## Understanding Wyoming’s Cohort Graduation Rate

The release of graduation rates for the class of 2009-10 marks the first time that Wyoming has used a cohort four-year graduation rate. Wyoming is using this calculation in order to comply with the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.*  This graduation rate includes only “on-time” graduates who earn regular high school diplomas within four years of entering high school. This establishes a uniform and accurate way of calculating high school graduation rates that will be comparable across states.

Use of this formula is possible because all Wyoming students have been assigned unique student identifiers (called WISER IDs) since the 2005-06 school year. This procedure of uniquely identifying student records enables the tracking of students across districts and school years. School districts have been reporting student level enrollment data to the Wyoming Department of Education since Fall 2005, and student level dropout and completion data to the Department since 2006-07. More recently, federal regulation requires the reporting of explicit exit-reason categories for each student exit event to the WDE, including various types of valid, documented transfers.

The on-time graduation cohort year is assigned as the end of the fourth school year after (and including) the school year in which a student is first enrolled in 9th grade in a Wyoming public school. A transfer into a cohort occurs when a student first enrolls in a Wyoming public school in any high school grade, 9 through 12. A transfer out of a cohort occurs when a student leaves a school and enrolls in another school or in an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma. Federally defined documentation requirements exist to validate the reporting of a student as having transferred to another diploma-awarding educational program or to a home schooling environment. A student who is retained in grade, enrolls in a GED program, or leaves school for any other reason may not be counted in the four-year or extended-year graduation rate as a transfer and must remain in the original cohort (i.e., must be included in the denominator of the graduation rate for that cohort) (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)(2)).

The following formula provides an example of the four-year graduation rate for the cohort entering 9th grade for the first time in the fall of the 2006-07 school year. The expected four-year (on-time) graduation date for this cohort is the end of the 2009-10 school year.

For students who moved between Wyoming public schools, student records were updated to reflect the correct district and building location. These students were considered "transfers out" of the district/building they left and "transfers in" to the district/building they entered. Students who exited the public school system entirely (out of state, to non-public school, or home school) or died at any time during the four-year period are removed from the cohort.

Exit Type Codes are used by schools to determine the reason a student leaves the school system for any cause. Full explanations of each Exit Code can be found in the [WDE684 Guidebook](http://www.k12.wy.us/wise/Documents/CurrentDocs/WDE684GuidebookOctober2010.pdf). A brief listing of each code is found at the end of this document, in Appendix A.

Students who graduate earlier than their cohort are 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.

Students who graduate during a summer session and complete their diploma requirements prior to the start of the next school year are counted with the previous spring graduates. For example, a student who receives their diploma on 8/10/2010 will be counted as a graduate in the 2009-10 school year. A student who completes on 10/15/2010 will be counted as a graduate in the 2010-11 school year.

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 required to be reported to the public as general information and for research use, are used in federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations for schools and districts, and are reported to the United States Department of Education and for use in federal reports such as National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) state profiles.

The Wyoming Department of Education plans to calculate and publish five-year graduation rates for the 2009-10 cohort in December 2011. This rate will include students who entered 9th grade for the first time in the fall of the 2006-07 school year and earned a regular high school diploma by the end of the 2010-11 school year.

## How to use the cohort graduation rate

Graduation rate reporting can be used to illustrate trends in graduation rates among specific student populations. Educators, parents, and community leaders can work to address the risk factors which are most prevalent within those populations.

Graduation rate reporting should also be used to inform parents, educators, and policy leaders about trends in graduation rates in each high school and district. Educators and policy makers can work to identify causes of low graduation rates and take steps to address the causes. School Board members and local community leaders can prioritize the need for interventions that improve graduation rates. Educators and policy makers can work to identify causes of high graduation rates and share that knowledge with others. Policy can be guided by knowing the circumstances under which students graduate at high rates.

