



Assistant Commissioner for Data Systems
Information and Reporting Services

To: BOCES District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Principals of Charter and Other Public Schools

From: Ken Wagner

Date: November 2011

Re: Reporting the 2010-11 School Year Cohort Graduation Rate

I am writing to summarize required changes in the way the 2010-11 school year cohort graduation rate will be reported. As you may know, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and other federal regulations (see 34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(i)-(iv)) require that, beginning in January 2012, states must report graduation rates using a new federal cohort definition. In addition, states are required to use this new cohort definition to make 2012-13 accountability status determinations based upon 2011-12 school year results.

There are three differences between this new federal cohort definition and what New York has used previously for accountability and graduation rate reporting (for a summary of the new federal cohort definition, see <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf>):

- Under New York's "old" cohort definition, students who have been enrolled in a school or district for fewer than five months are not counted in the cohort for accountability and graduation rate reporting purposes¹. The new federal definition includes in the cohort any student who has been enrolled for one day or longer.
- Under the old cohort definition, students who are incarcerated are considered "transfers" and are not included in the cohort for accountability and graduation rate reporting purposes. The new federal cohort definition will count incarcerated youth as transfers only if the student attends a program offering courses that can result in the earning of credit toward a high school diploma. Incarcerated youth who do not attend these types of programs will count as dropouts.
- Under the old cohort definition, ungraded students with disabilities are counted in a cohort based on the school year in which they reach age 17. The new federal

¹ Previously, New York has utilized the "five-month" rule for school and district accountability and graduation rate reporting purposes. New York has not utilized the five-month rule when reporting statewide graduation rates, including the overall statewide rate and rates disaggregated by student subgroup or need/resource capacity indicators. In addition, the overall New York City graduation rate has not utilized the five-month rule.

cohort definition requires that all students be counted in a cohort based upon the year in which they first entered a ninth grade program.

The new federal cohort definition is intended to standardize the way graduation rate is reported by the states. Since it may have the overall effect of including more students in the graduation rate cohort, this new definition may result in lower reported graduation rates for schools and districts. The changes will be phased in over three cohort reporting cycles.

The 2005 cohort (four-, five-, and six-year outcomes) has been – or will be – reported using the old cohort definition. The 2007 cohort (four-, five-, and six-year outcomes) will be reported using only the new federal cohort definition. The 2006 cohort has been – or will be – reported using both cohort definitions, depending on the reporting year and reporting purpose. These changes are summarized in release-date order in Appendix A. As always, schools and districts have an opportunity to review verification reports and submit corrections prior to the public release of graduation rate data².

We understand that these federal requirements are complex, and we have tried to explain these changes as clearly as possible. If you have questions about this information, please contact the Office of Information and Reporting Services by phone (518-474-7965) or email (dataquest@mail.nysed.gov). You may also contact your Regional Information Center or Big 5 Data Coordinator if you have questions about how to report cohort graduation rate data to the Student Information Repository System (SIRS) or about the data contained in the SIRS. A list of regional data center contacts can be found at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/nystart/tips.html#contax>. Additional written documentation of these changes can be found in the SIRS guidance at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/sirs/>.

Thank you for all your work on behalf of all the students of our State.

C: Regional Information Center (RIC) Directors
Big 5 Data Coordinators
Regional SIRS Project Managers
Charter School Network Leaders

² The estimated four-year graduation rate for the 2006 cohort as of August 2010, using both the old and new cohort definitions, can be found side-by-side in the “Graduates” section of the “High School Accountability Data Verification Report” within the Level 2 reporting environment. The four-year graduation rate for the 2007 cohort as of June/August 2011 can be found in the “Total Cohort – Summary” report, also found in the Level 2 reporting environment. Your regional data center can provide the link to these Level 2 reports. School/district staff in New York City should contact their data liaisons to obtain this information. These reports reflect data in the SIRS as of the September 30, 2011 final reporting deadline.

Appendix A

Date of Release or First Use	Cohort	Purpose	Cohort Rules
June 14, 2011	2005 cohort after five years as of June 2010	Graduation Rate	Old
	2006 cohort after four years as of June and August 2010 (2009-10 school year data)	Graduation Rate	Old
Fall 2011	2006 cohort after four years as of August 2010 (2010-11 school year data)	2011-12 accountability status determinations based on 2010-11 school year data (cohort lagged by one year)	Old
January 2012	2006 cohort after four years as of August 2010 (2010-11 school year data)	ARRA compliance ³	New
Spring 2012	2005 cohort after six years as of June 2011	Graduation Rate	Old
	2006 cohort after five years as of June 2011	Graduation Rate	New
	2007 cohort after four years as of June and August 2011 (2010-11 school year data)	Graduation Rate	New
Summer 2012	2007 cohort after four years as of August 2011	2012-13 accountability status determinations based on 2011-12 school year data (cohort lagged by one year)	New
	2006 cohort after five years as of August 2011 (2011-12 school year data)	2012-13 accountability status determinations based on 2011-12 school year data (cohort lagged by one year) ⁴	New

³ These results will be posted on or about January 31, 2012 at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/arra/home.html>.

⁴ This is the first year in which accountability status determinations will be based on either four- or five-year graduation rate outcomes. Four-year outcomes will be based on the results of the 2007 cohort; five-year outcomes will be based on the results of the 2006 cohort.