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HIGH SCHOOL FIVE-YEAR GRADUATION RATES, WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM (WCPSS): 2009-10

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ABSTRACT

In 2009-10, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction was approved to include a five-year graduation rate as well as a four-year rate in determining if schools, districts, and the state made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the NCLB Act. This rate was based on the incoming 9th grade students of 2005-06. The denominator of the cohort remained the same for both the 2008-09 four-year and the 2009-10 five-year rate with an additional 296 graduates added to the numerator in the fifth year. The 2009-10 five-year district rate rose to 81.5% from a 2008-09 four-year rate of 78.4%. The subgroups with the largest increases were limited English proficient (9.8 percentage points), economically disadvantaged (7.8 percentage points), and students with disabilities subgroups (7.4 percentage points). Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American students had the largest rate increases among ethnic subgroups (6.6 and 5.5 percentage points, respectively).

BACKGROUND

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires public schools to report cohort graduation rates. This rate is used in determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for states, districts, and schools that have a graduating class. It is designated as the Other Academic Indicator (OAI). Prior to the 2009-10 school year, this cohort rate was a four-year rate. In 2009-10, the North Carolina OAI cohort graduation rate was redefined to include both a four-year or five-year rate. NCLB subgroups met their OAI target if either the four-year or five-year graduation rate was at least 80% or they made progress toward an 80% rate. Progress is defined as at least a two percentage point increase from one year to the next for the four-year cohort graduation rate, or at least a three percentage point increase from one year to the next for the five-year cohort graduation rate. See Haynie and Regan (2011) for a report of 2009-10 four-year graduation rates.

DISTRICT RESULTS

The 2009-10 five-year cohort graduation rate is defined as the percentage of students who entered the 9th grade *for the first time* during the 2005-06 school year and who earned a diploma by June of 2010. The number of students in the cohort (9,674) was set in 2008-09 for the four-year rate. The cohort included graduates, certificate completers, dropouts, and students still in school. Students who earn a certificate of completion are in the cohort but are not counted as graduates. The 2009-10 five-year rate was calculated by using the same denominator of 9,674 students and adding students of the 2008-09 cohort who graduated in 2009-10 to the numerator.

The number of graduates in the cohort increased by 296 students from 7,589 in 2008-09 to 7,885 in 2009-10. Of the 296, there were more males than females among the five-year graduates (167 to 129). For ethnic subgroups, Black/African American students added 153 graduates followed by White students (70 more graduates) and Hispanic/Latino students (53 more graduates). Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) had 150 five-year graduates, students with disabilities (SWD) had 82, and students with limited English proficiency (LEP) added 48 (Table 1).