## How to read the cohort graduation rate report

The 2009-10 cohort four-year graduation rate report includes data for the state, every district, and every building from which students graduate, and is divided into ten columns:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Column Name** | **Column Description** |
| **SCHOOL\_YEAR** | School Year, 2009-10 |
| **DATA\_SCOPE** | STATE, DISTRICT or SCHOOL level data |
| **DISTRICT\_ID** | District ID |
| **DISTRICT\_NAME** | District Name |
| **SCHOOL\_ID** | School ID (blank for state or district level records) |
| **SCHOOL\_NAME** | School Name (blank for state or district level records) |
| **REPORTING\_CATEGORY** | See below |
| **EXPECTED\_GRADUATES** | The number of students for which the district or school is accountable with an expected on-time graduation year of 2009-10 |
| **GRADUATES** | The number of these students graduating by 9/15/2010 |
| **GRADUATION\_RATE** | Graduation Rate = # Graduates / # Expected Graduates   * N/R indicates there fewer than 6 students and data are not reported to the public. |
|  |  |
|  | **REPORTING\_CATEGORY values** |
|  | All Students |
|  | ELL |
|  | Homeless |
|  | IEP |
|  | Lunch Eligible |
|  | Migrant |
|  | Gender—Female |
|  | Gender—Male |
|  | 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 |

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## Appendix A

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Last Reported Exit Type Code** | **Last Reported Exit Type** | **Graduation Status Determination for Students with an Expected On-Time (4 year) Graduation Year of 2009-10** |
| 108 | Graduated with a Wyoming "regular high school diploma" AND completed district defined college-bound course of study | "Graduate" (in most cases). If the student is reported as having graduated on or prior to 9/15/2010 (exit date) the student is a "Graduate", except in the rare cases where a subsequent enrollment record was submitted, or an updated graduation record indicating the student did not graduate until after 9/15/2010 was submitted, in which cases the student is a "Non-Graduate" for purposes of calculating the 2009-10 On-Time Graduation Rate |
| 124 | Graduated with a Wyoming "regular high school diploma" BUT WITHOUT having completed the district defined college-bound course of study | See Exit Type 108 above |
| blank | Actively enrolled student | "Non-Graduate". A student last reported as actively enrolled (with no further records submitted by the end of the 2009-10 school year) is a "Non-Graduate" at the reporting district and school |
| 132 | Completed school and received an "other" credential (other than a "regular high school diploma") | "Non-Graduate". Federal guidance mandates that only regular high-school diploma recipients be identified as having graduated for purposes of calculating graduation rates. Any student not graduating in 4 years but earning a diploma in more than 4 years will be included in the 5yr and/or 6yr graduation rates, as timing dictates |
| 140 | Dropped out, status unknown, or transfer not fully documented per federal requirements | "Non-Graduate", per federal guidance. |
| 159 | Discontinued schooling to participate in a GED or other education or training program that does not grant a "regular high school diploma" | "Non-Graduate", per federal guidance. |
| 167 | Expelled or involuntarily withdrawn without continuation of educational services | "Non-Graduate", per federal guidance. |
| 175 | Reached maximum age for services | "Non-Graduate", per federal guidance. |
| 248 | Enrolled in a foreign exchange program; student expected to return | "Non-Graduate". A student last reported as having enrolled in a foreign exchange program (with no further records submitted by the end of the 2009-10 school year) is a "Non-Graduate" at the reporting district and school |
| 310 | Attendance through end-of-year; grade level advanced | "Non-Graduate". A student last reported as having attended through the end of the year and not graduating by 9/15/2010 is a "Non-Graduate" at the reporting district and school because they did not graduate on-time. Other than the graduation exception, any transfer or exiting event taking place on or after 7/1/2010 is a 2010-11 exiting event, and does not change the accountability district and school for the 2009-10 school year |
| 329 | Attendance through end-of-year; retained in grade level | "Non-Graduate". Last reported exit status in 2009-10, see above discussion under exit type 310 |
| 345 | Transferred mid-year to a different public school in the same Wyoming district | "Non-Graduate". Last reported exit status in 2009-10, see above discussion under exit type 310 |
| 361 | Transferred to a public school in a different Wyoming district | "Non-Graduate". Last reported exit status in 2009-10. No subsequent enrollment record submitted by any Wyoming district following this exit event by 6/30/2010. Also see above discussion under exit type 310. NOTE: If your district has a transfer request from another Wyoming public district and believe that the student was subsequently enrolled in another Wyoming district prior to 6/30/2010, please contact the WDE and we will facilitate a decision process between the two districts involved. |
| All other types | Out of Wyoming public education transfers, emigration, or death | Excluded from graduation rate calculations. This student record not included in files as district has absolved responsibility for the student. |