82.2	84.0	84.4	85.4	86.0	1.0	3.8
Nebraska													
AFGR	87.8	87.0	86.3	83.8	82.9	83.8	90.0	93.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	86.0	88.0	88.5	89.7	88.9	0.7	3.0
Nevada													
AFGR	55.8	55.8	54.2	56.3	56.3	57.8	59.0	60.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	62.0	63.0	70.7	70.0	71.3	2.3	9.3
New Hampshire													
AFGR	80.1	81.1	81.7	83.4	84.3	86.3	87.0	87.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	85.9	86.1	86.0	87.3	88.1	88.1	0.5	2.0
New Jersey													
AFGR	85.1	84.8	84.4	84.6	85.3	87.2	87.0	87.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	83.2	86.0	87.5	88.6	89.7	1.6	6.5
New Mexico													
AFGR	65.4	67.3	59.1	66.8	64.8	67.3	71.0	74.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	60.3	66.1	67.3	63.0	70.0	70.3	68.5	68.6	1.4	5.6
New York													
AFGR	65.3	67.4	68.8	70.8	73.5	76.0	78.0	78.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	65.8	67.2	71.0	73.6	74.0	76.0	76.8	77.0	76.8	77.8	79.2	0.6	2.4
North Carolina													
AFGR	72.6	71.8	68.6	72.8	75.1	76.9	77.0	79.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	68.3	69.5	70.3	71.8	74.2	77.9	80.0	82.5	83.9	85.6	1.9	7.7
North Dakota													
AFGR	86.3	82.1	83.1	83.8	87.4	88.4	90.0	91.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	86.7	86.2	87.7	86.9	85.4	86.2	86.3	87.0	87.5	87.2	86.6	0.1	0.3
Ohio													
AFGR	80.2	79.2	78.7	79.0	79.6	81.4	82.0	84.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	78.0	80.0	81.0	82.2	81.8	80.7	0.2	0.7
Oklahoma													
AFGR	76.9	77.8	77.8	78.0	77.3	78.5	80.0	79.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	84.8	82.7	82.5	—	—
Oregon													
AFGR	74.2	73.0	73.8	76.7	76.5	76.3	78.0	78.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	66.2	66.4	67.7	68.0	68.7	72.0	73.8	1.5	6.1

Appendix A. Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2013

(continued)

STATE	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014%	2015 (%)	Average Annual Change in ACGR, 2011-2015 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2011-2015 (%)
Pennsylvania													
AFGR	82.5	—	83.0	82.7	80.5	84.1	86.0	88.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	77.8	82.6	84.0	85.5	85.3	84.8	0.6	2.2
Rhode Island													
AFGR	78.4	77.8	78.4	76.4	75.3	76.4	77.0	76.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	73.9	75.5	75.8	77.3	77.0	79.7	80.8	83.2	1.5	5.9
South Carolina													
AFGR	60.1	—	58.9	62.2	66.0	68.2	69.0	72.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	72.0	73.6	75.0	77.6	80.1	80.3	1.7	6.7
South Dakota													
AFGR	82.3	84.5	82.5	84.4	81.7	81.8	82.0	83.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	83.4	83.0	82.7	82.7	83.9	0.1	0.5
Tennessee													
AFGR	68.5	70.6	72.6	74.9	77.4	80.4	81.0	83.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	85.5	87.0	86.3	87.2	87.9	0.6	2.4
Texas													
AFGR	74.0	72.5	71.9	73.1	75.4	78.9	81.0	82.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	84.0	80.4	78.0	79.1	80.6	84.3	85.9	88.0	88.0	88.3	89.0	0.8	3.1
Utah													
AFGR	84.4	78.6	76.6	74.3	79.4	78.6	78.0	78.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	69.0	72.0	75.0	76.0	80.0	83.0	83.9	84.8	2.2	8.8
Vermont													
AFGR	86.5	82.3	88.6	89.3	89.6	91.4	93.0	93.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	85.1	86.4	85.7	85.6	87.5	87.5	88.0	86.6	87.8	87.7	0.1	0.2
Virginia													
AFGR	79.6	74.5	75.5	77.0	78.4	81.2	83.0	84.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	—	82.0	83.0	84.5	85.3	85.7	0.9	3.7
Washington													
AFGR	75.0	72.9	74.8	71.9	73.7	77.2	79.0	79.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	75.4	76.6	77.0	76.4	78.2	78.2	0.4	1.6
West Virginia													
AFGR	77.3	76.9	78.2	77.3	77.0	78.3	78.0	80.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	75.5	76.5	79.0	81.4	84.5	86.5	2.5	10.0
Wisconsin													
AFGR	86.7	87.5	88.5	89.6	90.7	91.1	92.0	92.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	85.7	87.0	88.0	88.0	88.6	88.4	0.4	1.4
Wyoming													
AFGR	76.7	76.1	75.8	76.0	75.2	80.3	80.0	80.0	—	—	—	—	—
ACGR	—	—	—	—	—	80.4	79.7	79.0	77.0	78.6	79.3	-0.1	-0.4

Appendix B. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR) and Cohort Subgroup Percentages, by State, 2014-15

STATE	All Students ACGR	Black (not Hispanic) or African American ACGR	Percent of Black Students in Cohort	Hispanic / Latino ACGR	Percent of Hispanic Students in Cohort	White (not Hispanic) or Caucasian ACGR	Percent of White Students in Cohort	Asian / Pacific Islander ACGR	Percent of Asian / Pacific Islander Students in Cohort	American Indian / Alaska Native or Native American ACGR	Percent of Native American Students in Cohort	Students with Disabilities (SWD) ACGR	Percent of SWD in Cohort	Low-Income ACGR	Percent of Low-Income in Cohort	English Language Learner (ELL) ACGR	Percent of ELL in Cohort
Alabama*	89.3%	87.0%	35.2%	90.0%	3.9%	90.5%	57.8%	93.0%	1.4%	90.0%	0.9%	72.4%	10.2%	84.7%	49.5%	75.0%	0.8%
Alaska	75.6%	71.0%	3.3%	72.0%	5.7%	80.0%	51.7%	83.0%	9.3%	64.0%	20.5%	57.0%	11.2%	66.6%	35.8%	56.0%	6.6%
Arizona	77.4%	72.6%	5.6%	72.7%	42.2%	83.2%	42.1%	87.0%	3.1%	66.8%	4.9%	64.4%	9.8%	73.1%	39.7%	34.0%	1.3%
Arkansas	84.9%	77.5%	22.1%	84.5%	9.9%	87.4%	63.7%	86.0%	2.1%	80.0%	0.7%	81.9%	9.1%	81.7%	49.6%	86.0%	4.5%
California	82.0%	71.0%	6.9%	79.0%	51.1%	88.0%	26.4%	92.2%	12.6%	73.0%	0.7%	65.0%	11.5%	78.0%	67.2%	69.0%	19.1%
Colorado	77.3%	69.9%	4.9%	67.6%	30.2%	82.6%	57.4%	87.0%	3.4%	64.0%	0.8%	53.8%	9.9%	65.5%	46.0%	61.1%	11.3%
Connecticut	87.2%	78.0%	13.8%	74.8%	19.3%	92.7%	60.9%	95.0%	4.1%	87.0%	0.3%	65.6%	14.3%	75.9%	41.9%	67.0%	5.3%
Delaware	85.6%	83.2%	32.6%	81.0%	11.4%	88.0%	50.8%	94.0%	3.7%	69.0%	0.4%	66.0%	13.7%	76.0%	28.0%	69.0%	3.8%
Florida	77.9%	68.0%	22.9%	76.7%	27.7%	82.7%	43.6%	90.5%	2.9%	76.0%	0.4%	56.8%	11.6%	70.4%	51.0%	59.5%	7.4%
Georgia	78.8%	75.2%	38.4%	72.0%	10.7%	82.8%	44.3%	87.9%	3.7%	76.0%	0.2%	54.3%	10.9%	74.5%	53.6%	56.4%	3.3%
Hawaii	81.6%	74.0%	2.2%	75.0%	6.2%	79.0%	13.1%	82.8%	78.0%	61.0%	0.5%	60.0%	10.5%	75.9%	45.0%	46.0%	4.6%
Idaho	78.9%	75.0%	1.2%	71.2%	16.1%	80.8%	78.2%	84.0%	1.7%	66.0%	1.2%	58.0%	8.6%	72.0%	50.3%	72.0%	7.8%
Illinois	85.6%	75.5%	17.6%	80.7%	21.5%	90.2%	53.5%	93.8%	4.6%	79.0%	0.3%	70.5%	13.3%	77.9%	46.5%	72.0%	4.3%
Indiana	87.1%	74.9%	11.6%	83.0%	8.2%	89.6%	74.2%	88.0%	2.0%	86.0%	0.3%	70.9%	12.2%	84.2%	36.1%	75.0%	2.6%
Iowa	90.8%	79.0%	4.7%	83.0%	8.0%	92.4%	82.1%	92.0%	2.4%	85.0%	0.5%	77.0%	12.9%	84.8%	38.6%	83.0%	3.4%
Kansas	85.7%	79.0%	7.1%	78.2%	15.7%	88.3%	68.8%	91.0%	2.8%	81.0%	1.2%	77.3%	12.2%	77.3%	50.1%	77.0%	8.0%
Kentucky	88.0%	80.4%	11.0%	83.0%	3.6%	89.3%	81.8%	91.0%	1.5%	81.0%	0.2%	66.0%	6.6%	84.8%	51.4%	67.0%	1.1%
Louisiana	77.5%	71.4%	44.1%	75.0%	3.9%	82.7%	48.6%	90.0%	1.9%	76.0%	0.8%	44.3%	8.8%	70.8%	65.0%	50.0%	1.1%
Maine	87.5%	80.0%	3.3%	80.0%	1.5%	87.9%	91.9%	93.0%	1.4%	82.0%	0.8%	74.0%	16.9%	75.6%	31.3%	77.0%	1.7%
Maryland	87.0%	82.3%	35.8%	76.9%	11.4%	92.0%	43.0%	95.9%	6.2%	79.0%	0.3%	63.9%	9.7%	78.6%	35.1%	49.0%	1.9%
Massachusetts	87.3%	77.5%	8.9%	72.2%	15.2%	91.6%	67.6%	92.3%	5.8%	80.0%	0.3%	69.9%	19.1%	78.2%	43.2%	64.0%	6.8%
Michigan	79.8%	67.3%	18.4%	72.1%	5.6%	83.5%	70.2%	90.3%	2.9%	71.0%	0.8%	57.1%	11.6%	67.5%	42.0%	72.1%	3.2%
Minnesota	81.9%	62.0%	10.0%	65.6%	6.8%	86.9%	74.0%	82.7%	6.8%	52.0%	2.3%	61.1%	13.5%	67.2%	36.5%	63.1%	6.5%
Mississippi	75.4%	72.0%	50.0%	68.0%	2.4%	79.4%	45.8%	85.0%	1.2%	70.0%	0.2%	30.7%	9.8%	70.5%	65.2%	53.0%	0.8%
Missouri	87.8%	75.6%	16.7%	84.0%	4.3%	90.6%	74.8%	93.0%	2.0%	86.0%	0.5%	76.6%	11.3%	80.7%	42.6%	71.0%	1.1%
Montana	86.0%	82.0%	1.4%	83.0%	3.8%	88.7%	82.5%	95.0%	1.4%	67.0%	10.9%	75.0%	12.1%	76.9%	44.9%	62.0%	3.6%
Nebraska	88.9%	75.0%	6.2%	81.6%	15.7%	92.5%	71.1%	79.0%	2.7%	76.0%	1.2%	71.0%	11.6%	81.4%	36.7%	55.0%	3.4%
Nevada	71.3%	55.5%	10.6%	66.7%	37.8%	78.0%	37.3%	82.0%	7.9%	58.0%	1.2%	29.0%	10.5%	63.7%	61.1%	32.0%	8.3%
New Hampshire	88.1%	80.0%	2.0%	75.0%	4.1%	88.9%	89.7%	91.0%	2.8%	75.0%	0.3%	73.0%	17.4%	76.7%	31.4%	77.0%	2.5%

Appendix B. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR) and Cohort Subgroup Percentages, by State, 2014-15

(continued)