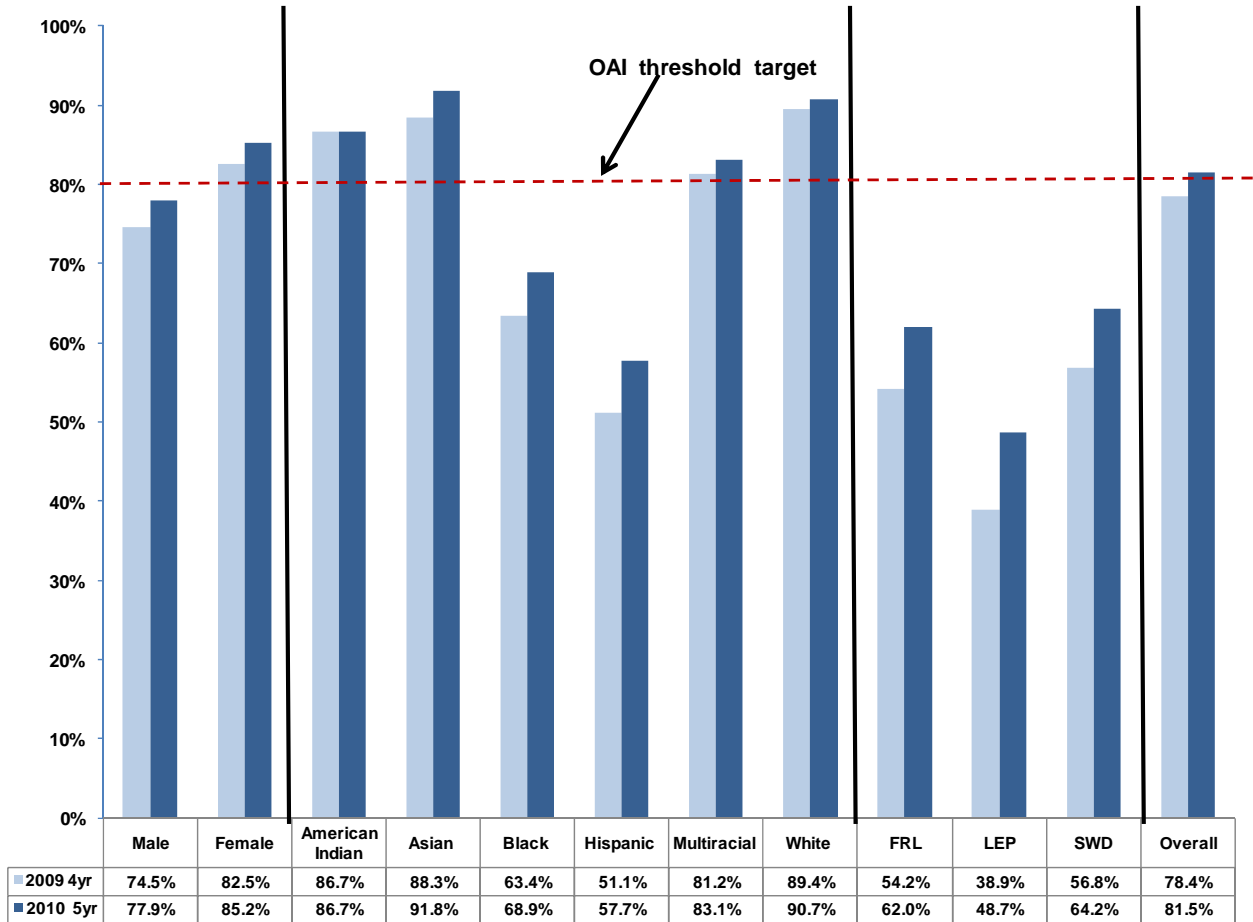
Table 1
Change in Number of Graduates
2009 4-year Rate to 2010 5-Year Rate

Subgroup	2009 4yr	2010 5yr	Change
Male	3,651	3,818	167
Female	3,938	4,067	129
American Indian	26	26	0
Asian	386	401	15
Black	1,765	1,918	153
Hispanic	412	465	53
Multiracial	212	217	5
White	4,788	4,858	70
FRL	1,035	1,185	150
LEP	190	238	48
SWD	629	711	82
Overall	7,589	7,885	296

Note: The cohort denominator was set at 9,674 students in 2008-09.

The overall district graduation rate improved from a four-year rate of 78.4% to a five-year rate of 81.5%. This 3.1 percentage point increase placed WCPSS over the 80% threshold needed to meet AYP’s OAI target in 2009-10. Among subgroups, the largest rate increases were LEP (9.8 percentage points), FRL (7.8 percentage points), and SWD (7.4 percentage points). Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American subgroups had the largest rate increases among ethnic subgroups (6.6 and 5.5 percentage points respectively, Figure 1.)

Figure 1
WCPSS 2010 5-Year Graduation Rates Compared to 2009 4-Year Graduation Rates



Note: Cohort is the same for each year.

COMPARISON RESULTS

Comparisons to the state rates and those of other selected districts reveal that the improvements in WCPSS five-year rates over four-year rates had a pattern consistent with both the state and other districts. The WCPSS five-year rate for all students and for male, female, Asian, Black/African American, Multiracial, White, and SWD subgroups were still above the state average. The five-year rates for Hispanic/Latino, FRL, and LEP subgroups stayed below the state rates (Figures 2-4).

