

STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



GRADUATION, DROPOUT, & PERSISTENCE RATE
TECHNICAL MANUAL

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Introduction

This manual helps LEAs and schools understand how graduation, dropout, and persistence rate are calculated. Graduation rate is included in the 9-12 school models for letter grades. Dropout and persistence rate are not currently used in any model; however, the information is still valuable to schools.

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) computes the four-, five-, six-, and seven-year rate for every public high school in the state. The graduation rate measures how long it takes students to graduate from the time they enter Grade 9 and aggregates the percentages each year for up to seven years. Graduation rates are required for state and federal reporting purposes. The results are reported at the subgroup, school, local education agency (LEA), and state levels.

The method the Arizona Department of Education uses to calculate graduation rates conforms to the 2008 non-regulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education and to the National Governors Association Compact on State High School Graduation Data. The source of information for the calculation is the state's longitudinal data system, the Arizona Education Data Standards (AzEDS)*. AzEDS became the official system of record in FY17. Prior to this, all data was submitted to SAIS. This document describes business rules used in graduation rate calculations, as well as the business rules used to calculate school-level dropout and persistence rates. This document is updated annually as needed.

Cohort Assignment & Membership

Membership in a cohort class is established at the time of the student's first enrollment in a high school grade in the United States. Cohorts are assigned by the typical four-year expectation for graduation. The student's membership with the cohort class remains the same, regardless of transfers between schools, credits earned, time spent out of Arizona, time spent out of school, or the time necessary for the student to complete requirements for graduation. Student cohort membership does not change once the student enters any high school in Arizona or elsewhere in the country.

For example, a student is considered a member of the 2024 cohort if:

- The student enrolled in an Arizona public school in Grade 9 for the first time in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

OR

- The student enrolled in an Arizona public school in Grade 10 in the 2021-2022 fiscal year and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade.

OR

- The student enrolled in an Arizona public school in Grade 11 in the 2022-2023 fiscal year and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade.

OR

- The student enrolled in an Arizona public school in Grade 12 in the 2023-2024 fiscal year and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade.

A student's cohort is NOT established if the student is enrolled in both a high school and non-high school grade in the same fiscal year. Students are enrolled in a non-high school grade (i.e. Grade 8) at any point during the fiscal year will not have a cohort assigned for that year, even if they are also enrolled in a high school grade during that fiscal year. However, the student's cohort will be assigned the next fiscal year based on the enrolled grade.

For example, if a student is enrolled in Grade 8 until December and then promotes to Grade 9 in January, their cohort will not be assigned for that student that fiscal year. A cohort will be assigned to that student based on the scenario below:

- If the student is enrolled in Grade 9 in FY 2024 (2023-2024 school year) the student's assigned cohort will be Cohort 2027.

OR

- If the student is enrolled in Grade 10 in FY 2024 the student's assigned cohort will be Cohort 2026.

Once the cohort is set for a four-year graduation expectation, the cohort membership follows the student through the Arizona public school system until graduation is recorded.

Students are maintained in the cohort for their last high school of record unless they have transferred to another school granting a high school diploma, transferred out of state or out of country, have left the public school system to be home schooled, or are deceased. Schools and LEAs are responsible for students in the non-graduate category even if the students were not enrolled in that school for their graduation year. The school and LEA that records the graduation exit code for a student is considered the last school of record regardless of whether it is the fourth or fifth year of high school for the student.

When calculating the graduation rates for subgroups, some subgroup memberships are based on the student's cohort rather than exclusively the student's information at the last enrollment record - namely English Learners (EL), Homeless, Foster Care, and Military Connected subgroups. For example, if a student was considered to be EL in Grade 9, exits the program as proficient in Grade 10, and then graduates from high school, that student will still be included in the graduation rate of the EL Cohort subgroup.

Exit and Year-End Codes

The student status used in the graduation rate calculations is based on the exit codes and year end codes submitted to AzEDS by schools and LEAs.

Exit Codes are used any time during the fiscal year when a student withdraws from an entity. Year-End Exit Codes are used to relay the status at the **end** of the fiscal year. Dates must be attached to both exit and year-end exit codes.