STATE	All Students ACGR	Black (not Hispanic) or African American ACGR	Percent of Black Students in Cohort	Hispanic / Latino ACGR	Percent of Hispanic Students in Cohort	White (not Hispanic) or Caucasian ACGR	Percent of White Students in Cohort	Asian / Pacific Islander ACGR	Percent of Asian / Pacific Islander Students in Cohort	American Indian / Alaska Native or Native American ACGR	Percent of Native American Students in Cohort	Students with Disabilities (SWD) ACGR	Percent of SWD in Cohort	Low-Income ACGR	Percent of Low-Income in Cohort	English Language Learner (ELL) ACGR	Percent of ELL in Cohort
New Jersey	89.7%	81.5%	16.7%	82.8%	21.5%	94.0%	52.1%	96.3%	8.9%	89.0%	0.2%	78.0%	15.4%	81.7%	31.9%	74.0%	3.7%
New Mexico	68.6%	61.0%	2.3%	67.2%	57.8%	73.6%	27.5%	79.0%	1.8%	63.0%	10.6%	59.3%	12.5%	63.5%	58.2%	64.0%	26.5%
New York	79.2%	66.5%	18.3%	66.0%	21.6%	88.7%	50.0%	84.9%	9.0%	65.0%	0.5%	52.9%	15.0%	71.0%	45.1%	36.0%	5.4%
North Carolina	85.6%	82.2%	27.3%	80.0%	11.4%	88.3%	53.7%	92.0%	2.6%	82.0%	1.4%	67.3%	10.5%	79.6%	39.9%	58.0%	2.3%
North Dakota	86.6%	76.0%	3.8%	75.0%	3.2%	90.6%	82.3%	78.0%	1.9%	60.0%	8.8%	68.0%	11.1%	71.0%	26.0%	62.0%	2.3%
Ohio	80.7%	59.7%	15.7%	69.9%	3.7%	85.7%	75.0%	86.0%	1.8%	75.0%	0.2%	67.0%	14.6%	68.7%	40.7%	50.0%	1.1%
Oklahoma	82.5%	77.4%	9.4%	78.8%	12.0%	84.2%	54.4%	89.0%	2.4%	82.2%	15.6%	75.6%	14.3%	77.5%	45.8%	60.0%	2.2%
Oregon	73.8%	63.0%	2.6%	67.4%	19.7%	76.0%	66.4%	84.0%	4.7%	55.0%	1.8%	52.7%	14.2%	66.4%	56.3%	51.0%	5.0%
Pennsylvania	84.8%	71.8%	15.2%	69.5%	8.7%	89.3%	70.9%	90.7%	3.5%	76.0%	0.1%	71.5%	14.9%	75.9%	39.4%	62.6%	2.2%
Rhode Island	83.2%	77.0%	8.2%	76.0%	21.5%	86.6%	63.2%	87.0%	3.7%	65.0%	0.8%	68.0%	23.4%	75.6%	57.6%	77.0%	11.4%
South Carolina	80.3%	76.7%	37.1%	77.0%	5.4%	82.7%	55.0%	91.0%	1.9%	80.0%	0.5%	49.0%	11.0%	73.7%	56.7%	76.0%	3.2%
South Dakota	83.9%	72.0%	2.3%	70.0%	3.7%	89.5%	80.0%	81.0%	2.0%	49.0%	10.2%	60.0%	8.3%	67.0%	30.1%	56.0%	2.0%
Tennessee	87.9%	80.6%	25.4%	83.5%	5.8%	90.9%	66.2%	93.0%	1.9%	85.0%	0.3%	70.0%	12.0%	83.5%	60.9%	75.0%	2.4%
Texas	89.0%	85.2%	13.1%	86.5%	48.5%	93.4%	32.2%	95.1%	4.1%	86.0%	0.4%	78.2%	8.6%	85.6%	49.9%	73.3%	7.2%
Utah	84.8%	70.0%	1.4%	74.4%	15.8%	87.4%	76.0%	86.0%	3.4%	70.0%	1.4%	67.9%	9.3%	76.7%	30.0%	66.0%	4.0%
Vermont	87.7%	81.0%	2.0%	S	1.8%	88.5%	90.8%	76.0%	2.1%	>=50%	0.2%	72.0%	16.3%	78.0%	44.3%	69.0%	2.3%
Virginia	85.7%	78.8%	23.3%	76.0%	11.4%	89.6%	54.7%	91.9%	6.1%	-		52.6%	11.5%	75.4%	31.8%	44.6%	4.1%
Washington	78.2%	68.8%	4.7%	69.6%	18.4%	80.9%	61.1%	85.5%	8.5%	60.0%	1.4%	58.0%	11.9%	68.1%	51.2%	55.8%	5.7%
West Virginia	86.5%	83.0%	5.2%	S	1.1%	86.7%	92.2%	>=95%	0.8%	71.0%	0.1%	69.0%	14.3%	82.9%	66.4%	86.0%	0.8%
Wisconsin	88.4%	64.1%	9.5%	77.5%	8.5%	92.9%	75.4%	91.0%	3.5%	78.0%	1.1%	67.5%	11.2%	77.3%	32.2%	62.0%	2.1%
Wyoming	79.3%	68.0%	1.3%	72.0%	11.7%	81.8%	80.8%	88.0%	1.1%	45.0%	3.1%	59.0%	13.6%	66.0%	39.6%	64.0%	2.6%
United States	**83.20%**	**74.60%**	**15.9%**	**77.80%**	**22.6%**	**87.60%**	**52.7%**	**90.20%**	**5.5%**	**71.60%**	**1.1%**	**64.60%**	**11.9%**	**76.10%**	**48.2%**	**65.10%**	**6.4%**

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Appendix C. Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR), by State and Subgroup, 2014-15

STATE	All Students	American Indian / Alaska Native or Native American	Asian / Pacific Islander 1	Black (not Hispanic) or African American	Hispanic / Latino	Multicultural or Multiethnic or Multiracial	White (not Hispanic) or Caucasian	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)	English Language Learners (ELL)	Low-Income Students	Asian	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander
		Special Populations								Major Racial and Ethnic Groups	Asian/Pacific Island	
Alabama*	89.3%	90.0%	93.0%	87.0%	90.0%	89.0%	90.5%	72.4%	75.0%	84.7%	-	-
Alaska	75.6%	64.0%	83.0%	71.0%	72.0%	74.0%	80.0%	57.0%	56.0%	66.6%	-	-
Arizona	77.4%	66.8%	87.0%	72.6%	72.7%	-	83.2%	64.4%	34.0%	73.1%	-	-
Arkansas	84.9%	80.0%	86.0%	77.5%	84.5%	87.0%	87.4%	81.9%	86.0%	81.7%	91.0%	66.0%
California	82.0%	73.0%	92.2%	71.0%	79.0%	83.0%	88.0%	65.0%	69.0%	78.0%	93.0%	82.0%
Colorado	77.3%	64.0%	87.0%	69.9%	67.6%	80.0%	82.6%	53.8%	61.1%	65.5%	88.0%	75.0%
Connecticut	87.2%	87.0%	95.0%	78.0%	74.8%	87.0%	92.7%	65.6%	67.0%	75.9%	95.0%	72.0%
Delaware	85.6%	69.0%	94.0%	83.2%	81.0%	80.0%	88.0%	66.0%	69.0%	76.0%	S	>=50%
Florida	77.9%	76.0%	90.5%	68.0%	76.7%	81.5%	82.7%	56.8%	59.5%	70.4%	90.9%	83.0%
Georgia	78.8%	76.0%	87.9%	75.2%	72.0%	80.2%	82.8%	54.3%	56.4%	74.5%	-	-
Hawaii	81.6%	61.0%	82.8%	74.0%	75.0%	-	79.0%	60.0%	46.0%	75.9%	-	-
Idaho	78.9%	66.0%	84.0%	75.0%	71.2%	73.0%	80.8%	58.0%	72.0%	72.0%	85.0%	78.0%
Illinois	85.6%	79.0%	93.8%	75.5%	80.7%	85.3%	90.2%	70.5%	72.0%	77.9%	93.9%	88.0%
Indiana	87.1%	86.0%	88.0%	74.9%	83.0%	84.0%	89.6%	70.9%	75.0%	84.2%	88.0%	87.0%
Iowa	90.8%	85.0%	92.0%	79.0%	83.0%	84.0%	92.4%	77.0%	83.0%	84.8%	93.0%	86.0%
Kansas	85.7%	81.0%	91.0%	79.0%	78.2%	82.0%	88.3%	77.3%	77.0%	77.3%	93.0%	59.0%
Kentucky	88.0%	81.0%	91.0%	80.4%	83.0%	84.0%	89.3%	66.0%	67.0%	84.8%	S	>=90%
Louisiana	77.5%	76.0%	90.0%	71.4%	75.0%	81.0%	82.7%	44.3%	50.0%	70.8%	91.0%	77.0%
Maine	87.5%	82.0%	93.0%	80.0%	80.0%	85.0%	87.9%	74.0%	77.0%	75.6%	S	>=50%
Maryland	87.0%	79.0%	95.9%	82.3%	76.9%	91.0%	92.0%	63.9%	49.0%	78.6%	96.1%	90.0%
Massachusetts	87.3%	80.0%	92.3%	77.5%	72.2%	86.0%	91.6%	69.9%	64.0%	78.2%	92.4%	84.0%
Michigan	79.8%	71.0%	90.3%	67.3%	72.1%	75.0%	83.5%	57.1%	72.1%	67.5%	90.8%	77.0%
Minnesota	81.9%	52.0%	82.7%	62.0%	65.6%	-	86.9%	61.1%	63.1%	67.2%	-	-
Mississippi	75.4%	70.0%	85.0%	72.0%	68.0%	68.0%	79.4%	30.7%	53.0%	70.5%	85.0%	-
Missouri	87.8%	86.0%	93.0%	75.6%	84.0%	86.0%	90.6%	76.6%	71.0%	80.7%	94.0%	83.0%
Montana	86.0%	67.0%	95.0%	82.0%	83.0%	-	88.7%	75.0%	62.0%	76.9%	S	>=90%
Nebraska	88.9%	76.0%	79.0%	75.0%	81.6%	84.0%	92.5%	71.0%	55.0%	81.4%	S	>=80%
Nevada	71.3%	58.0%	82.0%	55.5%	66.7%	76.0%	78.0%	29.0%	32.0%	63.7%	85.0%	71.0%
New Hampshire	88.1%	75.0%	91.0%	80.0%	75.0%	83.0%	88.9%	73.0%	77.0%	76.7%	S	>=50%
New Jersey	89.7%	89.0%	96.3%	81.5%	82.8%	89.0%	94.0%	78.0%	74.0%	81.7%	96.5%	88.0%
New Mexico	68.6%	63.0%	79.0%	61.0%	67.2%	-	73.6%	59.3%	64.0%	63.5%	-	-
New York	79.2%	65.0%	84.9%	66.5%	66.0%	80.0%	88.7%	52.9%	36.0%	71.0%	-	-
North Carolina	85.6%	82.0%	92.0%	82.2%	80.0%	84.5%	88.3%	67.3%	58.0%	79.6%	-	-
North Dakota	86.6%	60.0%	78.0%	76.0%	75.0%	-	90.6%	68.0%	62.0%	71.0%	78.0%	-
Ohio	80.7%	75.0%	86.0%	59.7%	69.9%	76.0%	85.7%	67.0%	50.0%	68.7%	-	-
Oklahoma	82.5%	82.2%	89.0%	77.4%	78.8%	81.0%	84.2%	75.6%	60.0%	77.5%	90.0%	79.0%
Oregon	73.8%	55.0%	84.0%	63.0%	67.4%	73.0%	76.0%	52.7%	51.0%	66.4%	87.0%	63.0%

Appendix C. Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR), by State and Subgroup, 2014-15

(continued)

STATE	All Students	American Indian / Alaska Native or Native American	Asian / Pacific Islander 1	Black (not Hispanic) or African American	Hispanic / Latino	Multicultural or Multiethnic or Multiracial	White (not Hispanic) or Caucasian	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)	English Language Learners (ELL)	Low-Income Students	Asian	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander
		Special Populations								Major Racial and Ethnic Groups		Asian/Pacific Island
Pennsylvania	84.8%	76.0%	90.7%	71.8%	69.5%	76.0%	89.3%	71.5%	62.6%	75.9%	90.7%	91.0%
Rhode Island	83.2%	65.0%	87.0%	77.0%	76.0%	77.0%	86.6%	68.0%	77.0%	75.6%	89.0%	75.0%
South Carolina	80.3%	80.0%	91.0%	76.7%	77.0%	-	82.7%	49.0%	76.0%	73.7%	-	-
South Dakota	83.9%	49.0%	81.0%	72.0%	70.0%	72.0%	89.5%	60.0%	56.0%	67.0%	S	>=50%
Tennessee	87.9%	85.0%	93.0%	80.6%	83.5%	-	90.9%	70.0%	75.0%	83.5%	93.0%	94.0%
Texas	89.0%	86.0%	95.1%	85.2%	86.5%	92.1%	93.4%	78.2%	73.3%	85.6%	95.4%	89.0%
Utah	84.8%	70.0%	86.0%	70.0%	74.4%	87.0%	87.4%	67.9%	66.0%	76.7%	89.0%	84.0%
Vermont	87.7%	>=50%	76.0%	81.0%	S	80.0%	88.5%	72.0%	69.0%	78.0%	S	S
Virginia	85.7%	-	91.9%	78.8%	76.0%	-	89.6%	52.6%	44.6%	75.4%	91.9%	-
Washington	78.2%	60.0%	85.5%	68.8%	69.6%	78.0%	80.9%	58.0%	55.8%	68.1%	87.8%	67.0%
West Virginia	86.5%	71.0%	>=95%	83.0%	S	85.0%	86.7%	69.0%	86.0%	82.9%	>=95%	S
Wisconsin	88.4%	78.0%	91.0%	64.1%	77.5%	86.0%	92.9%	67.5%	62.0%	77.3%	91.0%	84.0%
Wyoming	79.3%	45.0%	88.0%	68.0%	72.0%	72.0%	81.8%	59.0%	64.0%	66.0%	S	S

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

- A dash (-) indicates that the data are not available.

† Not applicable: Data are not expected to be reported by the SEA for SY2014-15.

S Indicates that data were suppressed.

1 The Asian/Pacific Islander column represents either the value reported by the state to the Department of Education for the major racial and ethnic group "Asian/Pacific Islander" or an aggregation of values reported by the state for the major racial and ethnic groups "Asian," "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander," and "Filipino." (California is the only state currently using the major racial and ethnic group "Filipino.")

2 Disaggregated reporting for Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates is done according to the provisions outlined within each state's Accountability Workbook. Accordingly, not every state uses major racial and ethnic groups which enable further disaggregation of Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations.

>= Indicates that the value has been blurred, and is greater than or equal to the listed value.

Source: Reproduced from the United States Department of Education (2016). Provisional Data File: SY2014-15 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates; Data Notes for Provisional SY2014-15 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates. Retrieved November 6, 2016 from http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-main.cfm

Notes:

There continues to be some variance in how it is implemented in each state, particularly for children with disabilities and limited English proficient students, leading to some accounting differences between states.