Figure 2
2010 5-Year Graduation Rates by All Students and Gender
for WCPSS, NC, and Selected NC School Districts

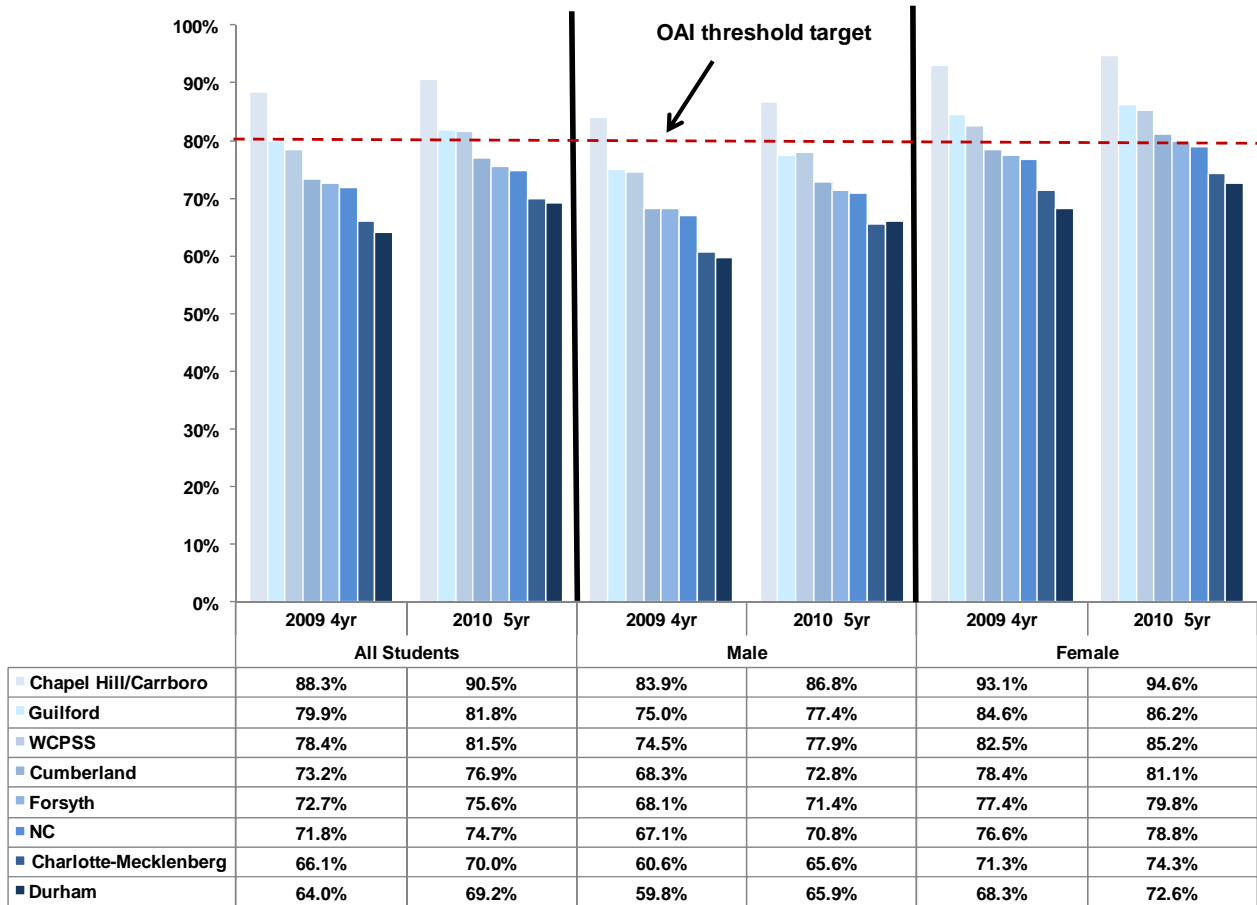


Figure 3

2010 5-Year Graduation Rates by Ethnicity for WCPSS, NC, and Selected NC School Districts

