**Another Report Finds High Graduation Rates at an All-Time High**

EdWeek’s annual [**Diplomas Count**](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/06/04/graduation-rate-hits-high-but-some-groups.html) report shows that the U.S. high school on-time graduation rate has hit another all-time high with 81 percent of students graduating within four-years of entering high school. You may remember last month another [report](http://blog.centerforpubliceducation.org/2015/05/12/high-school-graduation-rates-hit-another-all-time-high/) found the same. Both reports were based on similar data so it is not surprising they found similar results.

One difference is that this most recent report sheds a brighter light on disparities between different groups of students. An examination of EdWeek’s data shows that in 2013—the most recent year graduation rate data is available—the poverty gap in on-time graduation rates is as large as 16 percentage points in Minnesota to just one percentage point in Kentucky. Nationally, the gap between white students and their black and Hispanic classmates continues to narrow. Again, the gaps differ significantly from state to state.

While the overall story is certainly good news, the persistent gaps are still troubling. Gaps are particularly large between special education students and the general student population as well as between English Language Learners (ELL) and native English speakers. So while significant progress has been made, there is a lot more work to be done until all students enter high school with a similar chance to graduate high school four years later.

**The Findings**

***National Graduation Rates***

* The national graduation rate hit another all-time high.
	+ Eighty-one percent of students who entered 9th grade in the fall of 2009 graduated with at least a standard high school diploma by the summer of 2013 -- the highest level seen since the late 1960s.
		- Between 2011 and 2013 the graduation rate increased 2 points.
		- Graduation rates had remained relatively stagnant between the late 1960s and early 2000’s.
* Large attainment gaps also remain between traditionally disadvantaged groups and their more advantaged classmates.
	+ 16 point gap between white and black students (71 and 87 percent).
	+ 12 point gap between white and Hispanic students (75 and 87 percent).
	+ Seventy-three percent of students from economically disadvantaged families graduated on-time.
		- This is 8 points lower than the national average.
	+ Just 62 percent of Students with Disabilities graduated on-time.
		- This is 19 points lower than the national average.
	+ Only 61 percent of Limited English Proficient students graduated on-time.
		- This is 20 points lower than the national average.

***State Graduation Rates***

* Most states have improved their graduation rates since 2011.
	+ All but six states (Arizona, Illinois, New York, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wyoming) improved their on-time graduation rates between 2011 and 2013.
	+ Nevada made the greatest improvement by increasing their graduation rate from 62 to 71 percent (9 points) during this same time period.
		- New Mexico and Utah both improved their graduation rates by 7 points as well.
* Large gaps remain between states
	+ There is a 28 percentage point gap between Iowa --the state with the highest graduation rate (90 percent)-- and the District of Columbia which has the lowest graduation rate (62 percent).
	+ Only seven states (Alaska, District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oregon) have graduation rates that fell under 75 percent while 21 states have graduation rates of at least 85 percent.
	+ In Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota there is a 15 point gap between the graduation rates of economically disadvantaged students and their state averages.
		- In six states (Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky, Hawaii, Indiana, and District of Columbia) the gap is 5 points or less.
	+ In Mississippi just 23 percent of Students with Disabilities (SWD) graduated on-time which is 53 points lower than the state average (76 percent). Mississippi had both the lowest graduation rates for SWD and the largest gap.
		- On the other end of the spectrum Arkansas had the highest graduation rate for SWK (80 percent) while Alabama had the smallest gap (3 points).
	+ Three states (New Hampshire, North Dakota, and Texas) had graduation rates over 80 percent for black students.
		- Three states (Minnesota, Nevada, and Oregon) had graduation rates of less than 60 percent for their black students.
	+ Eleven states graduated at least 80 percent of their Hispanic students on-time.
		- Minnesota was the only state to graduate less than 60 percent of their Hispanic students.

**Keep in mind:**

* Graduation rates for 2013 were based on the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) which calculates the graduation rate by dividing the number of 9th graders enrolled four years earlier to the number of graduates in the current year.
	+ GED and certificates of attendance are not counted as graduates under the ACGR.
* The ACGR represent on-time graduation rates and don’t include those students who took longer than four years to graduate with a standard high school diploma. As CPE’s report [**Better Late Than Never**](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Better-late-than-never-At-a-glance) found, graduation rates would likely increase by 5 percentage points if late high school graduates were included.
* While each state calculates their graduation similarly, states have fairly wide discretion on how to categorize students into groups. For example, a student who exits special education in grade 11 might be included in the special education graduation rate in one state, but not in another.
* Furthermore, each states has different requirements to obtain a regular high school diploma.

**State by State Graduation Rates:**

<http://www.edweek.org/media/graduation-rate-pdf-download-education-week-diplomas-count.pdf>