The Asian/Pacific Islander column represents either the value reported by the state to the Department of Education for the major racial and ethnic group "Asian / Pacific Islander" or an aggregation of values reported by the state for the major racial and ethnic groups "Asian", "Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander" and "Filipino". Values reported in the Asian/Pacific Islander column which represent the U. S. Department of Education aggregation of other values reported by the state have been presented in Italic type. (California is the only state currently using the major racial and ethnic group "Filipino".)

State specific notes:

BIE did not submit data to the department.

Puerto Rico reports a 3-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, so they are excluded from this table.

California, Georgia, Missouri, and Texas submitted their data late; therefore their data have not gone through ED's standard data quality review

Since the close of the SY1314 reporting window, Pennsylvania has resubmitted data to EDFacts, this table does not represent their most recent submissions.

Appendix D. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Change from 2010-11 to 2013-14, by State

STATE	ACGR, 2011 (%)	ACGR, 2015 (%)	ACGR Percentage Point Change from 2011-2015
Alabama*	72	89.3	17.3
Alaska	68	75.6	7.6
Arizona	77.9	77.4	-0.5
Arkansas	80.7	84.9	4.2
California	76.3	82.0	5.7
Colorado	73.9	77.3	3.4
Connecticut	83	87.2	4.2
Delaware	78.5	85.6	7.1
Florida	70.6	77.9	7.3
Georgia	67.5	78.8	11.3
Hawaii	80	81.6	1.6
Idaho		78.9	78.9
Illinois	83.8	85.6	1.8
Indiana	85.7	87.1	1.4
Iowa	88.3	90.8	2.5
Kansas	83	85.7	2.7
Kentucky		88.0	88
Louisiana	70.9	77.5	6.6
Maine	83.8	87.5	3.7
Maryland	82.8	87.0	4.2
Massachusetts	83.4	87.3	3.9
Michigan	74.3	79.8	5.5
Minnesota	76.9	81.9	5
Mississippi	73.7	75.4	1.7
Missouri	81.3	87.8	6.5

STATE	ACGR, 2011 (%)	ACGR, 2015 (%)	ACGR Percentage Point Change from 2011-2015
Montana	82.2	86.0	3.8
Nebraska	86	88.9	2.9
Nevada	62	71.3	9.3
New Hampshire	86.1	88.1	2
New Jersey	83.2	89.7	6.5
New Mexico	63	68.6	5.6
New York	76.8	79.2	2.4
North Carolina	77.9	85.6	7.7
North Dakota	86.3	86.6	0.3
Ohio	80	80.7	0.7
Oklahoma		82.5	82.5
Oregon	67.7	73.8	6.1
Pennsylvania	82.6	84.8	2.2
Rhode Island	77.3	83.2	5.9
South Carolina	73.6	80.3	6.7
South Dakota	83.4	83.9	0.5
Tennessee	85.5	87.9	2.4
Texas	85.9	89.0	3.1
Utah	76	84.8	8.8
Vermont	87.5	87.7	0.2
Virginia	82	85.7	3.7
Washington	76.6	78.2	1.6
West Virginia	76.5	86.5	10
Wisconsin	87	88.4	1.4
Wyoming	79.7	79.3	-0.4

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.
Note. Washington, DC is not included in this table. ACGR Percentage Point Change from 2011-2014 = The 2013-14 ACGR minus the 2010-11 ACGR; therefore, positive values indicate an increase in graduation rate.
Sources: Reproduced from the United States Department of Education (2016). Provisional Data Files: SY2010-11 and SY2014-15 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Appendix E. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Gaps, by Subgroup and State, 2014-15

STATE	White Students	African American Students	Percentage Point Difference (%)
	Rate (%)	*Rate (%)*	
Wisconsin	92.9%	64.1%	28.8
Ohio	85.7%	59.7%	26.0
Minnesota	86.9%	62.0%	24.9
Nevada	78.0%	55.5%	22.5
New York	88.7%	66.5%	22.2
Nebraska	92.5%	75.0%	17.5
Pennsylvania	89.3%	71.8%	17.5
South Dakota	89.5%	72.0%	17.5
Utah	87.4%	70.0%	17.4
California	88.0%	71.0%	17.0
Michigan	83.5%	67.3%	16.2
Missouri	90.6%	75.6%	15.0
Connecticut	92.7%	78.0%	14.7
Florida	82.7%	68.0%	14.7
Illinois	90.2%	75.5%	14.7
Indiana	89.6%	74.9%	14.7
North Dakota	90.6%	76.0%	14.6
Massachusetts	91.6%	77.5%	14.1
Wyoming	81.8%	68.0%	13.8
Iowa	92.4%	79.0%	13.4
Oregon	76.0%	63.0%	13.0
Colorado	82.6%	69.9%	12.7
New Mexico	73.6%	61.0%	12.6
New Jersey	94.0%	81.5%	12.5
Washington	80.9%	68.8%	12.1
Louisiana	82.7%	71.4%	11.3
Virginia	89.6%	78.8%	10.8
Arizona	83.2%	72.6%	10.6
Tennessee	90.9%	80.6%	10.3
Arkansas	87.4%	77.5%	9.9
Maryland	92.0%	82.3%	9.7
Rhode Island	86.6%	77.0%	9.6
Kansas	88.3%	79.0%	9.3
Alaska	80.0%	71.0%	9.0
Kentucky	89.3%	80.4%	8.9
New Hampshire	88.9%	80.0%	8.9
Texas	93.4%	85.2%	8.2
Maine	87.9%	80.0%	7.9
Georgia	82.8%	75.2%	7.6
Vermont	88.5%	81.0%	7.5
Mississippi	79.4%	72.0%	7.4
Oklahoma	84.2%	77.4%	6.8
Montana	88.7%	82.0%	6.7
North Carolina	88.3%	82.2%	6.1
South Carolina	82.7%	76.7%	6.0
Idaho	80.8%	75.0%	5.8
Hawaii	79.0%	74.0%	5.0
Delaware	88.0%	83.2%	4.8
West Virginia	86.7%	83.0%	3.7
Alabama*	90.5%	87.0%	3.5

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

Note. These tables are sorted by the Percentage Point Gap Differences between groups for the 2014-15 State Level ACGR.

Source: U.S. Department of Education (2016). Provisional Data File: SY2014-15 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR).

Appendix E. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Gaps, by Subgroup and State, 2014-15
(continued)

STATE	White Students	Hispanic Students	Percentage Point Difference (%)
	Rate (%)	*Rate (%)*	
New York	88.7%	66.0%	22.7
Minnesota	86.9%	65.6%	21.3
Pennsylvania	89.3%	69.5%	19.8
South Dakota	89.5%	70.0%	19.5
Massachusetts	91.6%	72.2%	19.4
Connecticut	92.7%	74.8%	17.9
Ohio	85.7%	69.9%	15.8
North Dakota	90.6%	75.0%	15.6
Wisconsin	92.9%	77.5%	15.4
Maryland	92.0%	76.9%	15.1
Colorado	82.6%	67.6%	15.0
New Hampshire	88.9%	75.0%	13.9
Virginia	89.6%	76.0%	13.6
Utah	87.4%	74.4%	13.0
Michigan	83.5%	72.1%	11.4
Mississippi	79.4%	68.0%	11.4
Nevada	78.0%	66.7%	11.3
Washington	80.9%	69.6%	11.3
New Jersey	94.0%	82.8%	11.2
Nebraska	92.5%	81.6%	10.9
Georgia	82.8%	72.0%	10.8
Rhode Island	86.6%	76.0%	10.6
Arizona	83.2%	72.7%	10.5
Kansas	88.3%	78.2%	10.1
Wyoming	81.8%	72.0%	9.8

STATE	White Students	Hispanic Students	Percentage Point Difference (%)
	Rate (%)	*Rate (%)*	
Idaho	80.8%	71.2%	9.6
Illinois	90.2%	80.7%	9.5
Iowa	92.4%	83.0%	9.4
California	88.0%	79.0%	9.0
Oregon	76.0%	67.4%	8.6
North Carolina	88.3%	80.0%	8.3
Alaska	80.0%	72.0%	8.0
Maine	87.9%	80.0%	7.9
Louisiana	82.7%	75.0%	7.7
Tennessee	90.9%	83.5%	7.4
Delaware	88.0%	81.0%	7.0
Texas	93.4%	86.5%	6.9
Indiana	89.6%	83.0%	6.6
Missouri	90.6%	84.0%	6.6
New Mexico	73.6%	67.2%	6.4
Kentucky	89.3%	83.0%	6.3
Florida	82.7%	76.7%	6.0
Montana	88.7%	83.0%	5.7
South Carolina	82.7%	77.0%	5.7
Oklahoma	84.2%	78.8%	5.4
Hawaii	79.0%	75.0%	4.0
Arkansas	87.4%	84.5%	2.9
Alabama*	90.5%	90.0%	0.5
Vermont	88.5%	†	†
West Virginia	86.7%	†	†

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.
Note. These tables are sorted by the Percentage Point Gap Differences between groups for the 2014-15 State Level ACGR.
Source: U.S. Department of Education (2016). Provisional Data File: SY2014-15 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR).

Appendix E. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Gaps, by Subgroup and State, 2014-15

(continued)

STATE	English Language Learners (ELL) Rate (%)	Non-ELL Rate (%)	Percentage Point Difference (%)
New York	36.0%	81.6%	45.6
Arizona	34.0%	78.0%	44.0
Nevada	32.0%	74.9%	42.9
Virginia	44.6%	87.5%	42.9
Maryland	49.0%	87.7%	38.7
Hawaii	46.0%	83.3%	37.3
Nebraska	55.0%	90.1%	35.1
Ohio	50.0%	81.1%	31.1
South Dakota	56.0%	84.5%	28.5
North Carolina	58.0%	86.3%	28.3
Louisiana	50.0%	77.8%	27.8
Wisconsin	62.0%	89.0%	27.0
North Dakota	62.0%	87.2%	25.2
Massachusetts	64.0%	89.0%	25.0
Montana	62.0%	86.9%	24.9
Oregon	51.0%	75.0%	24.0
Washington	55.8%	79.5%	23.7
Georgia	56.4%	79.6%	23.2
Oklahoma	60.0%	83.0%	23.0
Pennsylvania	62.6%	85.3%	22.7
Mississippi	53.0%	75.6%	22.6
Connecticut	67.0%	88.3%	21.3
Kentucky	67.0%	88.2%	21.2
Alaska	56.0%	77.0%	21.0
Minnesota	63.1%	83.2%	20.1

STATE	English Language Learners (ELL) Rate (%)	Non-ELL Rate (%)	Percentage Point Difference (%)
Florida	59.5%	79.4%	19.9
Utah	66.0%	85.6%	19.6
Vermont	69.0%	88.1%	19.1
Colorado	61.1%	79.4%	18.3
Delaware	69.0%	86.3%	17.3
Missouri	71.0%	88.0%	17.0
Texas	73.3%	90.2%	16.9
New Jersey	74.0%	90.3%	16.3
California	69.0%	85.1%	16.1
Wyoming	64.0%	79.7%	15.7
Alabama*	75.0%	89.4%	14.4
Illinois	72.0%	86.2%	14.2
Tennessee	75.0%	88.2%	13.2
Indiana	75.0%	87.4%	12.4
New Hampshire	77.0%	88.4%	11.4
Maine	77.0%	87.7%	10.7
Kansas	77.0%	86.5%	9.5
Iowa	83.0%	91.1%	8.1
Michigan	72.1%	80.1%	8.0
Idaho	72.0%	79.5%	7.5
Rhode Island	77.0%	84.0%	7.0
New Mexico	64.0%	70.3%	6.3
South Carolina	76.0%	80.4%	4.4
West Virginia	86.0%	86.5%	0.5
Arkansas	86.0%	84.8%	-1.2

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

Note. These tables are sorted by the Percentage Point Gap Differences between groups for the 2014-15 State Level ACGR.

Source: U.S. Department of Education (2016). Provisional Data File: SY2014-15 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR).

