

Hillsboro School District: Understanding Graduation Rates

BACKGROUND

Since reporting requirements were implemented under No Child Left Behind, states have calculated graduation rates using varying methods, creating inconsistent data from one state to the next. Many states' calculations (Oregon's included) were based on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) formula. The NCES graduation rate was based on outcomes within a single school year, dividing the number of graduates with a regular diploma in that year by the sum of the number of graduates with a regular diploma and the number of students in grades 9-12 who dropped out that year (not just seniors who dropped out). ***Note that students who were continuing on in some sort of educational program—credit recovery, GED, etc.—or those who earned alternate diplomas were not included in the NCES graduation rate.*** Other states likely used a variation of the NCES formula of graduates minus “drop-outs” to determine their rates (perhaps just focusing on seniors who dropped out in a given year).

To address and rectify these inconsistencies and get a clearer picture of outcomes over time, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) announced its decision to begin reporting high school graduation rates using a more rigorous, uniform four-year adjusted cohort rate as of the 2010-11 school year. A *cohort* is defined as the set of students that enter ninth grade in a given school year; the *cohort graduation rate* is the percentage of students in that cohort that graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma—determined by dividing those graduates by the number of students who entered high school four years earlier, adjusted for transfers in and out.

Sample 4-year cohort graduation rate = Number of students in the adjusted cohort who earn regular high school diplomas in 2010 (numerator)

Number of first-time 9th graders in 2006-07 adjusted for transfers in and out (denominator)

Note that students who take longer than four school years to graduate, those earning adult high school diplomas, modified diplomas, extended diplomas, general educational development (GED) certificates or other high school credentials are included in the denominator only and are therefore considered non-completers, along with students who drop out.

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) began reporting the cohort graduation rate two years in advance of the USDOE; in the spring of 2010, they released the 2008-09 graduation rates using both the NCES calculation and the cohort calculation for comparison, and to begin explaining the transition to schools and stakeholders.

COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS

The cohort graduation rate, while providing useful, standardized data, might give the casual observer an incorrect picture of how our schools are performing. Those used to the old calculation of graduation rates with percentages in the 90s might be shocked to see the new rates with percentages in the 70s and 80s and conclude that our educational system is slipping or sub-par compared to others.

We would contend that our system continually improves its educational delivery to all students, as well as its tracking and provision of alternative options for those who need additional assistance. Students who continue taking classes and working toward their goals are a testament to the flexibility of our system and variety of options available, not an indicator of a failed system.

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NCES Graduation Rate

2007-08	Total	White	Latino	Black	Asian	Limited English (LEP)	Students with Disabilities
District	90.2%	95.2%	77.7%	88.2%	95.3%	71.0%	81.3%
Century	96.3%	97.5%	86.4%	100%	100%	87.5%	84.9%
Glencoe	94.8%	97.3%	86.7%	100%	92.3%	80.0%	78.8%
Hilhi	92.0%	95.6%	84.1%	85.7%	100%	73.1%	79.4%
Liberty	86.8%	93.1%	77.8%	83.3%	95.0%	61.9%	85.2%

NCES Graduation Rate

2008-09	Total	White	Latino	Black	Asian	LEP	Students with Disabilities
District	91.6%	94.9%	83.1%	95.8%	95.9%	69.5%	79.3%
Century	97.2%	98.7%	91.6%	85.7%	100%	89.3%	78.6%
Glencoe	95.9%	97.9%	89.7%	100%	100%	79.0%	87.8%
Hilhi	93.1%	97.8%	83.5%	100%	100%	52.4%	79.4%
Liberty	92.6%	95.5%	85.5%	100%	100%	81.5%	85.7%

Compared to...

