



New York State Board of Regents
The State Education Department
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NEWS

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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RELEASES HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES; OVERALL RATE IMPROVES SLIGHTLY, BUT GAPS IN ACHIEVEMENT PERSIST AND TOO FEW SCHOOLS MEET NEW ASPIRATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The State Education Department today released high school graduation rates for the 2006 cohort – those students who entered 9th grade in 2006. These data show that New York's overall graduation rate continues to rise slowly over time. The Department also released outcome data based on aspirational performance measures – measures designed to indicate how schools and districts are performing on rigorous measures more closely aligned with college and career readiness. Outcomes on these aspirational performance measures were achieved at rates lower than the cohort graduation rates. The data also show that with regard to both the graduation rate and the aspirational performance measures, the achievement gap between white students and students of color remains.

Regents Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch said, "New York has some of the highest performing schools and districts in the country, but today's data makes clear that we have tremendous work to do to reduce the drop-out rate, close a stubbornly persistent racial achievement gap and ensure that more of our graduates are prepared for college and the workforce. This data underscores the urgency of our efforts to continue to raise standards, improve assessments, and support the highest quality teaching in all of our classrooms."

Education Commissioner David M. Steiner said, "While the state's overall graduation rate continues to slowly improve, too many of our students are graduating with only a local diploma. To help ensure that more students graduate high school prepared for the rigors of work and higher education, the Department will work closely with schools and districts to implement the Regents reform agenda – an agenda with the straightforward goal of closing the gap and lifting the level of achievement for all students."

Senior Deputy Commissioner John B. King said, "Every aspect of the Regents reform agenda is aimed at ensuring that more New York State students graduate college and career ready. We have adopted more rigorous Common Core standards and are aligning our assessments with those standards; we're going to create data systems that provide parents and educators with information that's more useful and more transparent; we're going to ensure that classroom teachers and school leaders are better trained, thoughtfully evaluated, and better supported; and we're going to help our lowest performing schools turn their performance around or replace them with innovative educational options. We are confident that these reforms will advance both equity and excellence."

Overall Graduation Rates:

Statewide, 73.4% of the students who started 9th grade in 2006 had graduated after 4 years, by June 2010. The previous year's graduation rate – for the 2005 cohort – was 71.8%; the rate for the 2001 cohort was 65.8%. The graduation rate is defined as the number of students in a cohort who earned a Regents or local diploma divided by the total number of students in that cohort.

Graduation rates for the state's Big 5 city school districts have increased overall during the past six years, and all except Buffalo improved over last year (but note: Buffalo's decrease was caused primarily by a change in its cohort size). Graduation rates in the Big 5 for the 2006 cohort are as follows:

- Buffalo: 47.4% (down from 53.1% for the 2005 cohort)
- New York City: 61% (up from 59% for the 2005 cohort)
- Rochester: 46.1% (up from 42.1% for the 2005 cohort)
- Syracuse: 45.9% (up from 45.2% for the 2005 cohort)
- Yonkers: 63.2% (up from 58.1% for the 2005 cohort)

The overall graduation rate for black students also rose over the previous year, from 55.7% to 57.7%. Similarly, the rate for Hispanic students rose from 54.8% last year to 57.3% this year. While a large gap in graduation rate between black and Hispanic students – as compared with white students – persists, that gap continues to narrow. The difference in graduation rates for black and white students declined from 30 percentage points for the 2001 cohort to 26 points for the 2006 cohort. For Hispanic students, the gap narrowed from a 33 percentage point difference for the 2001 cohort to a 27 point difference for the 2006 cohort. Statewide, a greater percentage of black and Hispanic students rely on the local diploma to graduate – as opposed to a Regents diploma or a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation – than do white students.

A report detailing these results and others – including individual school and district graduation rates for the 2006 cohort and graduation rates for the various Need/Resource Categories of school districts (*i.e.*, high-need urban-suburban, rural, average wealth, and low-need); students with disabilities; charter schools; English language learners; students who graduate after a fifth or sixth year; and for males/females – is available at this web address: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/press.html>.