Appendix F. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Gap Change, by Subgroup and State from 2010-11 to 2014-15

STATE	ACGR Gap Closure between White and Black Students from 2011 to 2015 (Percentage Points (%))	Percent of Black Students within the Cohort in 2015 (Percent (%))
Alabama*	11.5	35.2%
Wyoming	10.2	1.3%
Minnesota	10.1	10.0%
New Jersey	8.5	16.7%
Georgia	8.4	38.4%
Michigan	6.8	18.4%
Mississippi	6.6	50.0%
Pennsylvania	5.5	15.2%
Nevada	5.5	10.6%
Rhode Island	5.4	8.2%
New Hampshire	5.1	2.0%
California	5.0	6.9%
North Carolina	4.9	27.3%
Kansas	4.7	7.1%
South Dakota	4.5	2.3%
Delaware	4.2	32.6%
Missouri	4.0	16.7%
Massachusetts	3.9	8.9%
Iowa	3.6	4.7%
Maryland	3.3	35.8%
Colorado	3.3	4.9%
Connecticut	3.3	13.8%
Alaska	3.0	3.3%
Oregon	3.0	2.6%
Texas	2.8	13.1%
Nebraska	2.5	6.2%
Florida	2.3	22.9%
Virginia	2.2	23.3%
Washington	1.9	4.7%
Louisiana	1.7	44.1%
Utah	1.6	1.4%
North Dakota	1.4	3.8%
West Virginia	1.3	5.2%
Arkansas	1.1	22.1%
South Carolina	1.0	37.1%
Tennessee	0.7	25.4%
Arizona	0.4	5.6%
New Mexico	0.4	2.3%
Illinois	0.3	17.6%
Ohio	0.0	15.7%
New York	-0.2	18.3%
Maine	-0.9	3.3%
Indiana	-1.7	11.6%
Wisconsin	-1.8	9.5%
Montana	-2.7	1.4%
Vermont	-3.5	2.0%
Hawaii	-4.0	2.2%
Idaho	†	1.2%
Oklahoma	†	9.4%
Kentucky	†	11.0%

STATE	ACGR Gap Closure between White and Hispanic Students from 2011 to 2015 (Percentage Points (%))	Percent of Hispanic Students within the Cohort in 2015 (Percent (%))
Minnesota	11.7	6.8%
Alabama*	11.5	3.9%
Utah	10	15.8%
Massachusetts	7.6	15.2%
New Mexico	7.6	57.8%
Georgia	7.2	10.7%
Connecticut	7.1	19.3%
Nevada	6.7	37.8%
California	6	51.1%
Colorado	6	30.2%
New Jersey	5.8	21.5%
North Carolina	5.7	11.4%
Iowa	5.6	8.0%
Michigan	5.6	5.6%
Nebraska	5.1	15.7%
Alaska	5	5.7%
Washington	4.7	18.4%
Missouri	4.4	4.3%
Rhode Island	4.4	21.5%
Arkansas	4.1	9.9%
Delaware	4	11.4%
Wisconsin	3.6	8.5%
Oregon	3.4	19.7%
Pennsylvania	3.2	8.7%
Ohio	3.2	3.7%
Texas	3.1	48.5%
Kansas	2.9	15.7%
Tennessee	2.6	5.8%
Illinois	2.5	21.5%
Arizona	2.5	42.2%
South Dakota	2.5	3.7%
South Carolina	2.3	5.4%
Maryland	1.9	11.4%
Virginia	1.4	11.4%
Montana	1.3	3.8%
Florida	1	27.7%
Indiana	0.400	8.2%
New York	0.300	21.6%
New Hampshire	0.100	4.1%
Louisiana	-0.700	3.9%
North Dakota	-1.6	3.2%
Wyoming	-1.8	11.7%
Mississippi	-4.4	2.4%
Hawaii	-5	6.2%
Maine	-10.9	1.5%
Oklahoma	†	12.0%
Kentucky	†	3.6%
Idaho	†	16.1%
West Virginia	†	1.1%
Vermont	†	1.8%

STATE	ACGR Gap Closure between All and Students with Disabilities from 2011 to 2015 (Percentage Points (%))	Percent of Students with Disabilities within the Cohort in 2015 (Percent (%))
Alabama*	25.1	10.2%
Georgia	12.5	10.9%
Alaska	9.4	11.2%
Louisiana	8.8	8.8%
Mississippi	7.3	9.8%
New Mexico	6.7	12.5%
Florida	5.9	11.6%
Oregon	4.9	14.2%
Indiana	4.8	12.2%
Maine	4.5	16.9%
Iowa	4.2	12.9%
Rhode Island	3.8	23.4%
South Carolina	3.7	11.0%
Arkansas	3.0	9.1%
Illinois	2.9	13.3%
Maryland	2.9	9.7%
North Carolina	2.7	10.5%
Wyoming	2.7	13.6%
New York	2.7	15.0%
Delaware	2.4	13.7%
Vermont	2.3	16.3%
Montana	2.0	12.1%
Virginia	1.9	11.5%
New Hampshire	1.9	17.4%
Kansas	1.6	12.2%
Tennessee	1.1	12.0%
Missouri	0.8	11.3%
West Virginia	0.5	14.3%
North Dakota	0.4	11.1%
Minnesota	0.2	13.5%
Utah	0.1	9.3%
California	0.0	11.5%
Washington	-0.2	11.9%
Massachusetts	-0.4	19.1%
Connecticut	-0.6	14.3%
Hawaii	-0.6	10.5%
Ohio	-0.7	14.6%
Michigan	-0.7	11.6%
Wisconsin	-0.9	11.2%
Pennsylvania	-1.3	14.9%
New Jersey	-1.7	15.4%
Texas	-1.8	8.6%
Nebraska	-1.9	11.6%
Arizona	-2.0	9.8%
Colorado	-2.5	9.9%
Nevada	-3.3	10.5%
South Dakota	-4.9	8.3%
Oklahoma	†	14.3%
Idaho	†	8.6%
Kentucky	†	6.6%

Appendix F. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Gap Change, by Subgroup and State from 2010-11 to 2014-15

(continued)

STATE	ACGR Gap Closure between All and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students from 2011 to 2015 *Percentage Points (%)*	Percent of Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students within the Cohort in 2015 *Percent (%)*
Alabama*	21.7	0.8%
Georgia	12.6	3.3%
Texas	12.3	7.2%
Utah	12.2	4.0%
Iowa	10.2	3.4%
Arizona	9.6	1.3%
South Carolina	7.7	3.2%
Alaska	7.4	6.6%
Minnesota	6.2	6.5%
Arkansas	6.1	4.5%
Colorado	4.8	11.3%
Michigan	4.3	3.2%
Kansas	4.3	8.0%
Connecticut	3.8	5.3%
Massachusetts	3.7	6.8%
California	3.0	19.1%
Rhode Island	2.8	11.4%
Wyoming	2.7	2.6%
Washington	2.6	5.7%
New Mexico	2.4	26.5%
Illinois	2.4	4.3%
North Carolina	2.4	2.3%
Missouri	2.2	1.1%
Tennessee	2.1	2.4%
New Hampshire	1.9	2.5%
Montana	1.0	3.6%
Indiana	0.9	2.6%
Louisiana	0.5	1.1%
North Dakota	0.4	2.3%
Nebraska	0.1	3.4%
Florida	-0.4	7.4%
New Jersey	-0.7	3.7%
Pennsylvania	-2.2	2.2%
Delaware	-3.6	3.8%
Ohio	-3.7	1.1%
Maine	-4.5	1.7%
South Dakota	-4.9	2.0%
Wisconsin	-5.4	2.1%
Nevada	-6.3	8.3%
West Virginia	-6.5	0.8%
Oregon	-6.8	5.0%
Maryland	-9.0	1.9%
New York	-12.2	5.4%
Vermont	-13.7	2.3%
Virginia	-14.1	4.1%
Mississippi	-14.4	0.8%
Hawaii	-15.6	4.6%
Idaho	†	7.8%
Kentucky	†	1.1%
Oklahoma	†	2.2%

STATE	ACGR Gap Closure between All and Low-Income Students from 2011 to 2015 *Percentage Points (%)*	Percent of Low-Income Students within the Cohort in 2015 *Percent (%)*
Connecticut	8.7	41.9%
West Virginia	5.4	66.4%
Alabama*	5.4	49.5%
Minnesota	4.3	36.5%
Indiana	4.1	36.1%
Iowa	4.0	38.6%
New Jersey	4.0	31.9%
Massachusetts	3.9	43.2%
Georgia	3.7	53.6%
Florida	3.5	51.0%
Rhode Island	3.4	57.6%
Pennsylvania	3.1	39.4%
Alaska	3.0	35.8%
Ohio	3.0	40.7%
Utah	2.9	30.0%
Arkansas	2.8	49.6%
New Hampshire	2.6	31.4%
California	2.0	67.2%
New Mexico	1.9	58.2%
Montana	1.9	44.9%
Wisconsin	1.9	32.2%
Virginia	1.7	31.8%
Kansas	1.6	50.1%
Tennessee	1.6	60.9%
Nevada	1.4	61.1%
Illinois	1.3	46.5%
Mississippi	1.1	65.2%
North Carolina	1.0	39.9%
Arizona	0.7	39.7%
Wyoming	0.7	39.6%
Maryland	0.6	35.1%
Nebraska	0.5	36.7%
South Carolina	0.4	56.7%
Louisiana	0.3	65.0%
Vermont	0.3	44.3%
Colorado	0.2	46.0%
Washington	-0.1	51.2%
New York	-0.2	45.1%
Oregon	-0.4	56.3%
Hawaii	-0.7	45.0%
Maine	-0.9	31.3%
South Dakota	-0.9	30.1%
Missouri	-1.1	42.6%
Michigan	-1.3	42.0%
Texas	-1.4	49.9%
Delaware	-2.6	28.0%
North Dakota	-5.6	26.0%
Kentucky	†	51.4%
Oklahoma	†	45.8%
Idaho	†	50.3%

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

Note. † = Not applicable: Data are not expected to be reported by the SEA for SY2010-11 or 2014-15. ACGR percentage point gap change(s) between student groups = the gap that existed in 2010-11 minus the current 2014-15 ACGR gap between groups; hence, positive percentage point values indicate graduation rate gap closure and negative values indicate gap widening between groups.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education (2016). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 and 2014-15 State Level Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR).

Appendix G. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) by State, Percent Low-Income, ACGR Low-Income, ACGR Estimated Non-Low-Income, Gap between Low-Income and Non-Low-Income, and Gap Change 2011-2015

STATE	Gap between Non-Low-Income and Low-Income ACGR (Percentage Points), 2011	Overall 2015 ACGR (%)	Percent of Low-Income Students in the Cohort, 2015 (%)	Estimated Non-Low-Income 2015 ACGR (%)	Low-Income 2015 ACGR (%)	Gap between Non-Low-Income and Low-Income ACGR (Percentage Points), 2015	Gap Change between Non-Low-Income and Low-Income ACGR (Percentage Points), 2011-15
Alabama*	19.73	89.3%	49.5%	93.8%	84.7%	9.1	10.6
Alaska	18.28	75.6%	35.8%	80.6%	66.6%	14.0	4.2
Arizona	7.94	77.4%	39.7%	80.2%	73.1%	7.1	0.8
Arkansas	12.14	84.9%	49.6%	88.1%	81.7%	6.4	5.8
California	15.49	82.0%	67.2%	90.2%	78.0%	12.2	3.3
Colorado	19.13	77.3%	46.0%	87.3%	65.5%	21.8	-2.7
Connecticut	27.38	87.2%	41.9%	95.3%	75.9%	19.4	7.9
Delaware	12.40	85.6%	28.0%	89.3%	76.0%	13.3	-0.9
Florida	17.86	77.9%	51.0%	85.7%	70.4%	15.3	2.6
Georgia	15.05	78.8%	53.6%	83.8%	74.5%	9.3	5.8
Hawaii	8.43	81.6%	45.0%	86.3%	75.9%	10.4	-1.9
Idaho	†	78.9%	50.3%	85.9%	72.0%	13.9	†
Illinois	14.66	85.6%	46.5%	92.3%	77.9%	14.4	0.3
Indiana	10.55	87.1%	36.1%	88.7%	84.2%	4.5	6.0
Iowa	15.48	90.8%	38.6%	94.6%	84.8%	9.8	5.7
Kansas	19.57	85.7%	50.1%	94.1%	77.3%	16.8	2.7
Kentucky	†	88.0%	51.4%	91.4%	84.8%	6.6	†
Louisiana	14.11	77.5%	65.0%	89.9%	70.8%	19.1	-5.0
Maine	13.41	87.5%	31.3%	92.9%	75.6%	17.3	-3.9
Maryland	12.62	87.0%	35.1%	91.5%	78.6%	12.9	-0.3
Massachusetts	21.53	87.3%	43.2%	94.2%	78.2%	16.0	5.5
Michigan	18.65	79.8%	42.0%	88.7%	67.5%	21.2	-2.5
Minnesota	27.81	81.9%	36.5%	90.4%	67.2%	23.2	4.6
Mississippi	12.52	75.4%	65.2%	84.6%	70.5%	14.1	-1.6
Missouri	9.83	87.8%	42.6%	93.1%	80.7%	12.4	-2.5
Montana	18.71	86.0%	44.9%	93.4%	76.9%	16.5	2.2
Nebraska	11.89	88.9%	36.7%	93.2%	81.4%	11.8	0.0
Nevada	17.22	71.3%	61.1%	83.2%	63.7%	19.5	-2.3
New Hampshire	20.69	88.1%	31.4%	93.3%	76.7%	16.6	4.1

Appendix G. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) by State, Percent Low-Income, ACGR Low-Income, ACGR Estimated Non-Low-Income, Gap between Low-Income and Non-Low-Income, and Gap Change 2011-2015

(continued)

STATE	Gap between Non-Low-Income and Low-Income ACGR (Percentage Points), 2011	Overall 2015 ACGR (%)	Percent of Low-Income Students in the Cohort, 2015 (%)	Estimated Non-Low-Income 2015 ACGR (%)	Low-Income 2015 ACGR (%)	Gap between Non-Low-Income and Low-Income ACGR (Percentage Points), 2015	Gap Change between Non-Low-Income and Low-Income ACGR (Percentage Points), 2011-15
New Jersey	15.91	89.7%	31.9%	93.4%	81.7%	11.7	4.2
New Mexico	16.36	68.6%	58.2%	75.7%	63.5%	12.2	4.2
New York	13.24	79.2%	45.1%	85.9%	71.0%	14.9	-1.7
North Carolina	11.73	85.6%	39.9%	89.6%	79.6%	10.0	1.7
North Dakota	13.38	86.6%	26.0%	92.1%	71.0%	21.1	-7.7
Ohio	23.35	80.7%	40.7%	88.9%	68.7%	20.2	3.1
Oklahoma	†	82.5%	45.8%	86.7%	77.5%	9.2	†
Oregon	13.67	73.8%	56.3%	83.3%	66.4%	16.9	-3.3
Pennsylvania	17.71	84.8%	39.4%	90.6%	75.9%	14.7	3.0
Rhode Island	22.12	83.2%	57.6%	93.5%	75.6%	17.9	4.2
South Carolina	13.26	80.3%	56.7%	88.9%	73.7%	15.2	-2.0
South Dakota	22.25	83.9%	30.1%	91.2%	67.0%	24.2	-1.9
Tennessee	14.03	87.9%	60.9%	94.8%	83.5%	11.3	2.8
Texas	3.74	89.0%	49.9%	92.4%	85.6%	6.8	-3.0
Utah	15.46	84.8%	30.0%	88.3%	76.7%	11.6	3.9
Vermont	16.29	87.7%	44.3%	95.4%	78.0%	17.4	-1.1
Virginia	17.06	85.7%	31.8%	90.5%	75.4%	15.1	1.9
Washington	17.38	78.2%	51.2%	88.8%	68.1%	20.7	-3.3
West Virginia	19.86	86.5%	66.4%	93.6%	82.9%	10.7	9.2
Wisconsin	18.00	88.4%	32.2%	93.7%	77.3%	16.4	1.6
Wyoming	21.66	79.3%	39.6%	88.0%	66.0%	22.0	-0.4

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

Note. † = Not applicable: Data are not expected to be reported by the SEA for SY2010-11 or SY2014-15. Percent of Low-Income Students in the Cohort, 2015 (%) = the number of low-income students divided by the total cohort size within each state. Estimated Non-Low-Income ACGR (%) = the estimated graduates from all students minus low-income graduates divided by the estimated total cohort of all students minus low-income within the cohort (i.e., using state level ACGRs). Gap Change Between Non-Low-Income and Low-Income ACGR (Percentage Points), 2011-15 = the gap between the estimated non-low-income and low-income ACGRs from 2010-11 to 2013-15. Therefore, positive values indicate gap closure and negative values indicate gap widening.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education through provisional data file of SY2010-11 and SY 2014-15 State Level Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates and Cohort Counts. Retrieved on November 6, 2016 from http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-main.cfm.

