

# High School Graduation Rate

## DEFINITION

*High school graduation rate* is the percentage of students who graduate from high school within four years of entering, calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer by the total number of students in the cohort (the cohort is the number of first-time entering ninth graders in 2004-2005 adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the four years).

## SIGNIFICANCE

High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment. The path to high school graduation begins early. Research indicates that children who attend high-quality preschool programs are more likely to graduate from high school.<sup>1</sup>

Dropping out is almost always a long process rather than a sudden event. Warning signs that a student may drop out include: repeating one or more grades, failing one or more core subjects in the ninth grade, ongoing patterns of absenteeism or tardiness, suspensions, low academic achievement, high mobility, delinquent behavior and disengagement from school. In particular, research has consistently shown that students who are retained in school, even at the elementary level, are more likely to drop out than similar students who were not held back.<sup>2,3,4,5,6,7</sup>

Rhode Island public high schools lose 20 students from the “graduation pipeline” every school day.<sup>8</sup> Student achievement and graduation rates can be improved with strong school leadership, effective teachers, the use of data-based early warning systems to identify at-risk students, access to appropriate and timely academic and social supports, meaningful connections with adults in the school, improved communication with parents, and implementation of rigorous, engaging and relevant curricula.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

Adults without a high school diploma in Rhode Island are more than 4.5 times as likely to be unemployed as those who receive a bachelor’s degree.<sup>12</sup> In Rhode Island in 2007, the median income of adults without a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) certificate was \$22,087 compared to \$29,986 for people with a high school degree, and \$48,464 for those with a bachelor’s degree.<sup>13</sup>

2005 High School Graduation Rates	
	<b>2005</b>
<b>RI</b>	71%
<b>US</b>	71%
<b>National Rank*</b>	<i>30th</i>
<b>New England Rank**</b>	<i>6th</i>

\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. (2008). *Diplomas Count 2008 – Rhode Island state highlights 2008*. Retrieved February 3, 2009 from [www.edweek.org/go/dc08](http://www.edweek.org/go/dc08) *Diplomas Count* uses the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) method to calculate graduation rates.

## Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2008

	Four-Year Graduation Rate	Dropout Rate	% Completed GED	% of Students Still in School
All Students	74%	16%	3%	7%
Females	79%	13%	3%	5%
Males	69%	18%	4%	10%
English Language Learners	59%	27%	1%	13%
Students with Disabilities	56%	25%	4%	15%
Students without Disabilities	79%	13%	3%	5%
Low-Income Students	61%	24%	4%	11%
Higher-Income Students	86%	8%	2%	4%
White	78%	12%	3%	6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	74%	17%	3%	6%
Black	64%	21%	3%	12%
Hispanic	62%	25%	3%	10%
Native American	63%	22%	1%	14%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Class of 2008 four-year rates. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the class of 2008 was 74%, the dropout rate was 16%, 3% of students completed their GEDs within four years of entering high school and 7% were still in school in the fall of 2008. An additional 3% of students from the original class of 2007 cohort graduated in five years with the class of 2008.<sup>14</sup>

◆ Poverty is strongly linked to the likelihood of dropping out. Students in the core cities in Rhode Island are two and a half times more likely to drop out of high school than students in the remainder of the state.<sup>15</sup> Minority students are also more likely than White students to drop out of school. However, lower graduation rates in minority communities are mainly driven by higher poverty rates and lower rates of educational attainment among adults in the community.<sup>16</sup>

◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the class of 2008 was 69% for males and 79% for females.<sup>17</sup> While female students have lower dropout rates than males, national data show that female dropouts are significantly more likely to be unemployed and they earn less on average than male dropouts from the same racial and ethnic group.<sup>18</sup>

◆ Graduation and dropout rates for pregnant and parenting youth and youth in the foster care system in Rhode Island are not available at this time.

# High School Graduation Rate

Table 45.

