



# WYOMING 2016-17 COHORT GRADUATION RATE GUIDEBOOK



Information concerning the calculations and data sets used to determine graduation rates for public schools in Wyoming

**NOVEMBER 2017**

The purpose of this document is to provide information concerning the calculations and data sets used to determine graduation rates for public schools in Wyoming. The 2016-17 report contains the On-Time (4 year) Graduation Rate, the Extended-Year (5 year) Graduation Rate and the Extended-Year (6 year) Graduation Rate. Calculations and information produced and reported by any other entity are not official and should not be used as an official source of information.

Graduation rate is a key component of federal accountability provisions for states, districts, and schools. In October of 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) announced final regulations establishing a uniform and more accurate way of calculating high school graduation rates that will be comparable across states. The October 2008 announcement, “[A Uniform, Comparable Graduation Rate](#),” provides a straightforward and detailed definition for use by all states.

#### A UNIFORM AND ACCURATE DEFINITION OF GRADUATION RATE: THE FOUR-YEAR ADJUSTED COHORT GRADUATION RATE

An accurate method of calculating graduation rates that is uniform across states is necessary to improve high school accountability. Requiring school officials to have written confirmation before removing a student from a cohort will improve the accuracy of graduation rate calculations. Written confirmation will also ensure that students who have dropped out of school are not counted as transfers and will consequently hold schools accountable for dropouts and others who do not graduate from high school with a regular diploma.

- The final regulations define the “four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate” as the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school four years earlier (adjusting for transfers in and out, émigrés and deceased students—see below).
  - Students who graduate in four years include students who earn a regular high school diploma at the end of their fourth year; before the end of their fourth year; and, if a state chooses, during a summer session immediately following their fourth year.
  - To remove a student from a cohort, a school or district must confirm in writing that a student has transferred out, emigrated to another country, or is deceased.
  - For students who transfer out of a school, the written confirmation must be official and document that the student has enrolled in another school or in an educational program that culminates in a regular high school diploma.

## EXTENDED-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE

The Extended-Year Cohort Graduation Rate counts students who do not complete high school within four years. The same formula is used in both the On-Time and Extended-Year Rates, except that the Extended-Year Rate measures the number of students who graduate within five (or six) years of entering ninth grade. The Wyoming Department of Education applauds every effort to give students options and help them succeed. Many successful students take more than four years to graduate.

- Extended-Year (5 Year) Graduation Rates will be published in early 2017 for the cohort of students who began ninth grade in fall 2011 (class of 2015).
- Extended-Year (6 Year) Graduation Rates will be published in early 2017 for the cohort of students who began ninth grade in fall 2010 (class of 2014).

## GRADUATION RATES ARE CALCULATED FOR THE FOLLOWING STUDENT SUBGROUPS:

- All Students
- English Language Learners (ELL)
- Female Gender
- Male Gender
- Homeless Students
- IEP Students
- Students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch
- Migrant Students
- Race/Ethnicity - American Indian
- Race/Ethnicity – Asian
- Race/Ethnicity – Black
- Race/Ethnicity – Hispanic
- Race/Ethnicity – Pacific Islander
- Race/Ethnicity – Two or More Races
- Race/Ethnicity – White

## GRADUATION RATES ARE REPORTED TO THE FOLLOWING:

- Federal accountability for state, district and school reports
- United States Department of Education Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) State Profiles
- Independent Researchers
- Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA) School Performance Reports

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHAT IS A COHORT?

A group of students who start high school together. This group is tracked in the K-12 State Longitudinal Data System over their entire high school career. The Wyoming State On-Time Graduation Rate is a four year cohort beginning with ninth grade students, tracking them until the end of the twelfth grade. The Extended-Year Graduation Rate is a five year cohort beginning with ninth grade students, tracking them until one year after twelfth grade.

### HOW IS THE ON-TIME GRADUATION YEAR DETERMINED?

The student's expected on-time (4 year) high school graduation year based on the year and grade in which the student first attended a high school grade in a Wyoming public school. This is determined by reviewing WDE684 WISE Teacher/Course/Student data collections submitted by the districts. For instance, a student first attending a Wyoming public school as a 9th grader in 2006-07 has an expected on-time graduation year of 2009-10 (9th grade, 2006-07; 10th grade 2007-08; 11th grade 2008-09; 12th grade and graduate 2009-10). A student first attending a Wyoming public school as a 12th grader in 2009-10 would then also have an expected graduation year of 2009-10. All students in this file have an expected on-time graduation year of 2009-10. Students graduating early in 2009-10 will be used in future years graduation rates (2010-11 for example) so are not included, nor are students that graduated in 2009-10 but are not on-time graduates. All on-time status decisions are based on data submitted by Wyoming public school districts.

### WHAT ARE EXIT CODES?

These are codes used by schools to determine the reason a student leaves the school system for any reason. Full explanations of each Exit Code can be found beginning on page 43 in the [WDE684 Guidebook](#).

### HOW DO YOU DEFINE "GRADUATE"?

Students who graduate with a Wyoming "regular high school diploma" as defined through [Wyoming Statute and Rules and Regulations, Ch. 31 - Graduation Requirements](#) are considered Graduates.

## WHAT IS A WISER ID?

The Wyoming Integrated Statewide Education (WISE) Student Record ID (WISER ID) is a unique, yet non-personally identifiable, statewide student identifier that connects a student's data across districts and institutions. Deployment of the WISER ID System began at the start of the 2005-06 school year. This procedure of uniquely identifying student records fulfilled the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by enabling the tracking of students across districts.

