



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# Graduation and Dropout Statistics Annual Report

May 2017

Authorizing legislation: [RCW 28A.175.010](https://rcw.wa.gov/RCW/28A/28A.175.010)  
(<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.175&full=true#28A.175.010>)

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## Executive Summary

Graduation and dropout rates are important indicators of the status of K–12 education in Washington. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reports every year on rates for all students and sub-categories in the online report card.

OSPI uses the “adjusted cohort rate” methodology as required by the U.S. Department of Education. Results are produced for both 4-year and 5-year cohorts—or groups—of students. A student's cohort is based on the year they enter 9th grade for the first time. The calculation adjusts for students who transfer into a Washington public high school for the first time and join a cohort. Students are removed from the cohort if they transfer out of public school in Washington.

The adjusted cohort method tracks individual students over time and does not rely on estimates. It generally aligns with what most people think of as a graduation rate: Among a group of students who started high school together, what percent graduated in four (or five) years?

Washington’s 4-year graduation rate is 79.1 percent for students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2012–13. We call this the Class of 2016. The rate is an increase of one percent from the Class of 2015, which had a 4-year graduation rate of 78.1 percent.

The 5-year graduation rate for students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2011–12 is 81.9 percent. This is an increase of almost one percent from the previous year. The 5-year rate for 2015 was 81.1 percent.

# Introduction

## Purpose

Under the guidelines of state law, RCW 28A.175.010, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to report annually on the educational progress of public school students in grades 7–12. Federal guidelines provided by the U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf>, issued under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), require all states to determine adjusted cohort graduation results for students. To meet the state and federal reporting requirements, the OSPI prepares an annual report summarizing the enrollment activity of students in school grades 7–12 and adjusted cohort results for students.

## Definitions

**Adjusted Cohort:** A group of students identified as beginning 9th grade in a specified year. Students are included in the cohort based on when they first enter 9th grade, regardless of their expected graduation year. The cohort of entering 9th graders is “adjusted” for transfers in and out of high school through the next four and five years.

**Graduate:** A student who earns a high school diploma, a high school diploma with modifications allowed under a student’s Individualized Education Plan, or an associate degree from a community or technical college.

**Dropout:** A student who leaves school for any reason, except death, before completing school with a high school diploma or transferring to another school with a known exit reason. A student is considered a dropout regardless of when dropping out occurs (i.e., during or between regular school terms). A student who leaves during the year but returns during the reporting period is not considered a dropout.

For information about data collection, calculations, and verification, please see the 2011–12 report which details the graduation formulas.

## Graduation Rates

### Results for Adjusted 4-Year Cohort

The adjusted 4-year cohort graduation rate is calculated using the group of students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2012–13 and who are reported as graduates by the end of 2015–16.

**Table 1: Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (4-year)**

<b>Student Group</b>	<i>Received High School</i>	<i>Graduated w/ Associates</i>	Total All Graduates	Adjusted Cohort	<b>Adjusted 4-Year Cohort</b>
All Students	63,457	669	64,126	81,041	79.1%
Amer. Indian	761	5	766	1,264	60.6%
Asian	5,368	57	5,425	6,124	88.6%
Pacific Islander	490	1	491	720	68.2%
Black	2,641	1	2,651	3,749	70.7%
Hispanic	11,097	62	11,159	15,426	72.3%
White	39,369	487	39,856	48,901	81.5%
Two or More Races	3,728	47	3,775	4,849	77.9%
Special Education	5,617	5	5,622	9,669	58.1%
Limited English	2,642	8	2,650	4,604	57.6%
Low Income	28,596	218	28,814	41,495	69.4%
Migrant	1,400	9	1,409	2,092	67.4%
504 Plan	3,568	17	3,585	4,628	77.5%
Homeless	2,582	2	2,584	4,855	53.2%
Female	32,188	455	32,643	39,616	82.4%
Male	31,269	214	31,483	41,425	76.0%

Of the 64,126 students reported as graduates in the 4-year cohort, 487 students were reported as graduating in fewer than four years<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Students who graduate prior to February of the fourth year are defined as graduating in fewer than four years.

## Results for Adjusted 5-Year Cohort

The adjusted 5-year cohort graduation rate is calculated using the group of students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2010–12 and who are reported as graduates by the end of 2015–16. The table below shows the adjusted 5-year rate as well as the 4-year rate for the same cohort. The difference between the two columns represents the percentage of the cohort who graduated in their fifth year of high school.

