WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

WYOMING 2018-19 COHORT GRADUATION RATE GUIDEBOOK

Information concerning the calculations and data sets used to determine graduation rates for public schools in Wyoming

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Contents

SECTION 1: FEDERAL ADJUSTED COHORT GRADUATION RATES (ACGR)

Four-Year On-Time Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates 1
Extended-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates 1
On-time and Extended-Year Graduation Rate Calculations 1
Graduation Rate Reporting 2
Graduation Rate Reporting Subrgroups 2
ACGR Frequently Asked Questions 2

SECTION 2: STUDENT GRADUATION STATUS REVIEW

Review and Correction Window 3
Over-Reporting of Graduates 4
WDE684 Exit Types and Graduation Rate Status 4
Court Order Placed Students and Graduation Rate Inclusion 5
In-State Cross-District Transfers 6
Out-of-State Schools 6
In-State Private Schools and Virtual Schools 6
Home Schools 6
Legend - Confidential Student Graduation Status Review data set 8
Contact Information 9

Four-Year On-Time Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates

The purpose of this document is to provide information concerning the calculations and data sets used to determine federally defined Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR) for public schools in Wyoming. Graduation rates not produced and reported by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) are not valid for official use.

Graduation rate is a key component of federal accountability provisions for states, districts, and schools. In October of 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) announced final regulations establishing a uniform and more accurate way of calculating high school graduation rates that will be comparable across states. The October 2008 announcement, "A Uniform, Comparable Graduation Rate," provides a straightforward and detailed definition for use by all states:

> **A Uniform and Accurate Definition of Graduation Rate: The Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation**
>
> An accurate method of calculating graduation rates that is uniform across states is necessary to improve high school accountability. Requiring school officials to have written confirmation before removing a student from a cohort will improve the accuracy of graduation rate calculations. Written confirmation will also ensure that students who have dropped out of school are not counted as transfers and will consequently hold schools accountable for dropouts and others who do not graduate from high school with a regular diploma.
>
> The final regulations define the "four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate" as the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school four years earlier (adjusting for transfers in and out, émigrés and deceased students - see below).
>
> - Students who graduate in four years include students who earn a regular high school diploma at the end of their fourth year; before the end of their fourth year; and, if a state chooses, during a summer session immediately following their fourth year.
> - To remove a student from a cohort, a school or district must confirm in writing that a student has transferred out, immigrated to another country, or is deceased.
> - For students who transfer out of a school, the written confirmation must be official and document that the student has enrolled in another school or in an educational program that culminates in a regular high school diploma.

Extended-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates

Extended-Year (Five- and Six-Year) Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates use the same methodology as the Four Year (On-Time) ACGR. The difference is that the extended year rates include students who require a fifth or sixth year of high school to graduate. The Wyoming Department of Education applauds every effort to give students options and help them succeed. Many successful students take more than four years to graduate.

On-Time and Extended-Year Graduation Rate Calculations

On-Time Four-Year Graduation Rates include students whose expected on-time graduation year is the current reporting year. The numerator includes all students who graduated in four or fewer years, and the denominator consists of all students remaining in the cohort (not exited via valid transfer, emigration, or death).

Extended Five-Year Graduation Rates include students whose expected on-time graduation year was one year prior to the current reporting year. The numerator includes all students who graduated in five or fewer years, and the denominator consists of all students remaining in the cohort. Students graduating in their fifth year of high school move from being counted as non-graduates in the four-year rate to graduates in the fifth-year rate.

Extended Six-Year Graduation Rates include students whose expected on-time graduation year was two years prior to the current reporting year. The numerator includes all students who graduated in six or fewer years, and the denominator consists of all students remaining in the cohort. Students graduating in their sixth year of high school move from being counted as non-graduates in the fourth- and fifth-year rates to graduates in the sixth-year rate.

Graduation Rate Reporting

Graduation rates for the preceding school year are published in late January:

- Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (On-Time and Extended-Year) are published on the WDE Graduation Rates web page.
- Additional graduate and dropout data is published in the Statistical Report Series No. 2.

