

NEWS

Connecticut Department of Education

Dr. Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner

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Commissioner Calls for Action

New Formula, Unique Student Data Produce More Accurate State Graduation Rates

State Education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan today pledged new efforts to reduce Connecticut's dropout rates following the release of more accurate data on how many students actually complete high school in four years in Connecticut. The preliminary data indicate that the graduation rate for the class of 2009 is 79.3%. The Commissioner said he is engaged in conversations with the Governor and key legislators to seek legislative changes that help to address the issue.

"Over the past four years, the State Department of Education has been working to institute a new, more accurate system to track graduation rates of Connecticut students using unique student identifiers," said Commissioner McQuillan. "We have been able to remove duplication and error that comes with paper reporting."

Prior to this year, graduation rates could only be estimated from a combination of annual dropout data and self-reported aggregate graduate data. Starting with the graduating class of 2009, the Department is able to track an individual cohort, or group of students, from the initial entrance into 9th grade through to graduation with student-level data from the state's student information management system. This new system was created when Connecticut and 49 other states signed an agreement with the National Governors' Association to develop a new, more accurate and uniform system for tracking students.

"However, the new data show that the graduation rates in the state are worse than reported in previous years. For Black and Hispanic students, the rates are alarming; we must act now to do more."

"While we have made this a priority in recent years, we must approach this issue with a sense of urgency," said McQuillan. The Commissioner pointed out that just this past October, the Governor and the state Department of Education convened a Summit on Dropout Prevention, inviting 23 districts to begin the process of reducing dropout rates in their communities. The Department offered planning grants to help those districts with lower-than-average graduation rates to address the problem.

The Commissioner pointed out that the state must build on these efforts by:

- Moving up the effective date of a recent change in the law in order to prohibit 16-year-olds from withdrawing from school with permission from a parent or guardian, beginning July 1, 2010;
- Supporting Secondary School Reform which seeks to not only raise standards for all students but requires that districts implement the necessary student and family support systems in order to ensure each and every student will be successful in attaining these new, higher standards;
- Including support for dropout prevention in the Department's federal Race to the Top application to be submitted on June 1;
- Seeking legislation to change the date when the annual student census is taken (for purposes of calculating grants) from October 1 to January in order to encourage districts to keep students in school;
- Discouraging districts from using Adult Education as an alternative high school for 16- and 17-year-olds by encouraging districts to create more flexible options for students who want to stay in school but need more flexible hours in order to work to support their families, such as offering online courses and credit recovery programs.

Attached are preliminary data on graduation rates for the graduating class of 2009 in Connecticut.

Data Analysis Users' Guide

This guide provides data users terms and their definitions used in this analysis.

Terms and their definitions

The Cohort Count is as of the end of 2008-2009 school year.

4-Year Graduation Rate is the number of High School Students who receive a standard diploma within four years out of students who were first-time freshmen four years ago.

Still Enrolled are students who are part of cohort but have not graduated, repeating a year.

Non-Completers includes students who earned a certificate of attendance

Other includes students who dropped out (including those who enrolled in a GED program,) transferred to postsecondary education, and have an unknown status.

SEE CHART NEXT PAGE

2009 Connecticut Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates

	2009 Cohort #	Graduates	Non-Graduates		
		4-year graduation rate	Still Enrolled	Non completers (Certificate of attendance)	Other
All	43,648	79.3%	6.7%	0.3%	13.7%
Ethnicity					
Hispanic	6,688	58.1%	9.4%	0.5%	32.0%
Non Hispanic	36,960	83.2%	6.2%	0.2%	10.4%
Race					
African - American	6,174	66.2%	10.2%	0.9%	22.7%
Native American	107	73.8%	7.6%	0.0%	18.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,526	82.4%	4.2%	0.0%	13.4%
White/Caucasian	29,153	86.8%	5.4%	0.1%	7.7%
Gender					
Male	22,405	75.9%	8.2%	0.5%	15.4%
Female	21,243	82.9%	4.9%	0.1%	12.1%
Income					
Eligible for free/reduced lunch	11,074	59.9%	11.0%	0.9%	28.1%
Not eligible for free/reduced lunch	32,574	85.6%	5.5%	0.1%	8.8%
English Proficiency					
LEP ^a	2,122	53.4%	7.5%	0.0%	39.1%
Non-LEP	41,526	80.6%	6.6%	0.4%	12.4%
Special Education Status					
IEP ^b	5,071	61.3%	19.7%	0.5%	18.5%
Non-IEP	38,577	81.7%	4.9%	0.3%	13.1%

^aLimited English Proficiency

^bIndividual Education Plan

Row and column percentages may not total 100% because of round-offs