

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FLORIDA'S COHORT GRADUATION RATES

### ***What is the “federal or uniform” graduation rate?***

As defined in 34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(i)-(iv), “the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (hereafter referred to as ‘the four-year graduation rate’) is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently ‘adjusted’ by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the 9th grade and the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during that same period.”

Only standard diploma recipients are counted as graduates. In accordance with federal guidelines, transfers can only be removed from the cohort if the student transfers to an educational program that *culminates with a standard diploma*.

### ***What is a cohort?***

For graduation rate purposes, a cohort is a group of students who enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the same time on the same schedule to graduate four years later.

### ***How is the cohort graduation rate calculated?***

The graduation rate is the number of standard diploma recipients (numerator) divided by the total number of students in the adjusted cohort (denominator).

The denominator (adjusted cohort) is attained by compiling and classifying four years of individual student records to determine which students entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time four years prior to the year of the rate calculation; which students transferred into the cohort as 9<sup>th</sup> graders in year one, 10<sup>th</sup> graders in year two, 11<sup>th</sup> graders in year three, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in year four; and which students from the group transferred out or died.

The numerator is the number of standard diploma recipients from the adjusted cohort.

### ***How are students categorized in the cohort?***

1. Standard Diplomas
2. Non-Graduates: Special Diplomas, GEDs, Certificates of Completion, and students retained or still in school
3. Dropouts

Please refer to Appendix E in the [Technical Guide for the 2013-14 Florida High School Graduation Rate](#) for specific withdrawal code definitions. Appendices A and B in the [Database Manuals](#) for the Automated Student Database System, also define all the withdrawal and diploma codes for each cohort.

### ***Are graduation rates disaggregated by student subgroups?***

Yes. The graduation rates are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, disabled, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged (students eligible for free/reduced-price lunches).

***What are the advantages to using a cohort graduation rate method?***

The cohort method allows for the adjustment of student mobility, thus providing a more accurate picture of the students' progress and outcomes.

***How are students appropriately assigned to a cohort?***

Students are assigned to a cohort based upon their initial entry into 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the district. Incoming students are included in the cohort for which they were originally scheduled to graduate. For example, students transferred into the cohort as 9<sup>th</sup> graders in year one, 10<sup>th</sup> graders in year two, 11<sup>th</sup> graders in year three, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in year four.

***How are students appropriately removed from a cohort?***

Students transferring to another public or private school or a home education program in addition to deceased students are removed from the cohort. Students transferring to adult education programs are not removed from a school's cohort and count as non-graduates unless they earn an adult standard diploma. A GED is not considered to be a standard diploma.

***There is a school listed on the report that has been closed. How can that be?***

Most students who were enrolled in a school that closed should have been reported as transferring to another school. However, it is conceivable for students to be coded as dropouts prior to the closing of the school. In these circumstances, data for that school will still be included in the district's graduation rate calculation and a rate will be calculated for that school.

When reviewing the reports, keep in mind that the graduation rate covers a four-year window. Example: Jake was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at School B in 2009-10, but he dropped out in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2010-11 school year. Then School B closed in 2011-12. Jake still must count as a dropout in the 2012-13 cohort at School B. Every student must be accounted for in a cohort calculation.

***Where can I find a complete list of the withdrawal and diploma codes used in Florida?***

Appendices A and B in the [Database Manuals](#) for the Automated Student Database System, also define all the withdrawal and diploma codes for each cohort.

***If a dropout re-enrolls in another high school, how is this student counted in the four-year graduation rate?***

The goal of the cohort graduation rate is to determine the final educational outcome for all students during the four-year window. So, for graduation rate purposes, a prior dropout should be updated to a transfer if the student is later found enrolled in another school.

***How are students who are retained handled?***

The student remains in the same cohort no matter how many times he or she is retained. Again, an accurate graduation rate can only occur when students are counted in only one cohort. Unless the retained student can "catch up" with his cohort by making up credits, etc., he/she will be a non-graduate in the cohort rate.

***How are students who graduated early, such as those who graduate with the 18 credit hour diploma, counted?***

Students who graduate early are still counted in the cohort for which they were originally assigned. Example: A student entered ninth 9<sup>th</sup> in 2009-10. She is expected to graduate within four years, by

2012-13. She graduated a year early (2011-12) but will not be counted until 2012-13. We look for the educational outcome during the four-year period.

***How should students completing credits through virtual school be coded for graduation? Should the virtual school number or their zoned school number be used?***

If the virtual school is coded and reported as the school of enrollment and can issue diplomas, then a rate is calculated for that school.

The school of enrollment issues the diploma and is used for cohort purposes. A virtual school can issue a diploma for a student who is full-time at the virtual school.

***What about students who take longer than four years to graduate?***

Students taking longer than four years to graduate would be considered non-graduates in the four-year cohort graduation rate.

***Are summer graduates included in the graduation rate?***

Yes, summer graduates are counted if they graduate by the end of the current school year, which includes summer school.

***If a student gets a certificate of completion at the end of the year but takes a course in summer school to earn the 2.0 GPA, does the student count in the graduation rate if he/she gets the GPA before June 30?***

Yes, if the student is reported with an applicable diploma type on the Student End of Year Status records submitted to the FDOE for that school year. If the student is not reported with a diploma on the end-of-year records for that year, the student would not be counted as a graduate.

***Does the student who earns a certificate of completion but has not passed the FCAT 2.0 count if the student takes the ACT or SAT in June and gets the concordant score before June 30?***

Yes.

***Why can't the graduation rate and the dropout rate be added together to get 100%?***

The rates apply to different periods of measurement.

Graduation rate is a four-year, cohort-based indicator.

Dropout rate is a single-year indicator.

The rates apply to different populations.

Graduation rate tracks the progress of a group of students who entered the same grade at the same time over a four-year period.

Dropout rate tracks **all** students in grades 9 through 12 in a **single** year.

Not all non-graduates in the cohort are dropouts. Some students have been retained and are still in school, or some students received certificates of completion. These completers are considered non-graduates, not dropouts.

***Why would an elementary or middle school be listed in the graduation report?***

The cohort is built based upon the grade level of the student and not the school type. Some elementary or middle schools may serve a student assigned to a grade level of 9, 10, 11, or 12.