Appendix H. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for Students with Disabilities (SWD) versus Non-SWD Students, 2014-15

STATE	Percent of Students with Disabilities within the 2015 Cohort (%)	Estimated Non-SWD 2015 ACGR (%)	SWD 2015 ACGR (%)	Gap between Non-SWD and SWD 2015 ACGR (Percentage Points)
Alabama*	10.2%	91.2%	72.4%	18.8
Alaska	11.2%	77.9%	57.0%	20.9
Arizona	9.8%	78.8%	64.4%	14.4
Arkansas	9.1%	85.2%	81.9%	3.3
California	11.5%	84.2%	65.0%	19.2
Colorado	9.9%	79.9%	53.8%	26.1
Connecticut	14.3%	90.8%	65.6%	25.2
Delaware	13.7%	88.7%	66.0%	22.7
Florida	11.6%	80.7%	56.8%	23.9
Georgia	10.9%	81.8%	54.3%	27.5
Hawaii	10.5%	84.1%	60.0%	24.1
Idaho	8.6%	80.9%	58.0%	22.9
Illinois	13.3%	87.9%	70.5%	17.4
Indiana	12.2%	89.3%	70.9%	18.4
Iowa	12.9%	92.8%	77.0%	15.8
Kansas	12.2%	86.9%	77.3%	9.6
Kentucky	6.6%	89.5%	66.0%	23.5
Louisiana	8.8%	80.7%	44.3%	36.4
Maine	16.9%	90.3%	74.0%	16.3
Maryland	9.7%	89.5%	63.9%	25.6
Massachusetts	19.1%	91.4%	69.9%	21.5
Michigan	11.6%	82.8%	57.1%	25.7
Minnesota	13.5%	85.1%	61.1%	24.0
Mississippi	9.8%	80.3%	30.7%	49.6
Missouri	11.3%	89.2%	76.6%	12.6
Montana	12.1%	87.5%	75.0%	12.5
Nebraska	11.6%	91.2%	71.0%	20.2
Nevada	10.5%	76.3%	29.0%	47.3
New Hampshire	17.4%	91.3%	73.0%	18.3
New Jersey	15.4%	91.8%	78.0%	13.8
New Mexico	12.5%	69.9%	59.3%	10.6
New York	15.0%	83.8%	52.9%	30.9
North Carolina	10.5%	87.7%	67.3%	20.4
North Dakota	11.1%	88.9%	68.0%	20.9
Ohio	14.6%	83.0%	67.0%	16.0
Oklahoma	14.3%	83.7%	75.6%	8.1
Oregon	14.2%	77.3%	52.7%	24.6
Pennsylvania	14.9%	87.1%	71.5%	15.6
Rhode Island	23.4%	87.8%	68.0%	19.8
South Carolina	11.0%	84.2%	49.0%	35.2
South Dakota	8.3%	86.1%	60.0%	26.1
Tennessee	12.0%	90.4%	70.0%	20.4
Texas	8.6%	90.0%	78.2%	11.8
Utah	9.3%	86.5%	67.9%	18.6
Vermont	16.3%	90.8%	72.0%	18.8
Virginia	11.5%	90.0%	52.6%	37.4
Washington	11.9%	80.9%	58.0%	22.9
West Virginia	14.3%	89.4%	69.0%	20.4
Wisconsin	11.2%	91.0%	67.5%	23.5
Wyoming	13.6%	82.5%	59.0%	23.5

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

Note. Total Cohort Size (N) = the sum of all students in the 9th grade cohort in the district level ACGR file listed below. Percent of Students with Disabilities within the Cohort (%) = the number of SPED students divided by the total cohort size within each state. Estimated Non-SPED ACGR (%) = the estimated graduates from all students minus SPED graduates divided by the estimated total cohort of all students minus SPED within the cohort (i.e., using state level ACGRs). SPED ACGR (%) = the actual state level ACGR from 2014-15. Gap between Non-SPED and SPED 2015 ACGR (Percentage Points) = the estimated non-SPED ACGR minus the SPED ACGR.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education through provisional data file of SY2014-15 District and State Level Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Appendix I. Estimated Number of Additional Graduates Needed to Reach a 90 Percent Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) by State and Subgroup, 2014-15

STATE	All Students (N)	American Indian/ Alaska Native (N)	Asian/Pacific Islander (N)	Black (N)	Hispanic (N)	White (N)	Two or More Identities (N)	Students with Disabilities (N)	Low-Income (N)	English Language Learners (N)
Alabama*	381	-	†	575	-	-	4	975	1,431	62
Alaska	1,393	517	†	61	99	501	145	357	812	218
Arizona	10,117	917	†	784	5,865	2,298	†	2,019	5,381	582
Arkansas	1,825	24	31	990	194	593	16	264	1,474	64
California	39,089	573	-	6,373	27,448	2,577	834	14,011	39,378	19,611
Colorado	7,847	132	103	611	4,182	2,627	196	2,210	6,962	2,018
Connecticut	1,187	4	-	702	1,243	-	20	1,478	2,502	518
Delaware	426	8	†	215	99	98	11	319	379	77
Florida	24,199	111	-	10,061	7,377	6,358	431	7,730	19,981	4,536
Georgia	13,988	39	†	7,091	2,408	3,987	320	4,874	10,375	1,395
Hawaii	1,071	20	†	45	119	183	†	402	808	260
Idaho	2,381	62	36	39	649	1,543	57	590	1,944	301
Illinois	6,743	50	-	3,918	3,063	-	178	3,963	8,624	1,195
Indiana	2,198	8	59	1,328	436	225	168	1,759	1,588	295
Iowa	-	8	-	174	190	-	48	570	681	81
Kansas	1,498	36	-	272	646	408	121	541	2,214	361
Kentucky	965	7	†	511	123	276	57	759	1,288	125
Louisiana	5,996	53	-	3,932	278	1,701	37	1,932	5,987	214
Maine	353	9	†	47	21	273	8	383	636	32
Maryland	1,913	18	-	1,758	956	-	-	1,621	2,551	489
Massachu-setts	1,957	20	-	808	1,965	-	62	2,782	3,694	1,275
Michigan	12,499	177	-	5,108	1,233	5,588	397	4,673	11,567	711
Minnesota	5,367	584	†	1,860	1,104	1,520	†	2,583	5,521	1,160
Mississippi	5,217	16	41	3,214	187	1,734	39	2,075	4,545	107
Missouri	1,464	12	-	1,602	170	-	47	1,011	2,637	137
Montana	426	267	†	12	28	114	†	193	626	107
Nebraska	240	38	†	203	289	-	41	481	690	263
Nevada	6,357	128	325	1,244	2,993	1,522	248	2,184	5,464	1,643
New Hamp-shire	281	6	†	29	90	146	13	438	617	49
New Jersey	318	2	-	1,510	1,640	-	7	1,967	2,808	621
New Mexico	5,535	740	†	173	3,410	1,166	†	991	3,989	1,781
New York	22,878	271	†	9,113	10,988	1,377	134	11,803	18,166	6,125
North Carolina	4,861	126	†	2,356	1,258	1,008	210	2,636	4,581	823
North Dakota	257	200	35	40	36	-	†	185	374	50
Ohio	12,753	32	†	6,522	1,013	4,424	697	4,602	11,879	628
Oklahoma	3,395	552	11	536	609	1,429	247	933	2,593	303
Oregon	7,318	278	183	316	2,013	4,198	371	2,385	5,999	882

Appendix I. Estimated Number of Additional Graduates Needed to Reach a 90 Percent Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) by State and Subgroup, 2014-15

(continued)

STATE	All Students (N)	American Indian/ Alaska Native (N)	Asian/Pacific Islander (N)	Black (N)	Hispanic (N)	White (N)	Two or More Identities (N)	Students with Disabilities (N)	Low-Income (N)	English Language Learners (N)
Pennsylvania	7,192	26	-	3,836	2,468	686	296	3,800	7,690	832
Rhode Island	742	20	16	116	328	234	38	562	904	161
South Carolina	5,240	28	†	2,666	379	2,170	†	2,431	4,994	245
South Dakota	567	390	†	39	69	37	28	233	644	65
Tennessee	1,469	11	-	1,669	266	-	†	1,685	2,770	247
Texas	3,396	59	-	2,138	5,763	-	-	3,427	7,453	4,094
Utah	2,260	123	68	121	1,074	859	25	890	1,734	420
Vermont	142	6	†	11	†	84	18	181	327	29
Virginia	4,017	†	-	2,439	1,487	204	†	4,027	4,340	1,733
Washington	9,440	342	441	801	3,004	4,449	557	3,041	8,977	1,555
West Virginia	688	5	-	72	†	598	6	588	926	6
Wisconsin	1,044	89	-	1,601	696	-	49	1,637	2,668	384
Wyoming	735	97	†	19	145	455	25	289	653	46
Totals	251,625	7,241	1,349	89,661	100,101	57,650	6,206	111,470	244,826	58,916

*In December 2016, following an internal audit and US Department of Education investigation, Alabama education officials announced that graduation rates in the state had been improperly calculated and that the reported rates were inaccurate. We include the reported rates here, but note this important caveat and warn that these rates, in many cases, may be inflated.

Note. † = Not applicable: Data are not expected to be reported by the SEA for SY2014-15. The number of additional graduates needed to reach 90 percent graduation rate(s) for all students and each subgroup was calculated using the aggregated 2014-15 state level ACGR file (i.e., for the state level cohort sizes) and the 2014-15 graduation rates. The Asian/Pacific Islander column represents either the value reported by the state to the Department of Education for the major racial and ethnic group "Asian/Pacific Islander" or an aggregation of values reported by the state for the major racial and ethnic groups "Asian," "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander," and "Filipino." (California is the only state currently using the major racial and ethnic group "Filipino.")

Source: U.S. Department of Education (2016). Provisional data file: SY2014-15 State Level Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR).

Appendix J. Estimated Number of Additional Graduates Needed to Reach a 90 Percent Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) by Subgroup, 2014-15

Cohort Year	All Students (N)	American Indian/Alaska Native (N)	Asian/Pacific Islander (N)	Black (N)	Hispanic (N)	White (N)	Two or More Identities (N)	Students with Disabilities (N)	Low-Income (N)	English Language Learners (N)
2014-15	251,625	7,241	1,349	89,661	100,101	57,650	6,206	111,470	244,826	58,916

Note. † = Not applicable: Data are not expected to be reported by the SEA for SY2014-15. The number of additional graduates needed to reach 90 percent graduation rate(s) for all students and each subgroup was calculated using the aggregated 2014-15 state level ACGR file (i.e., for the state level cohort sizes) and the 2014-15 graduation rates. The Asian/Pacific Islander column represents either the value reported by the state to the Department of Education for the major racial and ethnic group "Asian/Pacific Islander" or an aggregation of values reported by the state for the major racial and ethnic groups "Asian," "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander," and "Filipino." (California is the only state currently using the major racial and ethnic group "Filipino.")

Source: U.S. Department of Education (2016). Provisional data file: SY2014-15 State Level Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR).

