

State Data Use Spotlight: West Virginia

Challenge: How do we improve school and local education agency (LEA) access to and use of data to increase the graduation rates for students with disabilities?

Historically, students with disabilities graduate from high school at lower rates than peers without disabilities. As a result, many students with disabilities also have poor postsecondary or adult outcomes, such as unemployment or employment in low-paying jobs. This state spotlight presents strategies the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) is using to increase school and local education agency (LEA) access to and awareness of data to make decisions to improve the graduation rate for students with disabilities.

State Context

West Virginia's Part B state-identified measurable result (SiMR) focuses on increasing the graduation rate of students with individualized education programs (IEPs). In 2014, the four-year standard diploma graduation rate among students with disabilities was 70.27%, while the rate among all students was 84.46%. By the 2017–18 school year, West Virginia aims to close the graduation gap and increase the number of students with disabilities who graduate with a standard high school diploma in four years to 81.44%. In order to assure students with disabilities graduate college and career ready, the state aimed to focus efforts at both the middle and high school grades. To achieve this goal, WVDE piloted the West Virginia GRADUATION 20/20 initiative in 2014–15 and began full implementation the following school year.

Public School Facts: West Virginia

Districts: 57
Schools: 695
Students: 273,200
Students with IEPs: 16.2%

(WVDE, 2016-2017 SY, K-12)

Strategies for Success

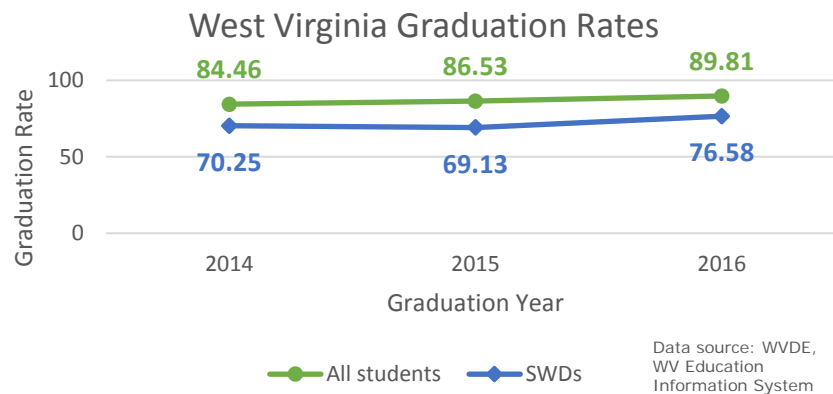
West Virginia GRADUATION 20/20 is a data-driven initiative based on two evidence-based practices: the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities's (NDPC-SD) Dropout Prevention Intervention Framework and the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center's Transition Planning and Services Innovation Configuration. These evidence-based practices were selected for two reasons. First, the approaches provided clear implementation steps. Second, the implementation steps offered enough flexibility to allow each school to customize the initiative through data-driven decision making. An integral part of the process was for each participating school to conduct analyses and select strategies to improve graduation outcomes for students with disabilities. WVDE implemented the following strategies to improve school and LEA access to and use of data:

- *Access to data reporting and tracking platforms.* ZoomWV, ZoomWV-e, and an Early Warning System were made available to schools and LEAs. ZoomWV is a public access site that provides aggregated data in easy-to-understand reports, while ZoomWV-e is a secure log-in portal that allows educators to view aggregated and student-level data. The Early Warning System tracks multiple data points to provide risk levels for potential dropouts. All three systems are populated by data entered at the local level into the West Virginia Educational Information System and include data for enrollment, attendance, graduation, dropout, assessment, course grades, and disciplinary referrals.
- *A local and individualized approach.* WVDE worked to target data use efforts in individual schools (e.g., school-level data analysis, development of school action plans with measurable outcomes, and individualized timelines).
- *Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) support.* WVDE funded RESA-based regional school support specialists in each region who provided professional learning and technical assistance in areas such as dropout prevention, transition services, and data analysis. Sites were provided two years of intensive support with the goal of building internal capacity.
- *Support from an in-house evaluation and research specialist.* The West Virginia Office of Special Education funds one evaluation and research specialist from the Office of Research, Accountability, and Data Governance to provide support in evaluation and data visualization.
- *Incentives for schools.* Schools that agreed to participate were given a \$2,500 stipend as incentive. Stipends were used for activities such as professional learning, classroom substitutes, back-to-school kickoffs, college campus visits, and books.

Impact of Strategies

Evidence suggests that the approaches used by WVDE were successful (see Figure 1). Since the 2013–14 school year, the overall percentage of students with disabilities who graduated in four years with a regular diploma has increased by 6.33 percentage points. Furthermore, the graduation gap between all students and students with disabilities has decreased from 14.2 percentage points in 2014 to 13.2 percentage points in 2016.

Figure 1.



Since the beginning of the pilot in 2014, 72 high schools have joined the West Virginia GRADUATION 20/20 initiative. West Virginia expanded the initiative to feeder middle schools of participating high schools; there are currently 20 middle schools participating. Future plans include adding more middle schools and potentially including elementary schools in the West Virginia GRADUATION 20/20 initiative.

Recommendations for States Facing Similar Challenges

- Leverage current resources and capitalize on relationships with national technical assistance centers as well as in-house and regional staff.
- Pilot the initiative in a limited number of schools to discover barriers along with potential solutions and develop improved implementation resources.
- Garner the support of an initiative across all levels; WVDE used an MOU, which outlined expectations at the state, RESA, district, and school levels.
- Provide ongoing, consistent support and communication at all levels of the initiative.

- Create individualized reports or provide access to a data expert so that schools and LEAs may easily identify root causes of poor student performance and risk for dropout.
- Celebrate all successes, large and small. Provide a platform for schools to share their stories and to be acknowledged for their efforts.

Available Resources

- National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), Technical Assistance State Facilitators (Find your state on the map [here.](#))
- NCSI Data Use Team Technical Assistance Support (Contact: Kristin Ruedel at kruedel@air.org)
- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition ([NTACT](#))
- [National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities](#)
- Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy) Data Visualization [Toolkit](#)
- CEEDAR Center *Innovations Configuration* on [Transition](#)

About this resource: This resource was developed by members of the NCSI Data Use Service Area Team, including Kristin Ruedel (AIR), Gena Nelson (AIR), Tessie Bailey (AIR), and Diana Blackmon (WestEd), and in collaboration with Patricia Homberg Executive Director, Office Special Education, (WVDE), Susan Beck, Assistant Director, Office of Special Education, (WVDE), Debra Harless, Coordinator, (WVDE), and Amber Stohr, Coordinator, (WVDE). The content was developed under cooperative agreement number #H326R140006 (NCSI) from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government. Project officers: Perry Williams and Shedeh Hajghassemali.