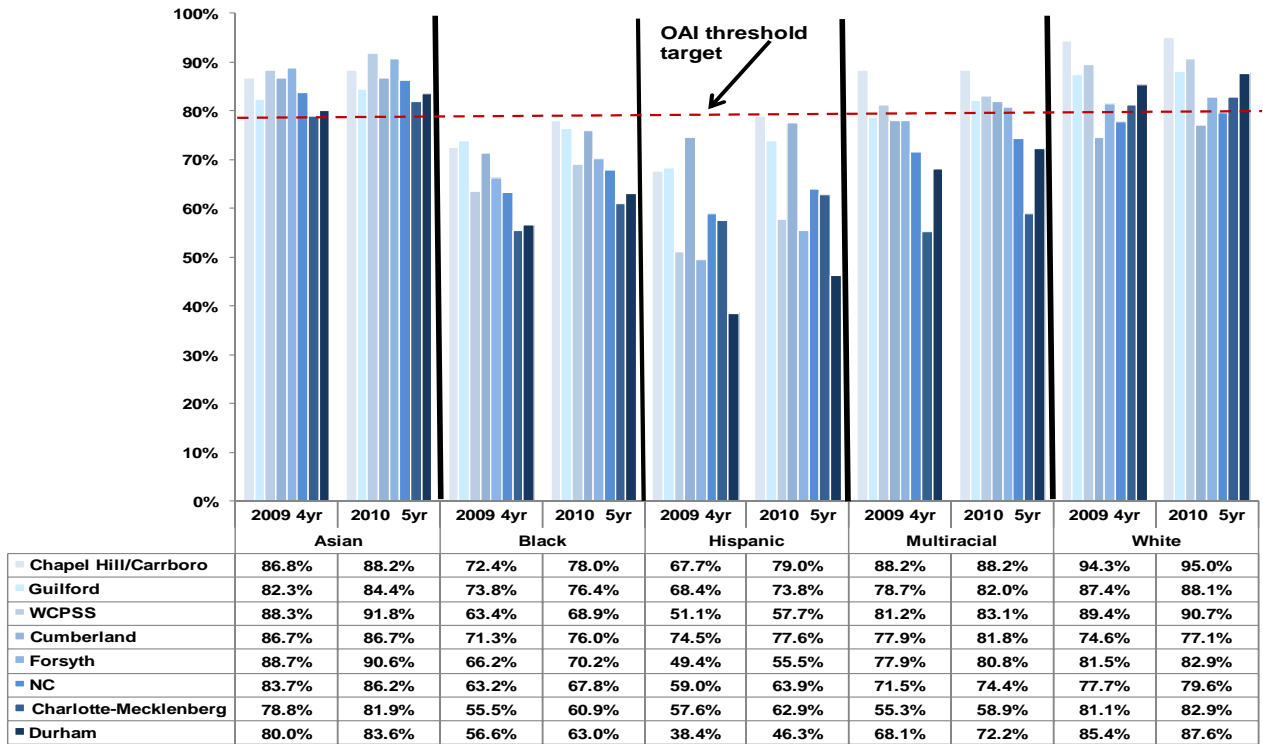
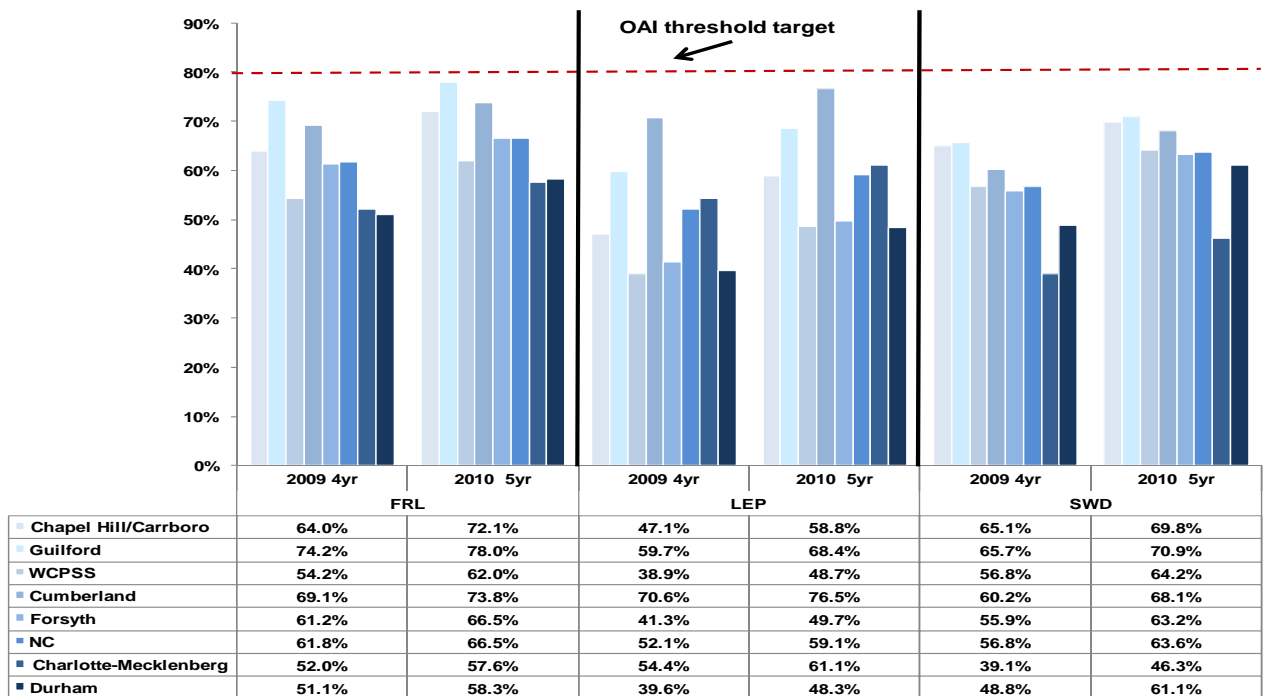