Appendix K. Percent of Non-Graduates, by Subgroup and State, 2014-15

States / Data Elements	Percent of Non-Graduates that are Black	Percent of Non-Graduates that are Hispanic	Percent of Non-Graduates that are White	Percent of Non-Graduates that are Asian / Pacific	Percent of Non-Graduates that are Native / Indian	Percent of Non-Graduates that are Students With Disabilities	Percent of Non-Graduates that are Low-Income	Percent of Non-Graduates that are English Language Learners
AL	42.7%	3.7%	51.3%	0.9%	0.8%	26.2%	70.8%	1.8%
AK	4.0%	6.5%	42.4%	6.5%	30.3%	19.7%	49.1%	12.0%
AZ	6.8%	51.0%	31.3%	1.8%	7.2%	15.5%	47.2%	3.8%
AR	33.0%	10.1%	53.2%	2.0%	0.9%	10.9%	60.1%	4.2%
CA	11.1%	59.6%	17.6%	5.4%	1.0%	22.3%	82.1%	32.9%
CO	6.5%	43.1%	44.0%	2.0%	1.3%	20.1%	69.9%	19.4%
CT	23.7%	38.0%	34.7%	1.6%	0.3%	38.4%	78.8%	13.7%
DE	38.1%	15.0%	42.4%	1.5%	0.8%	32.4%	46.6%	8.1%
FL	33.1%	29.2%	34.1%	1.3%	0.4%	22.8%	68.3%	13.6%
GA	44.9%	14.1%	36.0%	2.1%	0.3%	23.6%	64.5%	6.8%
HI	3.1%	8.5%	14.9%	72.9%	1.1%	22.8%	58.9%	13.6%
ID	1.4%	22.0%	71.2%	1.3%	2.0%	17.1%	66.8%	10.3%
IL	30.0%	28.8%	36.4%	2.0%	0.4%	27.2%	71.4%	8.4%
IN	22.6%	10.8%	59.8%	1.8%	0.3%	27.4%	44.2%	5.0%
IA	10.6%	14.8%	67.8%	2.1%	0.7%	32.3%	63.7%	6.3%
KS	10.4%	24.0%	56.3%	1.8%	1.5%	19.4%	79.5%	12.8%
KY	18.0%	5.2%	72.9%	1.1%	0.2%	18.6%	65.0%	3.1%
LA	56.0%	4.3%	37.4%	0.8%	0.8%	21.8%	84.4%	2.5%
ME	5.3%	2.4%	89.0%	0.8%	1.1%	35.2%	61.1%	3.2%
MD	48.7%	20.3%	26.5%	2.0%	0.4%	27.0%	57.8%	7.3%
MA	15.8%	33.3%	44.7%	3.5%	0.4%	45.3%	74.1%	19.2%
MI	29.7%	7.8%	57.3%	1.4%	1.1%	24.6%	67.5%	4.5%
MN	21.0%	13.0%	53.6%	6.5%	6.2%	29.0%	66.2%	13.3%
MS	56.9%	3.1%	38.3%	0.7%	0.3%	27.6%	78.2%	1.5%
MO	33.4%	5.6%	57.6%	1.2%	0.5%	21.8%	67.4%	2.6%
MT	1.8%	4.6%	66.6%	0.5%	25.7%	21.5%	74.0%	9.7%
NE	13.9%	26.1%	48.0%	5.0%	2.7%	30.2%	61.5%	13.9%
NV	16.4%	43.8%	28.6%	4.9%	1.7%	26.1%	77.3%	19.7%
NH	3.3%	8.6%	83.6%	2.1%	0.6%	39.6%	61.4%	4.9%
NJ	30.1%	35.8%	30.3%	3.2%	0.2%	33.0%	56.6%	9.2%
NM	2.9%	60.4%	23.1%	1.2%	12.5%	16.2%	67.7%	30.4%
NY	29.5%	35.3%	27.2%	6.5%	0.9%	34.0%	62.9%	16.5%
NC	33.8%	15.8%	43.6%	1.4%	1.8%	23.9%	56.5%	6.8%
ND	6.8%	5.9%	57.7%	3.2%	26.2%	26.5%	56.2%	6.6%
OH	32.8%	5.7%	55.6%	1.3%	0.2%	24.9%	66.0%	3.0%
OK	12.1%	14.6%	49.2%	1.5%	15.9%	20.0%	58.9%	5.1%
OR	3.7%	24.5%	60.8%	2.9%	3.0%	25.6%	72.2%	9.4%
PA	28.3%	17.5%	49.9%	2.1%	0.2%	27.8%	62.5%	5.4%
RI	11.2%	30.7%	50.4%	2.9%	1.6%	44.6%	83.6%	15.6%
SC	43.9%	6.3%	48.3%	0.9%	0.5%	28.4%	75.7%	3.9%
SD	4.1%	6.9%	52.2%	2.4%	32.4%	20.7%	61.7%	5.6%
TN	40.7%	8.0%	49.8%	1.1%	0.4%	29.9%	83.1%	4.9%
TX	17.6%	59.5%	19.3%	1.8%	0.6%	16.9%	65.3%	17.5%
UT	2.8%	26.7%	63.0%	3.1%	2.8%	19.6%	46.0%	9.0%
VT	3.0%	N/A	84.9%	4.1%	†	37.1%	79.1%	5.7%
VA	34.6%	19.1%	39.7%	3.5%	†	38.2%	54.7%	15.8%
WA	6.8%	25.7%	53.5%	5.7%	2.6%	22.9%	75.0%	11.5%
WV	6.6%	N/A	90.8%	†	0.3%	32.7%	84.1%	0.8%
WI	29.3%	16.6%	46.2%	2.7%	2.2%	31.3%	63.0%	6.9%
WY	2.0%	15.9%	71.0%	0.6%	8.3%	26.9%	65.0%	4.5%
US	24.1%	29.9%	38.9%	3.2%	1.8%	25.2%	68.5%	13.3%

Appendix L. ESSA High Schools (100 or more students) with ACGR of 67 Percent or Below, by State and Type, 2014-15

STATE	Number of Schools with ACGR <=67% & Enrollment>=100	# Regular	# Special Education	# Vocational	# Alternative	% Regular	% Special Education	% Vocational	% Alternative
Alabama	5	4	1	0	0	80%	20%	0%	0%
Alaska	33	16	1	0	16	48%	3%	0%	48%
Arizona	111	100	1	1	9	90%	1%	1%	8%
Arkansas	10	8	0	0	2	80%	0%	0%	20%
California	191	128	16	0	47	67%	8%	0%	25%
Colorado	92	42	1	1	48	46%	1%	1%	52%
Connecticut	10	8	0	0	2	80%	0%	0%	20%
Delaware	7	3	4	0	0	43%	57%	0%	0%
District Of Columbia	14	13	0	0	1	93%	0%	0%	7%
Florida	191	37	44	4	106	19%	23%	2%	55%
Georgia	59	48	1	0	10	81%	2%	0%	17%
Hawaii	8	8	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Idaho	33	9	0	0	24	27%	0%	0%	73%
Illinois	48	48	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Indiana	33	33	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Iowa	11	3	1	0	7	27%	9%	0%	64%
Kansas	14	14	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Kentucky	13	2	0	0	11	15%	0%	0%	85%
Maine	1	1	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Maryland	32	18	5	2	7	56%	16%	6%	22%
Massachusetts	39	33	1	2	3	85%	3%	5%	8%
Michigan	172	46	30	0	96	27%	17%	0%	56%
Minnesota	60	30	2	1	27	50%	3%	2%	45%
Mississippi	22	22	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Missouri	16	14	0	2	0	88%	0%	13%	0%
Montana	6	6	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Nebraska	3	3	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Nevada	31	20	1	0	10	65%	3%	0%	32%
New Hampshire	3	3	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
New Jersey	11	9	0	1	1	82%	0%	9%	9%
New Mexico	72	59	0	0	13	82%	0%	0%	18%
New York	265	227	7	9	22	86%	3%	3%	8%
North Carolina	14	6	0	0	8	43%	0%	0%	57%
North Dakota	7	7	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Ohio	156	145	11	0	0	93%	7%	0%	0%
Oklahoma	22	22	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Oregon	61	49	0	0	12	80%	0%	0%	20%
Pennsylvania	52	50	1	1	0	96%	2%	2%	0%
Rhode Island	4	4	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
South Carolina	16	11	1	0	4	69%	6%	0%	25%
South Dakota	6	3	0	0	3	50%	0%	0%	50%
Tennessee	25	20	4	1	0	80%	16%	4%	0%
Texas	89	7	1	0	81	8%	1%	0%	91%
Utah	30	11	2	0	17	37%	7%	0%	57%
Vermont	1	1	0	0	0	100%	0%	0%	0%
Virginia	10	5	1	0	4	50%	10%	0%	40%
Washington	99	27	1	0	71	27%	1%	0%	72%
West Virginia	0								
Wisconsin	35	24	0	0	11	69%	0%	0%	31%
Wyoming	6	3	0	0	3	50%	0%	0%	50%
Total	**2249**	**1410**	**138**	**25**	**676**	**63%**	**6%**	**1%**	**30%**

Appendix M. Student Demographics, Regular and ESSA Regular Brick-and-Mortar District and Charter Schools, 2014-15

Student Demographics, Regular District Brick-and-Mortar High Schools and Regular Charter Brick-and-Mortar High Schools, 2015

	Regular District B&M High Schools	Regular Charter B&M High Schools
Black	15%	24%
Hispanic/Latino	21%	35%
White	55%	33%
Students w/Disabilities	11%	11%
Low-Income	45%	64%

Student Demographics, Regular ESSA District Brick-and-Mortar High Schools and Regular Charter Brick-and-Mortar High Schools, 2015

	Regular District B&M High Schools	Regular Charter B&M High Schools
Black	40%	28%
Hispanic/Latino	33%	35%
White	18%	30%
Students w/Disabilities	17%	13%
Low-Income	78%	70%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education

Appendix N. 100 Largest School Districts in the US, by Enrollment and Locale, 2014-15

District	State	City	Locale	Enrollment	% Chronically Absent	% of Related Children aged 5-17 Living in Poverty	2011 ACGR	2012 ACGR	2013 ACGR	2014 ACGR	2015 ACGR	Change 2011 to 2015
Anchorage School District	AK	Anchorage	Large City	48,089	22	9	72	73	76	74	80	8
Mesa Unified District	AZ	Mesa	Large City	63,849	13	21	76	75	74	76	76	0
Phoenix Union High School District	AZ	Phoenix	Large City	26,900	4	43	79	75	74	76	79	0
Tucson Unified District	AZ	Tucson	Large City	48,455	26	28	82	80	80	80	83	1
Fresno Unified	CA	Fresno	Large City	73,543	18	43	73	75	76	79	84	11
Long Beach Unified	CA	Long Beach	Large City	79,709	13	26	78	80	81	81	84	6
Los Angeles Unified	CA	Los Angeles	Large City	646,683	13	30	61	67	68	70	72	11
Oakland Unified	CA	Oakland	Large City	48,077	17	30	59	59	63	60	63	4
Riverside Unified	CA	Riverside	Large City	42,339	13	20	80	82	85	87	89	9
Sacramento City Unified	CA	Sacramento	Large City	46,868	15	32	74	80	85	85	80	6
San Diego Unified	CA	San Diego	Large City	129,779	12	24	85	87	88	90	89	4
San Francisco Unified	CA	San Francisco	Large City	58,414	11	14	82	82	82	84	85	3
Santa Ana Unified	CA	Santa Ana	Large City	56,815	7	27	83	85	86	87	89	6
Cherry Creek, School District No. 5, in the county of Arapaho	CO	Greenwood Village	Large City	54,535	12	8	84	87	87	87	87	3
School District No. 1	CO	Denver	Large City	88,839	25	27	56	59	61	63	65	9
District of Columbia Public Schools	DC	Washington	Large City	46,155	40	30	53	54	56	58	66	13
DUVAL	FL	Jacksonville	Large City	128,685	2	22	63	68	72	74	77	14
Atlanta Public Schools	GA	Atlanta	Large City	51,145	35	35	52	51	59	59	71	19
City of Chicago SD 299	IL	Chicago	Large City	392,558	13	33	74	69	70	81	77	3
Indianapolis Public Schools	IN	Indianapolis	Large City	31,794	8	46	65	60	63	61	64	
Wichita	KS	Wichita	Large City	50,947	22	25	66	74	77	75	75	9
Jefferson County	KY	Louisville	Large City	100,602	19	23			77	79	79	
Baltimore City Public Schools	MD	Baltimore	Large City	84,976	37	32	66	66	69	70	70	4
Boston	MA	Boston	Large City	54,312	31	29	64	66	66	67	71	7
Detroit City School District	MI	Detroit	Large City	47,277	58	51	60	65	65	71	77	17
MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOL DIST.	MN	Minneapolis	Large City	36,999	22	31	47	50	54	59	64	17

Appendix N. 100 Largest School Districts in the US, by Enrollment and Locale, 2014-15

(continued)

District	State	City	Locale	Enrollment	% Chronically Absent	% of Related Children aged 5-17 Living in Poverty	2011 ACGR	2012 ACGR	2013 ACGR	2014 ACGR	2015 ACGR	Change 2011 to 2015
ST. PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	MN	Saint Paul	Large City	37,969	17	33	64	66	73	76	75	11
KANSAS CITY 33	MO	Kansas City	Large City	15,386	15	41	50	62	67	63	65	15
ST. LOUIS CITY	MO	St Louis	Large City	30,831		41	54	62	68	71	72	18
OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	NE	Omaha	Large City	51,928	20	24	73	76	78	81	78	5
CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	NV	Las Vegas	Large City	324,093	18	19	59	62	72	71	72	13
NEWARK PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	NJ	Newark	Large City	34,861		37	61	69	68	69	70	9
ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	NM	Albuquerque	Large City	93,001	0	23	63	65	69	62	62	
NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS	NY	New York	Large City	995,192	3	29	66	66	65	66	68	2
Guilford County Schools	NC	Greensboro	Large City	73,416	19	22	83	85	86	89	89	6
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	NC	Charlotte	Large City	145,636	10	19	74	76	81	85	88	14
Cleveland Municipal	OH	Cleveland	Large City	39,365	47	48	56	59	64	64	64	8
Columbus City School District	OH	Columbus	Large City	50,407	32	41	76	79	77	74	69	-7
Portland SD 1J	OR	Portland	Large City	47,806	25	18	62	63	67	70	74	12
Philadelphia City SD	PA	Philadelphia	Large City	134,241	37	36	55	62	70	68	65	10
Pittsburgh SD	PA	Pittsburgh	Large City	24,657	30	31	68	73	77	74	70	2
Shelby County	TN	Memphis	Large City	115,810	28					75	75	
Davidson County	TN	Nashville	Large City	84,069	8	27	76	78	77	79	82	6
ALIEF ISD	TX	Houston	Large City	47,202	12	35	91	93	93	93	92	1
ARLINGTON ISD	TX	Arlington	Large City	63,882	11	22	81	83	84	83	84	3
AUSTIN ISD	TX	Austin	Large City	84,564	13	28	80	83	84	86	90	10
DALLAS ISD	TX	Dallas	Large City	160,253	11	38	77	81	85	86	87	10
EL PASO ISD	TX	El Paso	Large City	60,852	11	32	81	82	80	80	80	
FORT WORTH ISD	TX	Fort Worth	Large City	85,975	17	36	80	80	79	81	82	2
HOUSTON ISD	TX	Houston	Large City	215,225	2	35	79	79	79	79	79	0
NORTH EAST ISD	TX	San Antonio	Large City	67,971	11	15	88	89	89	89	90	2
NORTHSIDE ISD	TX	San Antonio	Large City	103,606	11	17	92	92	92	93	94	2