## WHO IS EXCLUDED FROM THE CALCULATIONS?

Only a student who transfers out and enrolls in another school or in an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma, emigrates to another country, or dies may be removed from a high school's or district's cohort. Before removing a student from a cohort, a school or district must obtain confirmation in writing that the student transferred out, emigrated, or is deceased. No other students may be removed from the cohort. Thus, schools and districts must ensure that a student who drops out of high school is not deemed a transfer for purposes of calculating graduation rate; rather, the student must remain in the adjusted cohort— that is, the denominator of the graduation rate calculation.

## HOW ARE EARLY GRADUATES REPORTED?

Students who graduate earlier than their cohort should be reported with an exit date reflecting the actual date the diploma was granted. These students will be counted as on-time graduates with their cohort.

## HOW ARE GED STUDENTS COUNTED?

Per federal guidance, for the purposes of the On-Time (4 year) Graduation Rate, GED recipients are considered non-graduates.

## HOW ARE "OTHER" COMPLETERS COUNTED?

Federal guidance mandates that only regular high-school diploma recipients be identified as having graduated for purposes of calculating graduation rates.

## HOW DO YOU COUNT STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE AFTER MORE THAN 4 YEARS?

Any student not graduating in 4 years but earning a diploma in more than 4 years will be included in the Extended-Year Cohort (5 year and/or 6 year) graduation rates, as timing dictates. Per federal guidance, for the On-Time (4 year) Graduation Rate, these students are considered non-graduates.

IF A STUDENT RE-ENROLLS IN A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL AFTER HAVING DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL FOR A PERIOD OF TIME, HOW MAY A SCHOOL COUNT THAT STUDENT IN THE FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE?

The adjusted cohort graduation rate requires the WDE to have in place an accurate student record system that can track the progress of individual students over time. This system must record when a student has dropped out of school (and may not count him or her as a student who has transferred out). If, for example, a student who was a first-time 9th grader in 2008-2009 drops out in 2009-2010 after tenth grade, and then re-enrolls in high school in 2011-2012, that student may be deemed to have transferred into the receiving school and should be assigned to the cohort in which the student was a member when he or she started 9th grade for the first time (2008-2009). Unless the student skipped a grade later in high school or caught up with the original cohort in some other manner, that student could not graduate within four years of starting 9th grade, and therefore would count as a non-graduate in the four-year graduation rate.

WHERE ARE THE RATES PUBLISHED?

- Several different reports are available to access historical graduation counts and rates on the [WDE website](#).
- The WDE Statistical Report Series contains graduate and dropout data, specifically in [Statistical Report Series No. 2](#).
- The federal government has published state by state graduation rate information on their [website](#).

EXIT TYPES REQUIRING SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTATION FOR APPROVAL

Students exiting under WDE684 exit types 418 (Transferred to a private school in Wyoming) and 450 (Transferred to home schooling as the primary educational setting) are listed as “Non-Graduate” (rather than “Exited Cohort”) until documentation is provided to and approved by the WDE:

- Note: Wyoming statute 21-4-101 (a)(v) states “A home-based educational program means a program of educational instruction provided to a child by the child’s parent or legal guardian or by a person designated by the parent or legal guardian. An instructional program provided to more than one (1) family unit does not constitute a home-based educational program.”
  - Typically, an online program claiming to offer a high school diploma track but which is not accredited by the state of Wyoming is neither a homeschooling program nor a valid in-or-out-of-state private school.
- Exit type 418 (Transferred to a private school in Wyoming)
  - Required documentation includes a copy of the original records request from the school or correspondence from the school stating original enrollment date.

- Exit type 450 (Transferred to home schooling as the primary educational setting)
  - Some students who attended public high school and are then reported as transferring to homeschooling are found to be appropriately exited as 159 (Discontinued schooling to participate in a GED or other education or training program that does not grant a “regular high school diploma”).
  - Valid homeschooling cases include (documentation required will be determined on a case-by-case basis):
    - ◆ A student who was primarily homeschooled but mistakenly reported on WDE684 field StudentHomeSchooled as “No”.
    - ◆ A student who was homeschooled until high school then enrolled (at greater than 50% of the school day) under an agreement between a district and the student’s parents that a regular Wyoming high school diploma is NOT being sought by the student.
- Please contact Leslie Zimmerschied at [leslie.zimmerschied@wyo.gov](mailto:leslie.zimmerschied@wyo.gov) for assistance with appropriate methods to submit documentation. Confidential student information should not be included in an email.

## DATA-REVIEW STRATEGY FOCUSED ON ACCOUNTABILITY

For Wyoming’s WAEA accountability metrics, you may want to focus review on the following student graduation status records:

- Students marked as grad rate type “4 year (on-time)” with graduation status “Non-Graduate”
  - Determine if there is paperwork which can be submitted during this active review window to show that the student should actually be removed from the cohort (valid transfer, emigration, or death).
- Students of any grad rate type, “3 year (early)”, “4 year (on-time)”, “5 year”, etc., marked as graduation status “Graduate” and who graduated in 2015-16 (exit year field contains “2016-17”)
  - Ensure any students mistakenly reported as having graduated (received a regular high school diploma) when they did not graduate are identified and reported to the WDE to avoid WDE950 accountability ramifications (WDE950 Graduating Student Transcript Collection).
- NOTE: “Non-Graduate” students of grad rate type “5 year” and “6 year” are NOT included in any current year accountability, as they were included in a prior year’s WAEA 4-year-extended graduation rates.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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