Cohort Graduation Rate

2008-09	Total	White	Latino	Black	Asian	LEP	Students with Disabilities
District	75.6%	81.5%	61.6%	70.0%	89.2%	57.1%	47.7%
Century	78.1%	81.7%	65.0%	66.7%	88.4%	65.5%	37.8%
Glencoe	82.6%	89.1%	68.8%	62.5%	85.7%	54.1%	58.1%
Hilhi	77.8%	84.6%	62.7%	100%	94.1%	59.7%	48.4%
Liberty	74.3%	80.6%	60.7%	85.7%	92.6%	55.0%	53.9%

NCES Graduation Rate

2009-10	Total	White	Latino	Black	Asian	LEP	Students with Disabilities
District	88.2%	92.3%	82.1%	76.7%	99.2%	76.7%	80.5%
Century	97.0%	98.5%	94.4%	86.7%	100%	91.7%	88.9%
Glencoe	97.4%	98.6%	94.9%	100%	100%	94.1%	85.7%
Hilhi	92.7%	94.8%	86.1%	100%	100%	70.6%	86.1%
Liberty	97.3%	98.2%	94.1%	100%	100%	100%	86.7%

Compared to...

Cohort Graduation Rate

2009-10	Total	White	Latino	Black	Asian	LEP	Students with Disabilities
District	76.5%	81.6%	65.3%	69.7%	91.4%	57.7%	47.3%
Century	83.2%	84.1%	73.1%	86.7%	95.1%	78.1%	58.3%
Glencoe	82.7%	86.7%	74.2%	75.0%	92.3%	70.4%	32.6%
Hilhi	75.3%	84.1%	58.9%	71.4%	95.8%	49.2%	50.8%
Liberty	75.2%	80.2%	66.3%	20.0%	92.0%	54.2%	41.9%

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Cohort Graduation Rate

2010-11	Total	White	Latino	Black	Asian	LEP	Students with Disabilities
District	78.2%	82.6%	66.4%	78.4%	91.5%	63.1%	54.2%
Century	84.5%	88.2%	67.1%	90.0%	91.5%	64.5%	64.2%
Glencoe	80.6%	83.7%	68.9%	100%	94.4%	55.0%	53.5%
Hilhi	79.0%	87.6%	62.2%	75.0%	100%	61.4%	62.2%
Liberty	82.7%	84.2%	83.7%	78.6%	90.5%	80.6%	41.9%
Statewide	67.2%	69.9%	57.4%	51.9%	76.5%	51.6%	41.9%

Dropout Rate

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
District	3.4%	2.9%	3.5%	2.0%	2.3%	1.9%	2.8%	3.7%
Century	4.4%	2.6%	3.2%	1.0%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%
Glencoe	1.8%	1.8%	2.3%	1.1%	1.3%	1.0%	0.5%	1.4%
Hilhi	3.8%	4.0%	2.7%	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%
Liberty	3.8%	3.5%	3.7%	2.5%	3.3%	1.6%	0.5%	0.3%

Also consider the great work done by students in our alternative programs in the 2010-11 school year:

- a. GED: 186 students served. There were 44 students who completed the credits necessary to take the test to receive a GED. The GED program is open-ended so students remain a part of the program as long as they are attending regularly and making progress. They are usually given two years if they have signed a waiver.
- b. TOPS (Transition Options Program): 427 students served. TOPS is a credit recovery program, so students may graduate while in the program or transition back to their home school.
 - a. 37 diplomas awarded in 2010-11
 - b. 113 credit-earning fifth-year seniors
 - c. 45 transition students earned credits while waiting for another option or to return to their home school
 - d. 232 additional credit recovery students earned a total of 255.5 credits.
- c. 9th-12th Program: 114 students served; 24 graduates in 2010-11. Students are enrolled every quarter depending on the number of students who graduate, move, or leave. Students stay in the program until they receive the number of credits needed for graduation, so it's not uncommon to have 19, 20, even 21-year-olds in classes. The program can serve up to 90 students at a time.
- d. Pearl Program (expelled students Grades 9-12): 33 students served.
 - a. 4 students graduated
 - b. 5 students carried over since their expulsions continue from the year before
 - c. The remaining 24 students returned to their neighborhood schools this fall, moved out of the district, were homeschooled, went to PCC, or entered rehab.

Data Notes:

- District rates can vary from individual school rates because they take into account students who are considered ours, but who may not be enrolled at one of our four high schools.
- Reports can be accessed on the Oregon Department of Education website at www.ode.state.or.us.