Graduation rate data is also reported to/for:

- Federal ESSA accountability, state, district and school reports.
- Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA), WAEA School Performance Reports.
- United States Department of Education Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR).
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Graduation Rate Reporting Subgroups

- All Students.
- English Language Learners (ELL).
- Female Gender.
- Male Gender.
- Homeless Students.
- IEP Students.
- Students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch.
- Migrant Students.
- Military Connected (2020-21).
- Foster Care (2020-21).
- Race/Ethnicity - American Indian.
- Race/Ethnicity – Asian.
- Race/Ethnicity – Black.
- Race/Ethnicity – Hispanic.
- Race/Ethnicity – Pacific Islander.
- Race/Ethnicity – Two or More Races.
- Race/Ethnicity – White.

ACGR Frequently Asked Questions

What Is a Cohort?

A cohort begins as a group of first-time 9th grade students in a particular school year. The cohort is then "adjusted" by adding students transferring into the state during high school and subtracting students who transfer out, immigrate to another country, or die.

How Is On-Time Graduation Year Determined?

A student's expected on-time (four-year) high school graduation year is based on the first high school grade (9 -12) primary (non-concurrent) enrollment record reported for a student in the WDE684 enrollment collection by any Wyoming district.

In most cases, this occurs when a student is promoted from grades 8 to 9, meaning the student's on-time graduation year will be the fourth year of high school (one year for each grade, 9 -12).

On-time graduation year for students transferring into Wyoming from out of state are identified in the same manner. For example, the on-time graduation year for a student transferring into Wyoming as a tenth grade student will be the student's third year of high school in the state (one year for each grade, 10 -12).

What Is The Definition of a "Graduate"?

ESSA statute defines a "regular high school diploma" as the "standard high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of students in a State that is fully aligned with the State's standards."

Only students who graduate with a Wyoming "regular high school diploma" as defined through Wyoming Statute and Rules and Regulations, Ch. 31 - Graduation Requirements are considered Graduates.

Students NOT to be reported as having graduated include students receiving special education certificates of completion or attendance and students who have earned a GED, HISET, or other high school equivalency credential.

Are Any Students Excluded From The Calculations?

Only students who transfer out and enroll in regular-high-school-diploma granting schools, immigrate to another country, or die are exited from a graduation cohort (meaning not included in graduation rate calculation).

For a school to report the student as exited in a WDE684 submission, the school is first responsible to obtain documentation validating one of the above conditions.

This documentation is required to be provided to the WDE when requesting a change to a student's exit status during the student graduation status review window, and in all cases where reported exit type is transfer to home school or to a private school. Situation-specific documentation required to be submitted to the WDE is described in Section 2 of this document.

Student exit documentation must also be provided upon request in WDE accreditation, monitoring, and Department of Audit activities.

What Happens When a Student Drops Out and Re-Enrolls in a Later Year?

On-time graduation year for a student, once initially set, does not change. Some students who drop out later return to school. A student in this situation who graduates, but in their fifth or sixth year, will be included in the cohort's graduation rate accordingly, no differently than a student who was continuously enrolled in high school for five or six years before graduating.

How Are Summer Graduates Included?

Graduation year ends each September 15 to account for summer graduates. This means that a student reported as having graduated after June 30th but on or before September 15th will be included as having graduated in the school year typically defined to have ended on June 30. This provision only applies to students who graduate with a regular high school diploma during this extended time frame.

How Are Early Graduates Reported?

Students who graduate earlier than their cohort on-time graduation year should be reported as having graduated during the next available WDE684 collection window, and with an exit date reflecting the actual date the diploma was granted. These students will be counted as on-time graduates with their cohort.

SECTION 2: STUDENT GRADUATION STATUS REVIEW

Review and Correction Window

During the annual student level graduation status review window, districts are provided opportunity to provide correction requests along with required documentation as defined in this document. Prior to the start of the review window, districts and schools were contacted and provided with review period timelines and instruction on accessing the confidential "Graduation Results Student Level" report.

For correction requests to be considered, requests and accompanying documentation must be submitted via the Wyoming Transcript Center (WTC) as individual student-specific pdf documents, where each pdf file name includes the student's WISER ID, first name, and last name. Do NOT email correction requests or any student information.

