

# Graduation Rate Report

## Four and Five Year Graduation Rates for the Cohort Class of 2004



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This document is designed to accompany the revised graduation rate calculations for the cohort class of 2004. The revised numbers update and correct the original report released in October 2005.

This is the last graduation report using data collected via the old Graduation Rate Report data submission application. Schools used the application to submit to the Arizona Department of Education aggregate counts of students in the separate categories: original enrollment, transfers in, transfers out, graduates, dropouts, etc. Information on individual students was not collected. Starting with the cohort class of 2005, graduation rates have been calculated using individual student information submitted by schools to the department's Student Accountability Information System (SAIS).

The method used to calculate the graduation rates conforms to the National Governors Association Compact on State High School Graduation Data. After students entered ninth grade for the first time in the fall of 2000, they were identified as members of the cohort class of 2004. Over the next five years, each public school in Arizona tracked enrollment, transfer and graduation activities of students attending their schools.

Four years later, after the spring commencement in 2004, each school attributed one of the following outcomes to every student who was a member of the cohort class of 2004: *graduated, still enrolled, dropped out, status unknown, or GED recipient*. One year after the four year outcomes were reported, students who were members of the cohort class of 2004 and who graduated in the fifth year, were reported as five year graduates. Likewise, students who received a GED in the fifth year were reported as fifth year GED recipients.

Four year and five year data on members of this cohort class were entered into a Graduation Rate Study online computer application and electronically submitted to the ADE.<sup>1</sup> The ADE distributed forms and instructions for data collection to high schools via regional training centers and by mail. High schools required to submit data were defined as those having had student membership in *one or more* of the following grades over the course of four years **and** offered a high school diploma:

Membership in ninth grade in the 2000-2001 school year, **or**  
Membership in tenth grade in the 2001-2002 school year, **or**  
Membership in eleventh grade in the 2002-2003 school year, **or**  
Membership in twelfth grade in the 2003-2004 school year, **or**  
Graduated members of the cohort class of 2004 in the 2004-2005 school year  
**-And-**  
Offered a high school diploma

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<sup>1</sup> In the fifth year, schools only report students who receive a diploma or GED after their four year Spring commencement and before the first day of Summer recess at the end of the fifth year. Those who graduate after the Spring commencement of their fifth year are not reported as fifth year graduates.

Schools that met these criteria were considered to have served members of the cohort class of 2004 at some point during the students' high school years and were required to submit data even if none of those students received a diploma from that school. Therefore, if all members of the cohort transferred to other educational facilities, it is possible for a school to have a class membership of zero with a corresponding zero graduation rate.

### **Definitions**

The following terms are used within this report:

**Cohort class** is the group of students that entered ninth grade for the first time in the fall of 2000, independent of the state or district where each student first enrolled. These students were expected to advance through high school as a group and become part of the same graduating class within five years after the start of their ninth grade year (in the spring of 2004). Students who began their ninth grade year at one school and transferred to another school before their fifth year spring commencement are still a part of the same cohort class.

**Class membership** represents the total student count within the cohort class and is defined according to the following:

Original ninth grade enrollment  
+ transfers in  
- transfers out  
- deceased

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Class Membership

A class membership for any given school may change from year to year as students transfer in and out of schools. The accuracy of a school's class membership count is dependent on the school's ability to track student activity over the course of five years.

**Four year dropout rate** is expressed as a percentage of the class membership and reflects the proportion of the cohort class of 2004 that left within the first four years of high school and did not return, graduate, transfer, receive a GED, or die.

**Status unknown rate** is expressed as a percentage of the class membership and reflects the proportion of the cohort class of 2004 that left within the first four years of high school, did not return, graduate, transfer, receive a GED, or die and whose academic status and location are unknown to the schools from which the students have left.

**GED rate** is expressed as a percentage of the class membership and reflects the proportion of the cohort class of 2004 that did not receive a high school diploma but earned a GED by the spring commencement of the fifth year. To qualify for this outcome, the former student must have received a GED certificate, not merely enrolled in preparatory classes.

*Still enrolled after fourth year* is expressed as a percentage of the class membership and reflects the proportion of the cohort class of 2004 that did not receive a high school diploma by the end of summer recess of the fourth year but remained enrolled to attend a fifth year.

*Four year graduation rate* is expressed as a percentage of the class membership and reflects the proportion of the cohort class of 2004 that received a high school diploma by their **fourth** year Spring commencement in 2004.

*Five year graduation rate* is expressed as a percentage of the class membership and reflects the proportion of the cohort class of 2004 that received a high school diploma by their **fifth** year spring commencement in 2005. This proportion is calculated using the total number of students who graduated within four years, as well as those who returned for a fifth year and graduated:

$$\left( \frac{\text{Graduates within four years} + \text{graduates in the fifth year}}{\text{Cohort membership}} \right) \cdot 100$$

### **Transfer Documentation**

A student is not counted as a dropout if there is documented evidence of a transfer to another school that offers a high school diploma. School records must indicate the withdrawal status of each student who leaves the school. Documentation of a student transfer to another school consists of either (1) a request from another school for a transfer of the student's records or (2) information from a responsible adult that the student is enrolled in another educational facility from which (s)he may receive a high school diploma.