



New York State Board of Regents  
The State Education Department  
The University of the State of New York / Albany, NY 12234



Office of Communications

## **NEWS**

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### **EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RELEASES HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES; OVERALL RATES IMPROVE SLIGHTLY, BUT ARE STILL TOO LOW FOR OUR STUDENTS TO BE COMPETITIVE College and Career Readiness Measures Remain Low**

The State Education Department (SED) today released high school graduation rates for the 2007 cohort (students who entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2007). These data show that New York's overall graduation rate continues to rise slowly over time. SED also released outcome data for the same cohort based on aspirational performance measures, which are designed to measure how students are progressing toward college and career readiness. Outcomes on the aspirational performance measures are significantly lower than the cohort graduation rates. The data also show that in both the graduation rate and the aspirational performance measures, the achievement gap between white students and students of color remains.

"New York's overall graduation rate has improved, but nearly a quarter of our students still don't graduate after four years," said Board of Regents Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch. "And too many of those students who do graduate aren't ready for college and careers."

"These numbers make clear that we need to continue to pursue aggressive reforms in our schools including a new, richer curriculum and implementation of the new teacher evaluation law in districts across the state."

"Our students are competing globally," Commissioner John B. King, Jr. said. "That competition demands that we keep improving our graduation rates. But it also demands that we close the achievement gap and make sure students who do graduate are ready for college and careers. Next school year, we'll be implementing the Common Core standards, which will help more students achieve college and career readiness."

"But another key is keeping students engaged. Whatever that engagement takes – advanced math and science, Career and Technical Education programs, or a humanities focused courseload – we need to make sure all our students are on a path that prepares them for college and careers after they graduate from high school."

## Overall Graduation Rates

Statewide, 74% of the students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2007 had graduated after four years, by June 2011. The previous year's graduation rate – for the 2006 cohort – was 73.4%; the rate for the 2003 cohort was 69.3%. 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 generally increased over the past five years. Graduation rates in the Big 5 for the 2007 cohort are as follows:

- Buffalo: 54% (47.4% for the 2006 cohort; see slide 23 for details about changes in Buffalo's cohort size and the impact those changes had on the district's graduation rates)
- New York City: 60.9% (61% for the 2006 cohort)
- Rochester: 45.5% (46.1% for the 2006 cohort)
- Syracuse: 48.4% (45.9% for the 2006 cohort)
- Yonkers: 66.2% (63.2% for the 2006 cohort)

The overall graduation rate for black students rose over the previous year, from 57.7% to 58.4%. Similarly, the rate for Hispanic students rose from 57.3% last year to 58% this year. A large gap in the graduation rate between black and Hispanic students – as compared with white students – persists. The difference in graduation rates for black and white students declined from 28 percentage points for the 2004 cohort to 27 points for the 2007 cohort. For Hispanic students, the gap narrowed from a 30 percentage point difference for the 2004 cohort to a 27 point difference for the 2007 cohort. As a percentage of the cohort, more black and Hispanic students than white students earn Local Diplomas.

A report detailing these results and others – including individual school and district graduation rates for the 2007 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>.

The data demonstrate that persistence pays off for students who retake Regents exams in August and take advantage of credit recovery. The graduation rate for the state and for the Big 5 city school districts significantly improves when August data are included. For example New York City's graduation rate for August 2011 was 65.5% as compared with 60.9% through June. Statewide, 76.8% of the students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2007 had graduated after four years, by August 2011 (as compared with 74% through June).

### Phasing-Out the Local Diploma Option

Recognizing the need to better prepare students for the global workforce, the Board of Regents adopted more rigorous graduation requirements in 2005. Specifically, the Board passed regulations implementing a phase-out of the Local Diploma option for most general education students; those students would, instead, be required to pass five Regents exams (in mathematics, science, English, U.S. History, and Global History) at a score of 65 or better and earn all of their required course credits.

Students passing the five exams at 65 or better, and passing all of their required coursework, will earn a Regents diploma. The local diploma will continue to be an option for students with disabilities. The Regents are considering additional changes to expand the safety net options for students with disabilities.

When the Regents adopted the more rigorous requirements in 2005, it was predicted that graduation rates would plummet; but the data show an increase, not a decline, in the state's graduation rate. Over that time, a greater percentage of students have received a Regents diploma, with a corresponding drop in the percentage of students earning a Local Diploma. Similarly, over that same period of time, the number of students with disabilities earning a Regents Diploma has gone up, while the number earning a Local Diploma has remained relatively flat.

Because this trend (*i.e.*, declining numbers of Local Diplomas awarded; increasing numbers of Regents Diplomas awarded) has occurred at the same time that the phase-in to 65 has been implemented, it is reasonable to assume this trend will continue as the phase-in is completed with the cohort that will be graduating later this month.

### New York's Graduation Rate Compared With Other States

A recent report, *Building a Grad Nation, Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic*, found that New York is one of only two states in the country to have increased graduation rates by double digits between 2002 and 2009.

And the just released *Diploma Counts* report, issued by Education Week, ranked New York's graduation rate as tenth in the nation. The report further found that from 1999-2009, the graduation rate nationally increased by 6.7%; in New York State, it increased by 19.9%, the second biggest jump in the country.

While different organizations use different methodologies to calculate graduation rates, it is clear that New York State's graduation rate continues to trend upwards and at a faster pace than most other states.

### 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, SED will implement the Common Core standards and develop curricula aligned with college and career readiness. The Department will also implement changes to the state's assessment program to better support the determination of college and career readiness.

It will take time to implement the changes to exams and graduation requirements that the Regents determine are necessary. In the interim aspirational performance measures (APMs) will be established to better inform schools, districts and parents of the progress of their students. 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 mathematics Regents exam (note: this aspirational measure is referred to as the "ELA/Math APM").

Students reached these aspirational performance measures at rates significantly lower than the overall cohort graduation rates (note: APMs are reported as a percentage of the cohort):

- Statewide, 30.6% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 34.7% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 74%.
- In New York City, 16.3% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 20.7% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 60.9%.
- In Buffalo, 9.5% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 10.9% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 54%.
- In Rochester, 5.8% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 6.2% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 45.5%.
- In Syracuse, 7.5% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 9.0% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 48.4%.

- In Yonkers, 12.4% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 13.8% met the ELA/Math APM – compared with an overall graduation rate of 66.2%.

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

- White students: 43.3% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 48.1% met the ELA/Math APM.
- Black students: 9.5% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 11.5% met the ELA/Math APM.
- Hispanic students: 11.9% of the 2007 cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 14.5% met the ELA/Math APM.

The Department will continue to report APMs for schools and districts while college and career ready graduation requirements are phased-in.

A report detailing these results and others – including individual school and district outcomes for achieving aspirational performance measures and outcomes 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>.

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