Over-Reporting of Graduates

Only students who graduate with a Wyoming "regular high school diploma" as defined through Wyoming Statute and Rules and Regulations, Ch. 31 - Graduation Requirements are considered Graduates.

Unfortunately, reporting of students on the WDE684 as having graduated with a regular high school diploma who are later identified as **not** graduated remains a problem. Accordingly, increased record keeping vigilance is needed by districts, as is increased scrutiny of reported data by the WDE.

As a result, WDE950 errors were generated for the first time in November 2019, and are being provided to districts through the normal data collection error report process flow. These errors include cross collection comparison between the WDE684 and WDE950. This new activity replaces related error fields included in last year's student level graduation record review. Errors include:

- where information is missing from the WDE950 (e.g. graduation date, credits earned, GPA),
- where information reported on the WDE950 doesn't appear to support receipt of a regular high school diploma (e.g. credits earned too low, GPA below 1.0),
- where WDE684 and WDE950 records are mismatched (e.g. different school IDs, WDE950 transcript creation date falls before reported WDE684 graduation date, different WDE950 and WDE684 graduation years),
- and where WDE684 reporting of a student as having graduated is identified as questionable

In questionable cases, written district confirmation of a student as having graduated with a regular high school diploma will be required in addition to addressing outstanding WDE950 and/or WDE684 errors. Examples of situations where written confirmation will be required:

- A student was in a special education program as of the graduation date and exit type reported in the WDE684 student file, but was either not exited in the WDE684 special education file (no IEP exit date), or was exited under an exit type other than having graduated with a regular high school diploma (e.g. as receiving a special education completion or attendance certificate, transferring out of the IDEA program and the school, or aging-out of FAPE eligibility).
- A student has a history of testing via the state alternate assessment, or has been reported as an alternate test taker on the WDE684.
- A student has previously been reported as having graduated, but was then was reported as enrolled the following fall.

Common WDE684 misreporting practices leading to these types of errors include:

- Mistakenly reporting students who earned a special education certificate of completion or attendance (WDE684 exit type 132) as having graduated (WDE684 exit type 108 or 124).
- Mistakenly reporting students who did not graduate but have successfully passed a high school equivalency exam (e.g. GED, HISET) as graduates.
- Prior to or at the end of the school year pre-populating the student information system with a graduated exit type (108 or 124) for every student enrolled in grade 12 instead of determining and recording the correct exit type for each student after school has ended.

WDE684 Exit Types and Graduation Rate Status

The complete list of WDE684 exit types is provided in the WDE684A Guidebook on the Data Collection Suite Forms Inventory page, under collection WDE684 A, B, or C.

Student graduation status is "Graduate" if last reported (and approved) with exit types:

- 108 - Graduated with a Wyoming 'regular high school diploma' AND completed district defined college-bound course of study.
- 124 - Graduated with a Wyoming 'regular high school diploma' BUT WITHOUT having completed the district defined college-bound course of study.

Student graduation status is "Exited Cohort" if last reported (and approved) with exit types:

- 396 - Transferred to a public school in a different state.
- 426 - Transferred to a private school in a different state.
- 41A - (submitted 418 that has been WDE validated) Transferred to a private school in Wyoming.
- 45A - (submitted 450 that has been WDE validated) Transferred to home schooling as the primary educational setting.
- 213 - Deceased.
- 256 - Foreign student returned to home country following completion of foreign exchange program in the United States.
- 264 - Emigrated to another country.

Student graduation status is "Non-Graduate" for all exit codes not listed above.

- This includes 418 and 450, which means documentation was not provided or was not approved, so the codes were not changed to the "approved" versions, 41A or 45A.
- This also includes WDE populated exit type 951, used when a district has reported a student as having graduated at the end of the prior year, but as again enrolled the following (current) fall.