**Table 2: Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (5-year)**

<b>Student Group</b>	<i>Received High School</i>	<i>Graduated w/ Associates</i>	Total All Graduates	Adjusted Cohort	<b>(Class 2015)</b>	
					<b>of Adjusted 5-Year Cohort</b>	<b>Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Rate</b>
All Students	65,494	465	65,959	80,564	<b>81.9%</b>	<b>78.1%</b>
Amer. Indian	802	3	805	1,282	<b>62.8%</b>	<b>56.4%</b>
Asian	5,510	18	5,528	6,100	<b>90.6%</b>	<b>87.8%</b>
Pacific Islander	529	2	531	737	<b>72.0%</b>	<b>67.0%</b>
Black	2,831	1	2,832	3,796	<b>74.6%</b>	<b>68.8%</b>
Hispanic	11,104	38	11,142	14,809	<b>75.2%</b>	<b>69.6%</b>
White	40,923	378	41,301	49,159	<b>84.0%</b>	<b>80.9%</b>
Two or More Races	3,794	25	3,819	4,674	<b>81.7%</b>	<b>77.9%</b>
Special Education	6,340	2	6,342	9,662	<b>65.6%</b>	<b>57.9%</b>
Limited English	2,984	7	2,991	4,593	<b>65.1%</b>	<b>55.8%</b>
Low Income	30,236	140	30,376	41,606	<b>73.0%</b>	<b>68.0%</b>
Migrant	1,608	1	1,618	2,267	<b>71.4%</b>	<b>64.4%</b>
504 Plan	3,334	8	3,342	4,135	<b>80.8%</b>	<b>76.3%</b>
Homeless	2,540	3	2,543	4,580	<b>55.5%</b>	<b>51.9%</b>
Female	33,240	294	33,534	39,409	<b>85.1%</b>	<b>81.6%</b>
Male	32,254	171	32,425	41,155	<b>78.8%</b>	<b>74.7%</b>

Of the 65,959 students reported as graduates in the 5-year cohort, 3,149 students were reported as graduating in the fifth year of the cohort.

## Dropout Rates

### Results for Adjusted 4-Year Cohort

Students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2012–13 and who are reported as dropouts within the 4-year timeframe are reported in the year in which they dropped out. For all students, the 2016 4-Year adjusted cohort dropout rate was 11.2%. This is a decrease of 0.2% from the 2015 4-Year rate of 11.9%. Across the various subgroups of students American Indian students had the highest 4-Year dropout rate, 24.9%. Asian students had the lowest 4-Year dropout rate, 5.7%.

**Table 3: Adjusted Cohort Dropouts (4-year)**

Student Group	Dropouts				Total Dropouts	(2016) Adjusted 4-Year Cohort
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4		
All Students	458	903	2,186	5,927	9,474	11.7%
Amer. Indian	12	35	82	186	315	24.9%
Asian	36	40	83	192	351	5.7%
Pacific Islander	8	12	23	73	116	16.1%
Black	28	41	94	357	520	13.9%
Hispanic	125	267	546	1,581	2,519	16.3%
White	230	453	1,230	3,146	5,059	10.3%
Two or More Races	19	55	128	390	592	12.2%
Special Education	50	150	391	1,103	1,694	17.5%
Limited English	64	156	237	590	1,047	22.7%
Low Income	274	668	1,675	4,600	7,217	17.4%
Migrant	22	48	96	252	418	20.0%
504 Plan	6	38	110	331	485	10.5%
Homeless	21	88	273	941	1,323	27.3%
Female	236	378	882	2,423	3,919	9.9%
Male	222	525	1,304	3,504	5,555	13.4%

## Results for Adjusted 5-Year Cohort

Students identified as entering 9th grade for the first time in 2011–12 and who are reported as dropouts within the 5-year timeframe are reported in the year in which they dropped out. The 2016 5-Year adjusted cohort dropout rate was 14.8%. This rate decreased 0.7% from the 2015 5-Year rate of 15.5%. Females had a 5-Year dropout rate of 12.1%. Males had a 5-Year dropout rate of 17.3%.

