

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ C. _____

Date: March 26, 2009

Topic: Report on Data Elements to be Included in the Virginia Cohort Report

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Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by

State or federal law or regulation

Board of Education regulation

Other: _____

Action requested at this meeting Action requested at future meeting: _____ (date)

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action

date _____

action _____

Background Information:

House Bill 19 (2006) amended section § 22.1-253, 13:4 of the *Code of Virginia* and requires the State Board of Education to assure uniform assessment of high school graduation rates by collecting, analyzing and reporting high school graduation and dropout data using a formula prescribed by the Board. In November 2006 the Board of Education adopted the NGA On-Time Graduation Rate formula to calculate graduation rates in Virginia.

In its 2007 report to the Governor and General Assembly "On the Study of High School Dropout and Graduation Rates in the Commonwealth (SJR 329)," the Board of Education recommended that the Virginia Department of Education report both the annual and cohort dropout rates, and that dropout rates be published in the context of other information, including:

1. Graduation rates;
2. Completion rates that include graduates and students who earn alternative completion credentials such as the General Educational Development certificate (GED); and
3. A 'remain in school' rate.

In October 2008 the Virginia Department of Education, for the first time, reported the graduation rates using the new formula. The Department reported graduation rates at the state, school division, and school level for all students and for student subgroups consistent with those defined for federal accountability purposes. In the next week, the Department will publish the Virginia Cohort Report.

This report accounts for the status of all students included in the 2007-2008 adjusted cohort as defined by the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate, including dropouts. Reports will be published online for high schools, school divisions, and the state.

Summary of Major Elements

The Virginia Cohort Report accounts for the status of all students as of the end of the school year including students who graduate or complete high school in the summer. The report relies on longitudinal data to calculate a snapshot report that accounts for all students in the adjusted cohort before they begin the next school year.

The report templates are provided in Appendix A. In future years, the Department will publish the report in October.

The Cohort Report reports the status of students in each of the following categories:

- Diplomas: Students who earned one of the five approved Board of Education diplomas;
- Alternative completion credentials: Students who earned a GED or Certificate of Program Completion;
- Still enrolled: Students who did not earn a completion credential and were still enrolled in school on the last day of the 2007-2008 school year;
- Dropout: Students who dropped out of school according to the state's official definition (see Appendix B).
- Long-term absence: Students who were on long-term medical absence, emergency family absence, and students who were expelled for one-year. These students had not earned a credential and were not enrolled in school at the time of the report.
- Unconfirmed Status: Students whose records were properly reported to the state but whose status is inconclusive.

Students may have an unconfirmed status for the following reasons:

1. Students who transferred between Virginia public schools may have been erroneously assigned a new state testing identifier (STI) upon enrollment in the new school.
2. Students may have incomplete transfer data submitted to the state. This can occur when students transfer near the end of their on-time year and are waiting until the next school year to enroll in the new school; or when students register and enroll at another public school but don't actually attend the new school for any instructional days.
3. In the first two years of Virginia's longitudinal data system, the Virginia Department of Education did not require school divisions to submit data to document the status of students who left Virginia public schools over the summer and outside of Virginia's public school system (e.g., out-of-state or private schools). The Department does not have the exit status for these students.

The Department of Education has made several changes to the longitudinal data system since first requiring all students to have a unique identifier in 2005. These changes will significantly reduce the number of students with uncertain status in future years. The Department has been and will continue working with school divisions to correct data to improve the accuracy of reports and, to the extent possible, to confirm the status of all students. The Department has provided school divisions with data tools to easily identify students whose data should be reviewed and makes regular contact with school division personnel to provide technical assistance as needed.

Upon submission of data corrections, school divisions are required to submit evidence that directly supports

each change in the student's record that impacts the Cohort Report. Consistent with the process used for data corrections prior to the On-Time Graduation Rate report, the Department will audit a random sample of evidence submitted to support data corrections.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education accept this report for informational purposes.

Impact on Resources:

The Department has sufficient resources at this time to calculate and publish the cohort report.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

N/A

Appendix B: Virginia's Definition of a dropout

A dropout is an individual who:

1. Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year, or
2. Was not enrolled on October 1 of the previous school year although expected to be in membership;
and
3. Has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or -approved educational program; and
4. Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
 - (i) Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program;
 - (ii) Temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness;
 - (iii) Death .