Court Order Placed Students and Graduation Rate Inclusion

Regarding court order placed students, with exception of rare cases*, the resident district is responsible for ongoing reporting of primary enrollment records, and accountability for state assessment participation and student graduate / non-graduate status used in ESSA and WAEA graduation rate metrics. (*See document Placed Students Guidance on the Data Collection Suite Forms Inventory page, under collection WDE684 A, B, or C.)

Responsibility includes monitoring (whether on an IEP or not) including to know when a student's placement ends

1) so that the student can be recruited back into the resident school, or
2) to be aware of when a student has earned a regular-high-school diploma meeting Wyoming graduation requirements from the institution. Note: not all institutions have diploma granting educational programs, and earning a GED or HISET credential from an institution does not constitute meeting Wyoming graduation requirements.

Resident districts receive credit in ESSA and WAEA accountability metrics for a student who earns a regular-high-school diploma from an institution, as follows. First, the district is responsible to obtain a copy of the diploma and the student's education records from the institution.

Required documentation to provide to the WDE: The district must then create and submit a WDE950 graduation transcript (used in WAEA accountability determinations) and a WDE684 graduation exit event record (used in WAEA and ESSA graduation rates) using the resident school ID and exit type of 108 or 124 based on district evaluation of the student's academic record (typically 124 in these cases).

Note: The resident school did not issue the diploma, and as such is not responsible for fulfilling college transcript requests or related activity. Similarly, resident districts retain accountability for court order placed students who do not graduate while placed and who do not return to complete schooling in the resident district or meet any of the cohort exiting criteria (valid transfer, emigration, or death).

In-State Cross-District Transfers

When a student is exited by a district under WDE684 exit type 361, "Transferred to a public school in a different Wyoming district" the student is not automatically removed from the district's graduation cohort. Only when a WDE684 enrollment record is subsequently reported by another district does the responsibility transfer to the new district. With this in mind, it behooves districts to alert one another if they place a records request with another district, but then the student never attends school in the new district.

Out-of-State Schools

Reporting a student as an out of state transfers requires documentation reasonably validating the student as having moved out of Wyoming to another state. Documentation should include a records request (will contain the physical address of a brick and mortar school), and if the records-requesting school is a virtual school, additional written confirmation from a parent, guardian, or the school that the student no longer resides in Wyoming. The two transferred out of state WDE684 exit types are 396, "Transferred to a public school in a different state" and 426, "Transferred to a private school in a different state."

Required documentation to provide to the WDE: varies, as described above.

In-State Private Schools and Virtual Schools

The only valid in-state private school transfers are to St. Stephens Indian School (Bureau of Indian Affairs) or to one of Wyoming's licensed non-parochial schools (to our knowledge, there are no parochial schools operating in Wyoming that serve students through grade 12 and issue diplomas). As of the 2019-20 school year, there are two such schools which serve high school grades, Jackson Hole Community School in Jackson, and Excel Academy in Casper. Only when a Wyoming resident student transfers to one of these schools, and documentation is provided to the state, is use of WDE684 exit type 418, "Transferred to a private school in Wyoming," validated and changed in the WDE longitudinal data source to 41A.

Required documentation to provide to the WDE: A copy of the original records request from the school or correspondence from the school confirming the identity of the school and providing the student's enrollment date.

The only licensed virtual schools in Wyoming are those serving the entire state, operating through the public school system in Big Horn #1 and Niobrara #1. At this time, no national virtual schools have gone through process to become a licensed Wyoming private school (see "In-State Private Schools," above).

This means that a student who exits Wyoming public schooling, remains a Wyoming resident, and begins participation in a national or other non-Wyoming licensed virtual program, Penn Foster for example, is to be exited on the WDE684 using exit type 159, "Discontinued schooling to participate in a GED or other education or training program that does not grant a (Wyoming) regular high school diploma."

For information on the K12 private school licensing process and Chapter 18 of Wyoming Department of Education Rules and Regulations, see https://edu.wyoming.gov/beyond-the-classroom/school-programs/private-school-licensing/.

Home Schools

"Wyoming Statute 21-4-101 (a)(v) A home based educational program means a program of educational instruction provided to a child by the child's parent or legal guardian or by a person designated by the parent or legal guardian. An instructional program provided to more than one (1) family unit does not constitute a home based educational program"

This means that a home schooling curriculum listing an educational program delivered online (virtual program) is frequently identifying a transfer to a virtual school, not to a home school (see "In-State Private Schools and Virtual Schools," above).