Appendix N. 100 Largest School Districts in the US, by Enrollment and Locale, 2014-15

(continued)

District	State	City	Locale	Enrollment	% Chronically Absent	% of Related Children aged 5-17 Living in Poverty	2011 ACGR	2012 ACGR	2013 ACGR	2014 ACGR	2015 ACGR	Change 2011 to 2015
PLANO ISD	TX	Plano	Large City	54,689	1	9	93	95	95	94	95	2
SAN ANTONIO ISD	TX	San Antonio	Large City	53,750	0	41	75	79	81	78	80	5
SOCORRO ISD	TX	El Paso	Large City	44,561	6	23	86	89	90	88	88	2
YSLETA ISD	TX	El Paso	Large City	42,488	4	37	85	86	86	86	88	3
VA BEACH CITY PBLC SCHS	VA	Virginia Beach	Large City	70,121	13	10	82	83	84	85	86	4
Seattle Public Schools	WA	Seattle	Large City	52,834	19	12	76	75	73	76	77	1
Milwaukee School District	WI	Milwaukee	Large City	77,316	38	40	63	62	61	61	58	-5
Birmingham City	AL	Birmingham	Mid-size City	24,449	11	43	55	56	65	79	80	25
BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT	CT	Bridgeport	Mid-size City	21,047	19	33	60	66	67	72	64	4
HARTFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT	CT	Hartford	Mid-size City	21,435	24	42	63	65	71	72	70	7
Des Moines Independent Comm School District	IA	Des Moines	Mid-size City	34,355	14	23	76	79	79	82	78	2
Kansas City	KS	Kansas City	Mid-size City	22,129	21	40	63	67	65	64	68	5
East Baton Rouge Parish	LA	Baton Rouge	Mid-size City	41,850	11	28	63	66	69	66	67	4
JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOL DIST	MS	Jackson	Mid-size City	29,061	22	39	63	63	64	67	68	5
Providence	RI	Providence	Mid-size City	23,907	39	37	66	65	71	71	75	9
SALT LAKE DISTRICT	UT	Salt Lake City	Mid-size City	24,451	13	24	62	65	70	71	74	12
RICHMOND CITY PBLC SCHS	VA	Richmond	Mid-size City	23,957	22	40	59	61	65	71	70	11
Portland Public Schools	ME	Portland	Mid-size City	6,973	21	29	79	77	79	79	84	5
Jefferson County School District No. R-1	CO	Golden	Large Suburb	86,581	21	11	79	81	81	83	83	4
Christina School District	DE	Wilmington	Large Suburb	16,244	18	14	63	68	67	75	71	8
BREVARD	FL	Viera	Large Suburb	72,285	0	17	81	85	87	86	86	5
BROWARD	FL	Fort Lauderdale	Large Suburb	266,265	8	17	72	76	75	74	77	5
DADE	FL	Miami	Large Suburb	356,964	7	25	71	76	77	77	78	7
HILLSBOROUGH	FL	Tampa	Large Suburb	207,469	5	21	69	73	74	73	76	7
LEE	FL	Fort Myers	Large Suburb	89,364	0	22	69	72	74	75	75	6
ORANGE	FL	Orlando	Large Suburb	191,648	5	22	71	74	76	75	78	7

Appendix N. 100 Largest School Districts in the US, by Enrollment and Locale, 2014-15

(continued)

District	State	City	Locale	Enrollment	% Chronically Absent	% of Related Children aged 5-17 Living in Poverty	2011 ACGR	2012 ACGR	2013 ACGR	2014 ACGR	2015 ACGR	Change 2011 to 2015
PALM BEACH	FL	West Palm Beach	Large Suburb	186,605	1	20	74	77	76	78	79	5
PINELLAS	FL	Largo	Large Suburb	103,774	8	17	65	72	72	76	78	13
Cobb County	GA	Marietta	Large Suburb	111,751	11	15	73	76	77	78	81	8
DeKalb County	GA	Stone Mountain	Large Suburb	101,103	4	27	59	57	59	62	71	12
Fulton County	GA	Atlanta	Large Suburb	95,460	9	15	70	71	76	79	85	15
Gwinnett County	GA	Lawrenceville	Large Suburb	173,246	9	17	68	71	73	75	78	10
Hawaii Department of Education	HI	Honolulu	Large Suburb	182,384	20	14	80	82	82	82	82	2
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	MD	Annapolis	Large Suburb	79,518	15	7	84	85	86	88	88	4
Baltimore County Public Schools	MD	Baltimore	Large Suburb	109,830	18	10	82	84	86	88	88	6
Montgomery County Public Schools	MD	Rockville	Large Suburb	154,434	16	7	87	87	88	90	89	2
Prince George's County Public Schools	MD	Upper Marlboro	Large Suburb	127,576	0	10	75	73	74	77	79	4
Wake County Schools	NC	Cary	Large Suburb	155,820	11	13	81	81	81	83	86	5
Greenville 01	SC	Greenville	Large Suburb	75,508	3	20	74	72	77	82	84	10
CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS ISD	TX	Houston	Large Suburb	113,023	9	12	90	90	91	91	92	2
FORT BEND ISD	TX	Sugar Land	Large Suburb	72,152	7	11	91	91	92	92	93	2
ALPINE DISTRICT	UT	American Fork	Large Suburb	75,161	29	10	76	79	88	91	92	16
FAIRFAX CO PBLC SCHS	VA	Falls Church	Large Suburb	185,541	12	7	86	86	86	87	87	1
LOUDOUN CO PBLC SCHS	VA	Ashburn	Large Suburb	73,418	8	3	92	92	93	91	93	1
PRINCE WILLIAM CO PBLC SCHS	VA	Manassas	Large Suburb	86,641	14	9	84	84	84	86	86	2
POLK	FL	Bartow	Mid-size Suburb	99,723	3	26	66	68	69	69	69	3
KANAWHA COUNTY SCHOOLS	WV	Charleston	Mid-size Suburb	27,936	19	19	71	72	71	76	80	9

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education

Appendix O. Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Data Links, by State

STATE	Department	Link to Main Website	Link to ACGR Data
Alabama	Alabama State Department of Education	http://www.alsde.edu/home/Default.aspx	http://www.alsde.edu/dept/data/Pages/graduationrate-all.aspx
Alaska	Alaska Department of Education & Early Development	http://www.eed.state.ak.us/	http://www.eed.state.ak.us/stats/
Arizona	Arizona Department of Education	http://www.azed.gov/	http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/graduation-rates/
Arkansas	Arkansas Department of Education	http://www.arkansased.org/	http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/public-school-accountability/school-performance/graduation-rate
California	California Department of Education	http://www.cde.ca.gov/	http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesgrads.asp
Colorado	Colorado Department of Education	http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_home.htm	http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradcurrent
Connecticut	Connecticut State Department of Education	http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/site/default.asp	http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2758&q=334898
Delaware	Delaware Department of Education	http://www.doe.k12.de.us/	http://profiles.doe.k12.de.us/SchoolProfiles/State/Account.aspx
Florida	Florida Department of Education	http://www.fldoe.org/default.asp	http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/pubstudent.asp
Georgia	Georgia Department of Education	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/Home.aspx	http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=147
Hawaii	Hawaii State Department of Education	http://doe.k12.hi.us/	http://arch.k12.hi.us/school/nclb/nclb.html#
Idaho	Idaho State Department of Education	http://www.sde.idaho.gov/	https://apps.sde.idaho.gov/Accountability/ReportCard
Illinois	Illinois State Board of Education	http://www.isbe.net/	http://www.isbe.net/assessment/report_card.htm
Indiana	Indiana State Department of Education	http://www.doe.in.gov/	http://www.doe.in.gov/accountability/graduation-cohort-rate
Iowa	Iowa Department of Education	http://educateiowa.gov/	https://www.educateiowa.gov/education-statistics
Kansas	Kansas State Department of Education	http://www.ksde.org/	http://online.ksde.org/rcard/
Kentucky	Kentucky Department of Education	http://education.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx	http://applications.education.ky.gov/SRC/DataSets.aspx
Louisiana	Louisiana Department of Education	http://www.doe.state.la.us/	http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/data-management/cohort-graduation-rates-(2006-2012).pdf?sfvrsn=2
Maine	Maine Department of Education	http://www.maine.gov/doe/	http://www.maine.gov/education/gradrates/gradrates.html
Maryland	Maryland State Department of Education	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE	http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Entity.aspx?W-DATA=State
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education	http://www.doe.mass.edu/	(1) http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/ (2) http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/gradrates.aspx
Michigan	Michigan Department of Education	http://michigan.gov/mde	https://www.mischooldata.org/Other/DataFiles/Student-Counts/HistoricalGradDropout.aspx
Minnesota	Minnesota Department of Education	https://education.state.mn.us/MDE/index.html	(1)http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp (2)http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=054257&RevisionSelectionMethod=latest&Rendition=primary
Mississippi	Mississippi Department of Education	http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/mde-home	http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/dropout-prevention-and-compulsory-school-attendance/dropout-graduation-rate-information
Missouri	Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education	http://mcds.dese.mo.gov/Pages/default.aspx	http://mcds.dese.mo.gov/guidedinquiry/Pages/District-and-School-Information.aspx
Montana	Montana Office of Public Instruction	http://opi.mt.gov/	(1) http://opi.mt.gov/Reports&Data/Measurement/Index.html (2) http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/Measurement/

Appendix O. Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Data Links, by State

(continued)

STATE	Department	Link to Main Website	Link to ACGR Data
Nebraska	Nebraska Department of Education	http://www.education.ne.gov/	http://www.education.ne.gov/ndepress/2014/High_School_Graduation_Rate_Hits_Record_High.pdf
Nevada	Nevada Department of Education	http://www.doe.nv.gov/	http://www.nevadareportcard.com/di/main/cohort
New Hampshire	New Hampshire Department of Education	http://www.education.nh.gov/	http://www.education.nh.gov/data/dropouts.htm
New Jersey	State of New Jersey Department of Education	http://www.state.nj.us/education/	http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/grate/
New Mexico	New Mexico Public Education Department	http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/index.html	http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/Graduation_data.html
New York	New York State Education Department	http://www.nysed.gov/	http://data.nysed.gov/
North Carolina	North Carolina State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/organization/	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/cohortgradrate
North Dakota	North Dakota Department of Public Instruction	http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/	http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/resource/graduation.shtm
Ohio	Ohio Department of Education	http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDefaultPage.aspx?page=1	http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/Download-Data.aspx
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State Department of Education	http://www.ok.gov/sde/	https://apps.sde.ok.gov/CalendarDueDates/Default.aspx
Oregon	Oregon Department of Education	http://www.ode.state.or.us/home/	http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2644
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Department of Education	http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=7237&mode=2	Pennsylvania did not provide publicly downloaded files of the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates for its districts and schools, for the Class of 2012.
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	http://www.ride.ri.gov/default.aspx	http://www.eride.ri.gov/eride40/reportcards/12/default.aspx
South Carolina	South Carolina Department of Education	http://ed.sc.gov/	http://ed.sc.gov/data/report-cards/
South Dakota	South Dakota Department of Education	http://doe.sd.gov/	http://doe.sd.gov/reportcard/listnew/
Tennessee	Tennessee Department of Education	http://tn.gov/education/	http://www.tn.gov/education/data/report_card/index.shtml
Texas	Texas Education Agency	http://tea.texas.gov/	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/completion/2012/level.html
Utah	Utah State Office of Education	http://schools.utah.gov/main/	http://www.schools.utah.gov/data/Reports/Graduation-Dropout.aspx
Vermont	State of Vermont Department of Education	http://education.vermont.gov/	http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/data/dropout_completion.html
Virginia	Virginia Department of Education	http://www.doe.virginia.gov/	http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/cohort_reports/index.shtml
Washington	State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	http://www.k12.wa.us/	http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx
West Virginia	West Virginia Department of Education	http://wvde.state.wv.us/	http://wveis.k12.wv.us/nclb/pub/enroll/repstatgr.cfm?xrep=1&sy=11
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction	http://dpi.wi.gov/	http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/HSCompletionPage.aspx?OrgLevel=st&GraphFile=HIGHSCHOOLCOMPLETION&SCounty=47&SAthleticConf=45&SCESA=05&CompareTo=CURRENTONLY
Wyoming	Wyoming Department of Education	http://edu.wyoming.gov/Default.aspx	http://edu.wyoming.gov/data/graduation-rates/

Note. Current as of press time.

