



For Immediate Release

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83.2 Percent of Class of 2009 Graduate on Time **1,210 in Class of 2008 Return & Earn Diplomas in Fifth Year of High School**

More than 83 percent of the students in the class of 2009 graduated on time with a diploma, according to data reported today by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

The commonwealth's 2009 "Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate" of 83.2 percent expresses the percentage of students who were first-time ninth graders during the 2005-2006 school year and earned a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years. The 2009 graduation rate is one point higher than the four-year rate of 82.2 percent for the class of 2008.

"A one-point increase in the graduation rate represents nearly 1,000 additional young men and women who earned diplomas and are ready for post-secondary education or entry-level employment," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright. "Building a long-term trend of rising graduation rates will require a continued student-by-student approach by educators, as well as the sustained involvement of parents and strong partnerships with community institutions."

The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is a cohort graduation rate calculated by tracking individual students from year to year using the commonwealth's longitudinal student data system. The calculation accounts for student mobility and retention. This is the second year VDOE has reported cohort graduation rates for the state, school divisions and schools.

"With policy direction from the Board of Education, and the support of the governor and General Assembly, Virginia is setting a national standard for accuracy and transparency in the reporting of graduation rates," said Board of Education President Mark E. Emblidge.

For a sixth consecutive year, the number of Virginia students graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma increased, and the number of advanced diplomas awarded exceeded the number of Standard Diplomas. Of the 98,043 students in the 2009 cohort, 81,587, or 83.2 percent, earned a Board of Education-approved diploma:

- 43,334, or 44.2 percent, earned an Advanced Studies Diploma
- 34,339, or 35 percent, earned a Standard Diploma
- 1,827, or 1.9 percent, earned a Modified Standard Diploma
- 2,075, or 2.1 percent, earned a Special Diploma

Modified Standard Diplomas and Special Diplomas are available only to students with disabilities.

Statewide, the following percentages of students in the class of 2009 graduated on time with a Board of Education-approved diploma:

- Female students — 86.4 percent
- Male students — 80.2 percent
- Black students — 75.7 percent
- Hispanic students — 72.3 percent
- White students — 87 percent
- Asian students — 93.3 percent
- Students with disabilities — 82.5 percent
- Disadvantaged students — 73.2 percent
- Limited English proficient students — 68.8 percent

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Of Virginia's 324 high schools, 187 had graduation rates higher than the state's 83.2 percent, two schools matched the state and 135 were lower. Sixty-five school divisions had graduation rates higher than the state, 65 divisions had rates that were lower, and one division's graduation rate was the same as the state rate.

Of the 98,043 students in the cohort, 7,772, or 7.9 percent, dropped out; 439 or 0.5 percent were reported as being on long-term medical or family leave or expelled for one year with the potential of returning to school; and the status of 1,723 or 1.8 percent could not be determined with current state data. A student whose status is unconfirmed is not counted as a dropout until it is established that he or she is not enrolled in another public or private school or receiving home instruction.

Data presented in the 2009 cohort reports for the commonwealth, school divisions and schools include on-time graduation rates and cohort dropout rates disaggregated by student subgroup.

2009 Cohort Report: State Summary

Subgroup	Adjusted Cohort	% Graduated	% GED	% Certificate	% Still Enrolled	% Dropout	% Long-term Absence	% Unconfirmed Status
All Students	98,043	83.2%	3.6%	0.3%	2.7%	7.9%	0.5%	1.8%
Female	48,093	86.4%	2.8%	0.4%	2.1%	6.5%	0.4%	1.4%
Male	49,950	80.2%	4.4%	0.3%	3.2%	9.3%	0.5%	2.1%
Black	26,433	75.7%	3.4%	0.6%	4.8%	11.3%	0.9%	3.4%
Hispanic	6,812	72.3%	3.1%	0.7%	2.9%	19.1%	0.3%	1.6%
White	58,003	87.0%	4.0%	0.2%	1.8%	5.6%	0.3%	1.2%
Asian	4,953	93.3%	1.3%	0.2%	1.5%	3.3%	0.1%	0.3%
American Indian	301	78.4%	6%	0%	3.7%	9.3%	1.3%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian	89	83.2%	4.5%	0%	3.4%	6.7%	0%	2.3%
Other	6,795	91.1%	2%	0.2%	1.8%	4.1%	0.2%	0.6%
Students with Disabilities	11,901	82.5%	3.8%	0.7%	n/a	12.5%	0%	0.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	24,009	73.2%	5.5%	0.7%	4.6%	12%	0.8%	3.3%
Limited English Proficient	3,920	68.8%	1.6%	1.6%	n/a	26.1%	0.1%	0.8%
Migrant	45	66.7%	6.7%	6.7%	0%	20%	0%	0%
Homeless	587	66.6%	4.8%	1.2%	5.3%	17.9%	1.2%	3.1%

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Slightly more than half of the dropouts in the 2009 cohort — 51.4 percent — left school by the end of the tenth grade: 25.3 percent dropped out during the ninth grade; 26.1 percent dropped out during their sophomore year; 25.9 percent dropped out during the eleventh grade; and 22.7 percent dropped out as seniors.

The data show that students in the cohort who repeated grades, were frequently absent and attended multiple schools were more likely to drop out:

- Of the students in the 2009 cohort who dropped out, 45.2 percent repeated at least one grade during high school, and 36.2 percent repeated their freshman year.
- 40 percent of the students who dropped out were ninth and tenth graders who were 17 years old or older.
- 29.7 percent of the dropouts had attendance rates of less than 80 percent during the year before they left school, compared with 2.2 percent of the students in the cohort who graduated.
- 64.6 percent of dropouts had attendance rates of less than 80 percent during their final year of school compared with 3.8 percent of graduates.
- 32.2 percent of the dropouts attended two or more high schools before leaving compared with 15.1 percent of the students in the cohort who graduated.

The dropout rates of 184 schools were lower than the state rate of 7.9 percent, and two schools had dropout rates that were comparable. The dropout rates of 138 schools exceeded the state rate. The number of high schools with dropout rates of five percent or less was 106, and 39 schools had dropout rates of 15 percent or higher.

Sixty-seven school divisions had dropout rates lower than the state, one school division's dropout rate was the same, and 63 divisions had rates that were higher. Thirty school divisions had dropout rates of five percent or less, and 13 divisions had dropout rates above 15 percent.

Five-Year Cohort Report for Class of 2008

VDOE also released new data for the class of 2008 showing that 1,210 students returned for a fifth year of high school and earned diplomas. Their achievement resulted in a five-year graduation rate for the class of 2008 of 83.5 percent compared with a four-year, on-time rate of 82.2 percent.

"I want to congratulate these young men and women who persevered and achieved their goals," said Dr. Wright. "Recognition is also due to the principals, teachers and counselors who encouraged them to return to school and complete their diploma requirements."

The five-year cohort report for the class of 2008 also includes 728 additional students counted as dropouts, resulting in a five-year dropout rate of 9.5 percent compared with the 8.7 percent reported as dropouts in the four-year cohort report released by VDOE in March 2009.

Cohort dropout rates reflect the number of students who drop out over the course of four years among a group of pupils who began the ninth grade together and differ from the division-level annual dropout rates traditionally reported by VDOE as part of the Superintendent's Annual Report.

High school cohort reports for schools, school divisions and the commonwealth are available for viewing and downloading in the Virginia School Report Card section of the VDOE Web site (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/src/ontime_grad_rate.shtml).