Students within a cohort are assigned to one of three categories based on their last exit or year end code in AzEDS following the end of their cohort year.

1. Students who have graduated (graduates)
2. Students who remain in the cohort but have not graduated (non-graduates)
3. Students who have exited the cohort (exited students)

The exit and year-end codes for each of these categories are detailed in the next section. The codes used are consistent across all graduation rate types.

Each student at the school may only have one exit or year-end exit code per year. The following sections provide detailed descriptions of these codes.

Graduates

Year-end: G

Withdrawal: W7

Summer Withdrawal: S7

Graduates are students who have met the requirements established by the Arizona State Board of Education by successfully earning a passing grade in the minimum course of study and corresponding competency requirements aligned with the State's academic standards in order to receive a high school diploma.

Students are considered as graduating on time for the four-year graduation rate if they graduate any time prior to September 1 of the following school year. Students are considered as graduating on time for the five-year rate if they graduate by June 30 of the fiscal year following their cohort year. Participating in graduation ceremonies and other activities for students is a matter of LEA policy.

Non-Graduates

The following are the codes for students who are considered non-graduates.

Attendees

Year-end: A

Attendees are 12th grade students who met one of the following requirements:

- Did NOT fulfill a course of study
- Did NOT complete an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Turned 22 years of age
- Attended school as a 12th grade foreign exchange student (used only in grade 12)

Attendees have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll. If a student has turned 22 years of age and is withdrawn with either a W6 or S6 code (i.e., Aged Out Withdrawn or Aged Out Summer Withdrawn), then they are considered to have exited the cohort.

Completers

Year-end: C

Withdrawal: W13

Summer Withdrawal: S13

Completers are 11th grade JTED and/or Foreign Exchange Students.

Completers have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll except in cases such as enrollment in a JTED post-graduation.

Promoted

Year-end: P

This code is used for students who were promoted to the next grade (used in all grade levels **except** for grade 12.)

Retained

Year-end: R

This code is used for students who were retained in the same grade. This code **cannot** be used for 12th grade students.

Still Enrolled (Course of Study)

Year-end: SC

Still enrolled (course of study) are students who will be enrolled for an additional year of high school to pursue a diploma.

SC is used only for 12th grade students.

Illness

Withdrawal: W2

Summer Withdrawal: S2

This code is used for students who withdraw due to chronic illness. (Withdrawal may not be required. Please refer to the LEA chronic illness policy.)

Expelled

Withdrawal: W3

Summer Withdrawal: S3

This code is used to withdraw students for expulsion prior to the end of the school year or summer term. The student will not be returning to school.

Long-Term Suspension

Withdrawal: W31

Summer Withdrawal: S31

This code is used to withdraw students for long-term suspension prior to the end of the school year or summer term. The student will not be returning to school.

Status Unknown

Withdrawal: W4

Summer Withdrawal: S4

Status unknown students are those students who have more than 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences, and whose status is unknown to the school or LEA. Attempts should be made to find out what has happened to these students so that other more appropriate codes can be applied. The effective date of withdrawal is the last day of actual attendance.

Arizona Online Instruction (AOIs) should use a W4 when students meet the criteria for “Status Unknown” established by their LEA. AOI LEAs policies determine when a student is considered Status Unknown (W4/S4) based on an approved period of time with a lack of engagement, and/or no response to outreach from the LEA. The requirements should be approved by their board, documented, shared with students/parents, and implemented as approved for auditing purposes. The effective date of the withdrawal is the last date of recorded activity.

Schools should use the S4 code for students who were enrolled at the end of the prior school year but fail to show at any time during the next school year and whose status or location is unknown to the school or LEA. The date of the S4 code should be July 1.

Parent Withdrawn & Awaiting Documentation

Withdrawal: W41

Summer Withdrawal: S41

Parent withdrawn students are students who were withdrawn with a parent’s signature on the Pupil Withdrawal Form, or with other written notice from the parent/guardian stating that the student will be transferring to another school. The school must then wait to receive documentation of a subsequent enrollment in order to change the student’s W41/S41 code. See codes W1 and W21 for documentation required for these code changes.