Appendix P. Graduation Rate FAQ

Why does graduating from high school matter? High school graduates are more likely to be employed, make higher taxable incomes, and generate jobs than those without a high school diploma. For example, had the nation already reached our 90 percent goal, the additional graduates from a single class would have earned an estimated $5.3 billion more in income, generated more than 37,000 jobs and increased the GDP by $6.6 billion per year. Graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or receive social services. They have better health outcomes and higher life expectancies. Strong evidence also links increased educational attainment with higher voting and volunteering rates. Finally, this issue even affects national security, as only graduates can be accepted to serve in the armed forces.

How were high school graduation rates determined in the past? Historically, high school graduation rates have been arrived at using multiple formulas that varied by state and researcher, and were based on several different definitions of the student baseline, of a diploma, and of a graduate. These rates include the leaver method, the completer method, and, most notably, state methods.

How were graduation rates determined on an interim basis? Beginning in the late 1990s, researchers and then the states and federal government began developing alternative graduation rate calculations. In 2005, members of the National Governors Association (NGA), deeply concerned about strategies for improving schools, reached a consensus that high school graduation rates should be calculated in a uniform way across the states, and in a pioneering compact, generated a formula for doing so. The formula was modified and refined in a 29-page rulemaking document released by then-Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, in December 2008. States were expected to report graduation rates using the refined formula (the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate [ACGR]) beginning with the 2010-11 school year. The Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) was an interim calculation that is still used today, for purposes of continuity.

What is the ACGR? The Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) is a method for tracking a group (or cohort) of students who enter high school together, as first-time ninth-graders (or tenth-graders, in schools that begin in tenth grade) and graduate "on-time" (i.e., within three or four years) with a regular diploma. The ACGR accounts (or adjusts) for students who transfer into the school, transfer out to another school in the state, or die. The ACGR is based on a state's ability to follow individual students, made feasible by assigning a single student identifier to each student, as also required in the 2008 regulations. Most states calculate the ACGR at the state, school district, and school-levels.

What is the formula for the ACGR? The U.S. Department of Education provided the following formula to calculate the ACGR for the graduating class of 2013.

Number of cohort members who earned a regular high school diploma by the end of the 2012-13 school year
Number of first-time 9th graders in fall 2009 (starting cohort) plus students who transferred in, minus students who transferred out, emigrated, or died during school years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Time span for the ACGR: The four-year ACGR is the "gold standard" for graduation rate reporting, as it is the number of years in which U.S. students are typically expected to complete high school. The four-year ACGR is the rate that the U.S. Department of Education reported in news releases in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. In addition to the four-year ACGR, many states calculate five and six-year ACGR to enable consideration of those students who take additional time to complete the standard course of study. Students who graduate early (i.e., in one, two, or three years) are included as graduates with their original four-year cohort. Three-year ACGRs are often calculated for schools that begin at the tenth grade.

What does using the ACGR accomplish? Using the ACGR means that states are no longer estimating graduation rates from aggregate enrollment numbers (as is done with the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate [AFGR]). ACGR counts individual students who graduate within a given time period.

What goes into the ACGR? For ACGR to provide an accurate picture, states must carefully define the terms they use to calculate ACGR and enact regulations and legislation that comply with the original federal regulations surrounding ACGR. "Graduation," for instance, is intended to mean that students have received the regular state diploma, rather than a GED, a certificate of attendance, a certificate of completion, an alternative diploma or a waiver diploma. "Transfer out" is intended to mean that when a student leaves school, his or her next destination is known and verified in writing, not assumed or conjectured. "Transfers in" should be added to the cohort.

Appendix P. Graduation Rate FAQ *(continued)*

Do all states use the same formula to calculate ACGR? No, not yet. While each state follows the same general ACGR formula provided by the U.S. Department of Education (see the above section, "What is the formula for the ACGR?"), states vary in the ways they define each component of the formula. For instance, states vary in how they count students who "transfer out" into incarceration, homeschooling, or across state boundaries. Students who "transfer out" into homeschooling during high school are considered valid transfers out in most states, although in most states there is no requirement that homeschooled students gain a diploma of any sort. Students who "transfer out" across state lines are considered valid, though documentation is not required in every state. Even more variation occurs among students with disabilities, who constitute approximately 14 percent of the student population. Some rigorous states expect students with disabilities to gain a regular diploma in four years, while other states say that they are granting a "regular diploma" to these students when, in fact, the "regular diploma" for special education students is whatever their individual education plan (IEP, required for students with disabilities) outlines. As a result, it may take several more years to fully implement the ACGR approach uniformly and with fidelity.

Why do the ambiguities and loopholes matter? They matter because they can impede our ability to truly measure real graduation rates and compare rates across states. The U.S. Department of Education developed a comprehensive formula, arrived at after a great deal of input and consensus from education experts across the states. To be able to make accurate comparisons across states, and to learn what is working and who still needs additional support, it is imperative that states use common definitions. When evaluating your state's regulation, ask "What happens if we change the definition of a ninth-grade cohort or a graduate?" The answer to this question affects your state's graduation rate and its ability to identify those schools, districts, and groups in need of additional support.

Are all states now reporting the four-year ACGR at the state level? Five states began using a formula similar to ACGR in 2003, or have calculated ACGR back to this period. By 2006, 11 states had reported ACGR, and by 2009, 24 had reported it. Thirty-five states reported in 2010. As of December 2015, all 50 states and the District of Columbia are reporting ACGR.

Do all states report ACGR at the school and district levels? Yes.

- See Appendix A for 2015 reported ACGR by state and subgroup.
- See Appendix O for links to state sources of ACGR.

Is the graduation rate that is reported on state report cards the same as the ACGR? Not necessarily. State accountability systems issue state, district, and school report cards. States are supposed to report ACGR, but can also report other graduation-related statistics, which may in some cases lead to confusion as to what the graduation rate actually is. In some states, report cards use methods other than the ACGR to estimate graduation rates. Many state calculation methods inflate the graduation rate by counting GEDs as regular diplomas, or by counting fourth, fifth, and sixth-year graduates together. Some states count students who received a certificate of completion or attendance rather than a diploma as graduates. Check with your state department of education about what method and definitions are used in your state, district, and school report cards. In addition, you may wish to check out the Alliance for Excellent Education's website and the individual state report cards for previous years. Those report cards list results by state method, Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (a different method that preceded ACGR), and results from independent sources. Together, these rates give the range in previous rates and illustrate why a common method based on common definitions and individual students was so badly needed.

Is the ACGR the ONLY graduation rate that is used in Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenges, Annual Report 2017? No. Because states are still in transition from using previous rates to using the ACGR, and because trend lines can only be established for states with several years of ACGR data, two other graduation rate estimations are used in this report: the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Promoting Power (PP).

- The AFGR was developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) after convening panels of experts to make recommendations about the most effective strategy to calculate graduation rates in the absence of data systems based on individual student identifiers. The AFGR depends on enrollment by grade reported annually by each school and district to the NCES' Common Core of Data or CCD. The AFGR is calculated by dividing the number of diploma recipients by the average of the number of ninth-graders three years earlier, the number of tenth-graders two years

Appendix P. Graduation Rate FAQ *(continued)*

earlier, and the number of eighth-graders four years earlier. The average is taken because research has shown that many ninth grades are disproportionately large because of the number of students retained. The AFGR does not account for transfers in or out.

- Promoting Power is an estimated graduation rate developed by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. It compares the number of twelfth-grade students in a school to the number of ninth-graders three years earlier by using the grade level enrollment numbers reported to the federal Common Core of Data. Promoting Power does not account for students who make it to twelfth grade but ultimately do not graduate, nor does it adjust for transfers in or out. In the absence of uniform, school-level graduation rates, Promoting Power enables up-to-date comparisons to be made across states and schools. Promoting Power has been used in each of the Building a Grad Nation Annual Reports.

What is a "dropout factory" school? A dropout factory is a high school with a Promoting Power of 60 percent or less. In other words, it is a school in which its reported twelfth grade enrollment is 60 percent or less than its ninth-grade enrollment three years earlier.

Why are AFGR and PP used in this report, in addition to ACGR? AFGR is used because it has been retroactively calculated for more than 30 years, enabling comparison of national and state trend lines and changes over time. Because AFGR is easily available only at the state level, (although it can be calculated for districts and schools using CCD data, as is done for select districts and schools by the Broad Prize for Urban Education) other more school-specific measures were needed. Promoting Power is one such proxy and enables zeroing in on the number, distribution, and characteristics of schools with low Promoting Power ("dropout factories"). As ACGR becomes more prevalent, use of PP and AFGR will gradually be phased out.

Is there one list of low-performing high schools based on ACGR? No, there is not one centralized list of low-performing high schools across the nation based on ACGR. Each state calculates its own ACGR and most, but not all, states have done so school by school. In states that do not publish ACGR by school, it is recommended that state departments of education be contacted. Appendix O lists links for each state, current as of press time.

Is the dropout rate the inverse of the graduation rate? No. Graduation rates are not the inverse of dropout rates. Generally, the dropout rate is the total number of students who drop out from all grades in a school or district in a given year, divided by the total enrollment in those grades. Depending on the state, dropout rates may cover grades 7 to 12 or grades 9 to 12. Dropout rates can be among the most misleading of indicators because the data is diluted over the grades. Ten to 15 percent is typically considered a very high dropout rate.

Are graduation rates reported or calculated using school and district enrollment data comparable to those reported by the U.S. Census? Not on face value. Two different situations are being addressed. The Census Bureau conducts two surveys (the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey) that provide snapshots of educational attainment for the population, snapshots that are taken separately for different age groups. Typically, both surveys produce higher rates of educational attainment than do high school graduation rates. In part, the surveys are covering an older population that has had time to "get back on the graduation path" through alternate methods, including the GED (not included in the ACGR or AFGR). They also are not restricted to students enrolled in public schools, but include a sampling of the 11 percent of the population who attended private school and the three percent who are home-schooled. One survey excludes those living in group situations, such as the incarcerated and the military; the incarcerated population tends to have low graduation rates.

How do I find out the graduation rate in my school or community? Consult the tables listed earlier in Appendix O for web resources, or contact your state department of education if its website does not provide school-by-school information. The Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis also provides information on how to find out the graduation rate and size of the dropout crisis in your community. http://www.americaspromise.org/our-work/Dropout-Prevention/~/media/Files/Our%20Work/Dropout%20Prevention/Grad%20Nation%20Guidebook%20052809.ashx

The Civic Marshall Plan's State Challenge also provides a quick snapshot of each state's status in meeting the graduation challenge. Download your state's index to see where it stands. http://new.every1graduates.org/building-a- grad-nation-state-profiles-and-annual-updates/

Appendix Q. Civic Marshall Plan Principles

Every school in every community has unique opportunities to accelerate achievement for their children. To do so, stakeholders at every level require a set of appropriate solutions for their unique needs. The Civic Marshall Plan is not meant to be a prescription, but rather an iterative, evolving, dynamic, solutions-oriented campaign to end America's dropout crisis. Therefore, the Civic Marshall Plan's action items are organized around Four Leading Principles: focus, high expectations, accountability, and collaboration. The principles offer stakeholders key themes that can guide all of their work, while the action items provide targeted issues on which they can focus to reach the goal of 90 percent graduation rate by 2020.

(1) PRINCIPLE: STRATEGIC FOCUS: We must direct human, financial and technical capacities and resources to low-graduation rate communities, school systems, schools and disadvantaged students.

Action Items:

- Serve communities housing the "dropout factory high schools" that have 60 percent and lower high school graduation rates and their feeder middle and elementary schools.
- Serve communities housing the high schools that have 61 to 75 percent graduation rates and their feeder middle and elementary schools to ensure they do not slip into a "dropout factory."
- Integrate multi-sector, business and community-based efforts in collaboration with individual school and school system efforts.

(2) PRINCIPLE: HIGH EXPECTATIONS: All students deserve a world-class education and all children can succeed, if provided appropriate supports.

Action Items:

- Reduce chronic absenteeism with policies and practices that support students in coming to school, staying in school, and learning at school.
- Support, promote, or launch grade-level reading campaigns, ensuring all students read proficiently and with comprehension by fourth grade and beyond.
- Support students in advancing on grade level through school transitions.
- Redesign middle grades education, engaging, effective, academically directed schools.
- Provide engaging and demanding coursework that prepares students for college and careers, as outlined in the Common Core State Standards.
- Transform or replace "dropout factories."
- Expand education options and choices for students, connecting high school and postsecondary opportunities, including quality career technical education, early college high schools, dual enrollment, back on track and recovery programs.
- Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; strengthen state and school system policies to accelerate student achievement.

(3) PRINCIPLE: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT. We must measure our work so that we know what's working – and what is not. We must build state, school system, and school capacity to improve graduation and college readiness rates.

Action Items:

- Use evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and data-driven decision making in all education-related sectors.
- Fully implement, use and improve linked educational data systems throughout the educational continuum.
- Develop and support highly effective and accountable teachers, counselors, youth-serving personnel, and administrator, working with those who represent teachers.
- Build Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems to identify and appropriately support "on track" and "off track" students.
- Measure the effectiveness of in-school and out-of-school interventions in order to promote and scale best practices.
- Maximize "time on task" in school and maximize extended learning time in school, out of school, afterschool, and during the summer.

(4) THOUGHTFUL COLLABORATION. Ending the dropout crisis requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. To achieve collective impact, collaborations must be deliberately planned, guided by shared metrics and thoughtfully integrated to maximize efficiency and outcomes.

Action Items:

- Showcase examples of success at the state and community levels, serving as a challenge to others.
- Create multi-sector and community-based efforts that harness the power of youth-serving agencies, non-profits and businesses as education partners.
- Ensure parents and families are continuously engaged in their child's education and provided appropriate resources to promote their child's success.
- Elicit the perspectives of students, educators, and parents.
- Educate community members about the need for education, high school and beyond, using all available tools to keep Grad Nation a local, state, and national priority.

Endnotes

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