

WISCONSIN GRADUATION RATE REPORTING CHANGES

Changes in Graduation Rate Reporting at DPI

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will be reporting graduation rates using a new formula beginning in spring of 2011. The new formula is called a four-year adjusted cohort rate and will be reported (in [WINSS](#) [Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools]) alongside DPI's current, or legacy, rate. This article will provide a brief overview of the new graduation rate formula, why the new formula is necessary, and DPI's plans for reporting the formula and using the rate for accountability purposes.

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate

The new graduation rate formula is called a four-year adjusted cohort rate. To calculate this rate, students are placed into a permanent statewide cohort based on their grade level upon first enrolling in a Wisconsin public high school. The cohort is adjusted based on the following circumstances:

- Add to the cohort: new students who transfer into a Wisconsin public high school.
- Remove from the cohort: students who transfer to a non-public high school in Wisconsin, move out-of-state, emigrate to another country, or die.

The adjusted cohort rate provides information about the percentage of students who earn a regular diploma within a certain period of time. A regular diploma, according to [Wis. Stat. sec. 118.33\(1\)\(a\) and \(d\)](#), does not include the High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED), GED (General Educational Development), or certificates of attendance or completion.

Comparing Rates

New four-year adjusted cohort formula:

$$\frac{\text{\# of students who graduate within four years with a regular diploma}}{\text{divided by \# of students in the four-year adjusted cohort}}$$

Legacy rate formula (in use since 2003-04):

$$\frac{\text{\# of students who graduate with a regular diploma}}{\text{divided by \# of students expected to graduate}}$$

Both the legacy rate and the four-year adjusted cohort rate count only students earning a regular diploma in the numerator of the formula. The adjusted cohort rate refines that group by only including those students who earn a regular diploma within the selected timeframe; in this case, four years (which includes the summer following the fourth year). The denominator counts all students in the adjusted cohort. Wisconsin's legacy

rate is not cohort based; it instead provides a snapshot of high school graduation and completion in a given year. The denominator counts all students expected to graduate that year, including students who graduate, drop-out, reach maximum age, and earn other completion credentials.

Why A New Graduation Rate Formula?

There are many ways to calculate graduation rates. The U.S. Department of Education (USED) wants comparability across states and is requiring that states use an adjusted cohort graduation rate. States are required to report a four-year adjusted cohort rate publicly, and use the rate for adequate yearly progress (AYP) calculations.

DPI's intent is to provide a comprehensive picture of student transition from high school and, as such, WINSS will include reports using both the current (legacy) rate and the new four-year adjusted cohort rate. Because cohort placement is permanent, DPI will be able to provide reports with five- and six-year rates in addition to the four-year adjusted cohort rate.

Reporting and Accountability Plans

Beginning in spring 2011, DPI will report more than one graduation rate:

Reporting Year	Graduating Class	Graduation Rates Reported	Accountability (AYP) Rate(s)
2010-11	Class of 2010	four-year adjusted cohort; legacy rate	legacy rate
2011-12	Class of 2011	four-year adjusted cohort; legacy rate	four-year adjusted cohort (by AYP subgroup)*
2012-13	Class of 2012	four-year adjusted cohort; six-year adjusted cohort	four-year adjusted cohort (by AYP subgroup)*

*Guidance from USED, expected in fall 2011, may allow use of an additional, extended rate for AYP.

DPI has a graduation webpage, <http://dpi.wi.gov/graduation/index.html>, that includes a variety of information about graduation rate formulas and different pathways to graduation in Wisconsin.

Note:

This information reflects how DPI reports graduation rates and uses these rates for accountability purposes. The reporting changes do not alter the fact that Wisconsin students have a right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) up to 21 years of age if necessary. This right is particularly important for students with a disability.

For further information, please refer to *WI DPI Information Update Bulletin 10.08, High School Graduation and Students with Disabilities: How Students with Disabilities Meet the High School Graduation Requirements* at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/bul10-08.html>.