Aspirational Performance Measures:

Recognizing that remediation rates in New York's colleges are far too high, and that much more needs to be done to enhance the State's economic competitiveness, the Board of Regents has begun an in depth discussion of the knowledge, skills, and abilities high school graduates must demonstrate in order to show they are prepared for college and careers.

To inform that discussion, the Regents have been working to determine which data are good indicators of future post-secondary success. This past summer, for example, they reviewed research that analyzed how student performance on the state's grade 3-8 math and English tests relates to performance on the NAEP exam and on Regents exams, and how performance on Regents exams relates to first year performance in college. The research indicated that some students who had scored "proficient" on state exams found themselves unprepared, without remediation, to do the work required of them when they reached college. Specifically, the data showed that in 2007, 44% of first-time students at two-year institutions of higher education – and 13% of first-time students at four-year institutions – took remedial coursework. Accordingly, the Regents and the Commissioner adjusted the cut scores on the grade 3-8 exams to more accurately indicate proficiency.

The Board also looked at data showing the gap between high school and college expectations. In February the Regents reviewed data comparing the graduation rate for the 2005 cohort with the "college and career ready" graduation rate – defined at that time as the percentage of students in the cohort who graduated with a score 80 or better on a math Regents exam and 75 or better on the English Regents exam. The Regents view these data as an important indicator of future student success. Students who graduate high school – but do so with a score below 80 on a math Regents exam and below 75 on the English exam – are likely to require remediation in college.

Based on these findings, the Board of Regents has begun to consider changes to New York's graduation requirements – options that include raising the required passing scores on the English and math Regents exams and/or requiring students to pass a second Regents exam in math; allowing greater flexibility in meeting graduation requirements; and allowing alternative and supplemental credentials. Additionally, the Department is implementing changes to the assessment program that will better support the determination of student readiness for college and careers (including aligning the state assessments to the new New York State Common Core Standards by 2012-2013).

Because it will take time to implement those changes to our exams and graduation requirements that the Regents determine are necessary, they have determined that in the interim it is important to establish aspirational performance measures to be used by schools, districts and parents to better inform them of the progress of their students – and to report those outcomes. Therefore, in addition to reporting cohort graduation rate results, the Department today is also reporting on the following aspirational measures of achievement:

- The percent of students in the cohort who earned a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation (*i.e.*, earned 22 units of course credit; passed 7-9 Regents exams at a score of 65 or above; and took advanced course sequences in Career and Technical Education, the arts, or a language other than English); and
- The percent of students in the cohort who graduated with a local, Regents, or Regents with Advanced Designation diploma and earned a score of 75 or greater on their English Regents examination and an 80 or better on a math Regents exam (note: this aspirational measure is what had been referred to as the “college and career ready” graduation rate in February 2011; it is now referred to as the “ELA/Math APM”).

Students reached these aspirational performance measures at rates significantly lower than the cohort graduation rates:

- Statewide, 30.9% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 36.7% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 73.4%.
- In New York City, 16.4% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 21.4% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 61%.
- In Buffalo, 3.2% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 8.1% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 47.4%.
- In Rochester, 6.8% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 5.9% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 46.1%.
- In Syracuse, 7.5% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 9.3% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 45.9%
- In Yonkers, 8.2% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 14.5% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 63.2%

Statewide, there is a large gap between white students and students of color with regard to success in achieving the aspirational performance measures:

- White students: 43.3% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 50.6% met the ELA/Math APM.
- Black students: 9.5% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 12.8% met the ELA/Math APM.
- Hispanic students: 11.7% of the 2006 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 14.9% met the ELA/Math APM.

A report detailing these results and others – including individual school and district outcomes in achieving these aspirational performance measures and outcomes in achieving these APMs for the various Need/Resource Categories of school districts (*i.e.*, high-need urban-suburban, rural, average wealth, and low-need); students with disabilities; charter schools; English language learners; students who graduate after a

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