**Table 4: Adjusted Cohort Dropouts (5-year)**

Student Group	Dropouts		Dropouts		Dropouts	Total	(2016)
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Dropout	Adjusted 5-Year Dropout
All Students	423	941	1,959	4,781	3,797	11,901	14.8%
Amer. Indian	12	30	70	185	114	411	32.1%
Asian	32	37	50	159	135	405	6.6%
Pacific Islander	7	13	32	64	64	180	24.4%
Black	34	58	89	308	268	757	19.9%
Hispanic	129	228	511	1,166	1,023	3,057	20.6%
White	201	522	1,108	2,639	1,939	6,409	13.0%
Two or More Races	16	53	99	260	250	678	14.5%
Special Education	42	154	372	822	794	2,184	22.6%
Limited English	74	121	242	481	394	1,312	28.6%
Low Income	274	693	1,528	3,595	3,112	9,202	22.1%
Migrant	22	56	101	215	157	551	24.3%
504 Plan	9	32	82	243	235	601	14.5%
Homeless	36	89	234	640	643	1,642	35.9%
Female	205	410	815	1,844	1,497	4,771	12.1%
Male	218	531	1,144	2,937	2,300	7,130	17.3%



## Results for Annual Dropouts Grades 7–12

The table below represents students who were enrolled in grades 7–12 during the 2015–16 school year and whose final status after that year was dropout. Note that the annual dropout data below is based on students' reported grade levels and not on graduation cohorts since those are not established until students enter 9th grade for the first time. This dropout rate is an annual snapshot for the 2015–16 school year for all students, rather than a look over multiple years for a specific group of students. Students reported in grades 7–12 with an expected year of graduation of 2016 or later, are included in this dropout rate.

**Table 5: Annual Dropout Rates**

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Grade 7</b>	<b>Grade 8</b>	<b>Grade 9</b>	<b>Grade 10</b>	<b>Grade 11</b>	<b>Grade 12</b>
All Students	1.5%	2.1%	2.1%	2.9%	4.5%	7.9%
Amer. Indian	3.8%	5.7%	4.4%	8.6%	10.2%	16.1%
Asian	1.0%	1.8%	1.2%	1.3%	1.6%	3.4%
Pacific Islander	3.7%	4.0%	2.8%	6.1%	7.8%	13.9%
Black	3.6%	4.4%	3.8%	4.4%	6.1%	10.7%
Hispanic	1.8%	2.3%	2.8%	3.7%	6.1%	11.2%
White	1.2%	1.7%	1.7%	2.4%	3.9%	6.9%
Two or More Races	1.7%	2.6%	2.2%	3.6%	5.0%	9.2%
Special Education	1.8%	2.5%	2.5%	4.0%	6.3%	11.3%
Limited English	2.1%	2.7%	4.4%	5.5%	7.9%	17.4%
Low Income	2.0%	2.6%	3.1%	4.5%	6.8%	11.9%
Migrant	1.9%	1.7%	3.6%	4.8%	7.1%	12.2%
504 Plan	1.4%	2.0%	1.7%	2.3%	3.7%	5.4%
Homeless	5.9%	9.0%	8.1%	10.7%	12.9%	18.2%
Female	1.5%	2.1%	2.0%	2.7%	3.9%	6.5%
Male	1.5%	2.1%	2.1%	3.1%	5.0%	9.2%

Table 6 shows the number of students associated with each dropout reason, by grade. It also shows the percent of dropouts overall with that given reason code. The most common categories associated with dropouts are unknown and unconfirmed transfers.

**Table 6: Annual Dropouts - Reasons for Dropping Out**

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total Dropouts	Percent of Total
Attended School 4 Years, Did Not Graduate	0	0	1	6	26	694	727	4.4%
Lacked Progress or Poor Grades	4	15	74	120	339	596	1,148	7.0%
School Not for Me, Chose to Stay Home	48	62	138	203	395	593	1,439	8.7%
Married, Family Support or Child Related	0	1	5	18	20	34	78	0.5%
Offered Training or Chose to Work	0	0	13	27	52	103	195	1.2%
Left to Take GED	0	0	4	32	138	184	358	2.2%
Expelled or Suspended	29	44	45	46	52	51	267	1.6%
Drug or Alcohol Related	0	0	7	9	5	11	32	0.2%
Unconfirmed Transfer	694	816	660	714	790	741	4,415	26.8%
Dropped for Other or Unknown Reason	426	647	746	1,175	1,823	2,995	7,812	47.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,201</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>1,693</b>	<b>2,350</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>6,002</b>	<b>16,471</b>	

## Conclusion

At the direction of the U.S. Department of Education, Washington uses the adjusted cohort graduation calculation to track a single cohort of students over four or five years. This report summarizes the graduation rates following the 2015–16 school year.