High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2008

SCHOOL DISTRICT	COMMUNITY CONTEXT			FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES				
	% CHILDREN IN POVERTY	% MINORITY ENROLLMENT	% STUDENTS TAKING THE SAT	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL
Barrington	3%	5%	89%	239	95%	3%	2%	1%
Bristol-Warren	7%	6%	60%	318	80%	11%	2%	7%
Burrillville	9%	5%	55%	230	75%	12%	4%	9%
Central Falls	36%	85%	38%	305	52%	29%	2%	16%
Charlho	5%	5%	53%	310	84%	10%	1%	4%
Coventry	6%	3%	53%	458	83%	11%	2%	4%
Cranston	12%	24%	52%	907	82%	9%	4%	5%
Cumberland	6%	9%	63%	398	81%	10%	2%	8%
East Greenwich	4%	8%	82%	196	94%	2%	2%	3%
East Providence	12%	22%	47%	541	76%	18%	1%	6%
Exeter-West Greenwich	5%	4%	59%	195	87%	5%	3%	5%
Foster-Glocester	6%	3%	71%	261	87%	8%	3%	3%
Johnston	11%	16%	51%	212	78%	8%	8%	6%
Lincoln	7%	7%	64%	309	83%	12%	2%	3%
Middletown	6%	16%	57%	158	84%	6%	4%	6%
Narragansett	7%	7%	77%	117	94%	3%	1%	3%
New Shoreham	9%	8%	94%	15	100%	0%	0%	0%
Newport	16%	49%	60%	192	66%	22%	3%	9%
North Kingstown	7%	5%	70%	384	88%	6%	2%	4%
North Providence	11%	21%	54%	289	88%	5%	1%	6%
North Smithfield	5%	4%	66%	124	90%	2%	6%	2%
Pawtucket	22%	56%	52%	717	57%	26%	6%	11%
Portsmouth	4%	5%	70%	289	86%	4%	6%	4%
Providence	34%	88%	57%	2,379	63%	26%	2%	9%
Scituate	6%	2%	70%	164	84%	9%	4%	4%
Smithfield	5%	5%	60%	215	88%	6%	1%	5%
South Kingstown	5%	12%	72%	309	86%	8%	2%	4%
Tiverton	6%	2%	64%	199	83%	9%	5%	3%
Warwick	7%	10%	55%	985	72%	13%	4%	11%
West Warwick	13%	16%	45%	300	68%	19%	4%	10%
Westerly	7%	11%	64%	291	88%	7%	2%	4%
Woonsocket	25%	42%	43%	492	60%	28%	3%	9%
Davies Career and Technical	NA	39%	23%	189	68%	14%	3%	14%
DCYF	NA	71%	NA	193	4%	57%	24%	15%
MET School	NA	72%	4%	197	74%	13%	2%	11%
Beacon Charter	NA	25%	56%	50	60%	32%	6%	2%
Blackstone Academy Charter	NA	76%	37%	28	68%	7%	4%	21%
Core Cities	28%	69%	53%	4,385	61%	26%	3%	10%
Remainder of State	8%	12%	61%	8,115	83%	9%	3%	5%
Rhode Island	15%	31%	57%	13,163	74%	16%	3%	7%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

% of children in poverty is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Population Estimates, Children Ages 5-17, 2007. All other data are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007-2008 school year and refer only to public school students.

The four-year 2008 cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer divided by the total number of students in the cohort (the cohort is calculated as the number of first-time entering ninth graders in 2004-2005 adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the course of the four years). The cohort dropout rate is calculated the same way as the graduation rate, but the numerator is the number of students who drop out or whose status is unknown at the end of four years. Separate rates are also calculated for the percentage of students who are retained in high school and therefore are taking more than four years to graduate and for the percentage of students who received their GED within four years instead of graduating with a traditional diploma.

The core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth and students from Jamestown attend high school in North Kingstown. DCYF includes students attending DCYF alternative schools.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Shore, R. (July 2005). *Reducing the high school dropout rate*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>2,17,18,20</sup> Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007-2008 school year.

<sup>3</sup> Healthy Teen Network and the National Women's Law Center. (n.d.). *Keeping pregnant and parenting students from dropping out: A guide for policymakers and schools*. Retrieved on February 3, 2009 from [www.healthyteennetwork.org](http://www.healthyteennetwork.org)

<sup>4</sup> *Fact sheet: Educational outcomes for children and youth in foster and out-of-home care*. (2007). Seattle, WA: National Working Group on Foster Care and Education and Casey Family Programs.

(continued on page 161)