Figure 4

2010 5-Year Graduation Rates by FRL, LEP, and SWD subgroups for WCPSS, NC, and Selected NC School Districts



WCPSS SCHOOL RESULTS

All WCPSS high schools with a 2009 four-year graduation rate had a 2010 five-year graduation rate increase. The increases ranged from a high of seven percentage points at East Wake High School of Technology to three tenths of a percentage point increase at Green Hope High School. Two additional schools had rates above the threshold of 80% to bring the total number of schools above 80% to 18 out of 23.

Table 2
2010 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by School

Schools/Unit	2009 4yr	2010 5yr	Increase
NC	71.8%	74.7%	2.9%
WCPSS	78.4%	81.5%	3.1%
Apex	90.2%	92.2%	2.0%
Athens Drive	75.8%	80.3%	4.5%
Broughton	80.2%	82.2%	2.0%
Cary	78.5%	81.4%	2.9%
East Wake: Arts	85.2%	88.6%	3.4%
East Wake: Engineering	84.8%	87.9%	3.1%
East Wake: Health	84.0%	85.6%	1.6%
East Wake: Technology	80.7%	87.7%	7.0%
Enloe	85.5%	88.4%	2.9%
Fuquay-Varina	83.0%	84.9%	1.9%
Garner	71.8%	77.4%	5.6%
Green Hope	94.0%	94.3%	0.3%
Holly Springs	90.6%	92.2%	1.6%
Knightdale	73.8%	76.5%	2.7%
Leesville Road	87.5%	90.2%	2.7%
Middle Creek	80.4%	82.6%	2.2%
Millbrook	72.6%	75.7%	3.1%
Panther Creek	96.6%	97.7%	1.1%
Phillips	74.4%	79.1%	4.7%
Sanderson	76.7%	79.6%	2.9%
Southeast Raleigh	80.9%	84.8%	3.9%
Wake Forest-Rolesville	86.7%	87.3%	0.6%
Wakefield	85.0%	88.5%	3.5%

Note: Rates are not calculated for high schools that did not have a graduating class in 2009, the basis of the denominator of the cohort.

REFERENCES

Haynie, G., & Regan, R. (2011). *High school four-year graduation rates, Wake County Public School System (WCPSS): 2009-10*. Raleigh, NC: Wake County Public School System.