Scenarios where exiting of a student to a home school is approved as valid by the WDE include:

1) A student was primarily homeschooled prior to and then into high school but was mistakenly reported in one or a few WDE684 records with StudentHomeSchooled = "N."
2) A student was homeschooled until high school then enrolled in a public high school (at greater than 50% of the school day) to supplement or complete their home school program under an agreement between a district and the student's parents that a regular Wyoming high school diploma is NOT being sought.
3) And in relatively rare cases, a student attended public school until sometime during their high school career, and then left public school to finish their education via a legitimate home school curriculum. These cases are validated by the WDE through review of the home school curriculum submitted by a student's parents or guardians to ensure the program meets statutory requirements (a single family curriculum, which excludes virtual programs and GED, HISET, and other high school equivalency programs).

Required documentation to provide to the WDE: Home school curriculum submission(s) to the district and any other relevant documents or correspondence. NOTE: For a student to be considered as having a valid exit to a home school program, a home school curriculum must be submitted in accordance with statutory language (below) even if the student has "attained his sixteenth birthday or completed the tenth grade". Submitted curriculums are subject to approval by the WDE for graduation rate purposes (only).

"W.S. 21-4-102 (b) A home based educational program shall meet the requirements of a basic academic educational program pursuant to W.S. 21-4-101(a)(vi). It shall be the responsibility of every person administering a home based educational program to submit a curriculum to the local board of trustees each year showing that the program complies with the requirements of this subsection. Failure to submit a curriculum showing compliance is prima facie evidence that the home based educational program does not meet the requirements of this article."

Legend - Confidential Student Graduation Status Review data set

Column Name	Column Description
District ID	District ID on final WDE684 exit record
School ID	School ID on final WDE684 exit record
School Year	Graduation Rate Processing School Year
WISER ID	Student's WISER_ID
Expected On-Time Grad Year	The student's expected on-time (4-year) high school graduation year.
Grad Rate Type	"Three-year (early)" if the student has an "Expected On-Time Grad Year" of the year following "School Year," "Four-year (on-time)" if the student has an "Expected On-Time Grad Year" of "School Year," "Five-year" if the student had an "Expected On-Time Grad Year" one year prior to "School Year," "Six-year" if the student had an Expected On-Time Grad Year two years prior to "School Year."
First Name	Student's First Name submitted on the exit record
Middle Name	Student's Middle Name submitted on the exit record
Last Name	Student's Last Name submitted on the exit record
Birthdate	Student's Birth Date submitted on the exit record
Grade	Student's Grade submitted on the exit record
Exit Date	Exit Date on the exit record (student's final Wyoming public school exit record ending during or before "School Year")
Grad Rate Exit Year	Exit Year determined based on the Exit Date.
Exit Type	WDE684 Exit Type code
Graduation Status	Graduation status of Graduate, Non-Graduate, or Exited Cohort.
Gender At Exit	Gender as reported on the student's exit record.
Race Ethnicity At Exit	Ethnicity as reported on the student's exit record. A = Asian, B = Black, I = American Indian, H = Hispanic, W = White, P = Pacific Islander, Z = Two or More Races
IEP During Grades 9 -12	(T/F) Students reported as IDEA (on an IEP) at any time during high school (grades 9 -12) enrollment in Wyoming
ELL During Grades 9 -12	(T/F) Students reported as an English Language Learner (ELL) at any time during high school (grades 9 -12) enrollment in Wyoming
Free or Reduced Lunch During Grades 9 -12	(T/F) Students reported as free/reduced lunch eligible at any time during high school (grades 9 -12) enrollment in Wyoming
Migrant During Grades 9 -12	(T/F) Students reported as Migrant at any time during high school (grades 9 -12) enrollment in Wyoming
Homeless During Grades 9 -12	(T/F) Students reported as Homeless at any time during high school (grades 9 -12) enrollment in Wyoming

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