The adjusted cohort method yields a 79.1 percent 4-year graduation rate for the Class of 2016, students who first began 9th grade in 2012–13. This is slightly higher than the Class of 2015, whose 4-year graduation rate was 78.1 percent. An additional 3.8 percent of students in the Class of 2015 graduated during their fifth-year of high school (2015–16) for a total 5-year rate of 81.9 percent. The cumulative dropout rate, after four years, for students entering 9th grade in 2012–13 was 11.7 percent.

# APPENDICES

Appendices A through I are available as electronic files under *Graduation and Dropout Statistics* at <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin>.

- Appendix A: State Level (2016 Adjusted Cohort 4-Year and 5-Year)
- Appendix B: County Level (2016 Adjusted Cohort 4-Year)
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## **Appendix J: Estimated Benefits from Changes in Washington State’s High School Graduation Rate**

*This appendix was prepared by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy.*

*Estimate prepared December 2016.*

The 2010 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to “calculate an annual estimate of the savings resulting from any change compared to the prior school year in the extended graduation rate.”<sup>2</sup>

To produce this estimate, WSIPP uses its economic model that assesses benefits and costs of public policies and outcomes. Monetary estimates are calculated for three perspectives: 1) benefits that accrue solely to high school graduates, 2) benefits received by taxpayers from having other people graduate from high school, and 3) any other measurable (non-graduate and non-taxpayer) monetary benefits. For technical details about the WSIPP model, visit

<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/TechnicalDocumentation/WsippBenefitCostTechnicalDocumentation.pdf>

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) calculates a five-year high school graduation rate, which includes students who take more than four years to graduate. In the 2014–15 school year, this graduation rate was 81.1 percent; in 2015–16, the rate was 81.9 percent, an increase of 0.8 percentage points, representing 622 additional graduates (see Exhibit 1).

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<sup>2</sup> RCW 28A.175.010 (8)

## Change in the Five-Year High School Graduation Rate in Washington State, 2014-15 to 2015-16

	Five-Year Graduation Rate	Students in Cohort	Graduates (Rate * Cohort)
<b>Actual Graduates (2015–16 rate)</b>	81.9%	80,564	65,959
<b>Hypothetical Graduates (based on the 2014–15 rate)</b>	81.1%	80,564	65,337
<b><i>Difference</i></b>	<i>+0.8%</i>		<i>+622</i>

*Sources: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Washington State Institute for Public Policy*

Using WSIPP’s benefit-cost model, we estimate that the per-student monetary benefit associated with graduating from high school is \$573,393 (see Exhibit 2). The benefits accrue over an individual’s lifetime and the dollar amount is in net present value terms, in 2015 dollars.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> To calculate net present value, we use a .035 discount rate.

## Lifetime, Net Present Value, 2015 Dollars

	\$275,817	\$158,817	\$138,759	\$573,393
<b>Components of the benefits</b>				
Higher Earnings	\$309,301	\$140,460	\$172,679	\$662,441
Lower Crime	\$0	\$646	\$1,859	\$2,505
Health Care Costs	(\$9,308)	\$33,766	(\$20,515)	\$3,944
Costs of Higher Education	(\$24,176)	(\$16,056)	(\$15,265)	(\$55,497)

*Source: Washington State Institute for Public Policy Benefit-Cost Model. Totals may not add due to rounding.*

About half of the benefits go to the graduates themselves in the form of increased earnings, for which they pay taxes (represented as benefits to taxpayers). Some of these gains in earnings come from the greater rate at which high school graduates attend postsecondary institutions. The costs incurred in higher education to achieve the increased earnings are distributed across the funders of higher education. Graduating from high school is also associated with less crime. Additionally, individuals who graduate from high school are more likely to use private health care services but less likely to use publicly funded health care services.

For the 622 additional graduates in 2015–16, the total estimated monetary benefit is \$356.7 million.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 622 x \$574,393 = \$356,650,673

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