Dropouts: Age 16 or Older

Withdrawal: W5

Summer Withdrawal: S5

Dropouts are students who leave school with the intention of NOT completing the necessary requirements for a high school diploma.

This code should be used for students who are 16 or older and have intentionally dropped out of school, except for one of the following reasons:

- Chronic Illness
- To receive a GED Certificate
- Transfer to a Juvenile Correctional Facility

Dropouts: Under Age 16

Withdrawal: W51

Summer Withdrawal: S51

Dropouts are students who leave school with the intention of NOT completing the necessary requirements for a high school diploma.

This code should be used for students who are under 16 and have withdrawn based on reasons listed in [ARS §15-802\(D\)\(2-5\)](#) with supporting documentation.

Detention

Withdrawal: W10

Summer Withdrawal: S10

The detention code is used to withdraw students who have been transferred to a state detention or correctional facility where they are receiving educational services.

GED

Withdrawal: W11

Summer Withdrawal: S11

General Educational Development (GED) students are students who withdraw from school expressly for the purpose of obtaining a GED. Students of high school age must withdraw to take the GED test.

Vocational School

Withdrawal: W12

Summer Withdrawal: S12

This code is used for students who leave school to continue studies at a technical or vocational school. This includes ALL schools or educational programs that DO NOT meet Arizona requirements for obtaining a high school diploma.

Grand Canyon Diploma

Withdrawal: W14

The student has met all of the requirements for the Grand Canyon Diploma but has not been awarded the diploma. The student is continuing in high school.

Withdrawal: W15

The student has met all of the requirements for the Grand Canyon Diploma and has been awarded the diploma.

Exited Students

The following are codes for students who are considered as exiting the cohort. The school is no longer responsible for graduating students who exit the cohort for one of the following reasons: W1/S1, W21/S21, W22/S22, S99, CC, W6/S6, W8/S8, W9/S9, W17/S17, W18/S18, W19/S19, W20/S20.

Transferred

Withdrawal:

W1: Withdrawn before the scheduled end of year to attend a school in-state.

W21: Withdrawn before the scheduled end of year to attend a school out-of-state.

W22: Withdrawn before the scheduled end of year to attend a school out of the country.

Summer Withdrawal:

S1: Summer transfer to attend a school in-state.

S21: Summer transfer to attend a school out-of-state.

S22: Summer transfer to attend a school out of the country.

S99: Summer transfer to attend a school within the same District.

This code is used for students who withdraw from one school to continue their studies in another school, public or private, which grants an accredited high school diploma.

This code also applies to students who have been accepted into an early admission college program as long as they are attending college full-time and are working toward an Arizona high school diploma.

An [Official Notice of Pupil Withdrawal Form](#) must be completed for students who withdraw. To confirm that a student transferred out, a school or LEA must have “official written documentation” that a student has transferred to another school or to an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)(1)).

Examples of official written documentation include:

- A request for student records from a receiving public or private high school or an educational program that culminates in a regular high school diploma.
- Written record of a response from an official in the receiving school or program acknowledging the student's enrollment.

A conversation with a parent or neighbor, for instance, **would not** be considered official written documentation of a transfer (verbal notification is not sufficient.)

A school or LEA must have written confirmation that a student has emigrated to another country (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)) but need not obtain official written notice that the student is enrolled in a new school within that country.

Parents/Guardians can give written documentation only in verification of W22/S22.

Concurrently Enrolled

Year-end: CC

Students concurrently enrolled in multiple schools and are not expected to return to the school.

Example:

A 12th grade student is concurrently enrolled at a CTED/JTED AND at a brick and mortar high school. The student will graduate from the brick and mortar school (using a G Year-end code), and the CTED/JTED will exit the student with a CC Year-end code.

Aged Out

Withdrawal: W6

Summer Withdrawal: S6

This code is used to withdraw students who are no longer of school age or are under school age (younger than 6 or older than 21 years.)

Deceased

Withdrawal: W8

Summer Withdrawal: S8

This code is used to withdraw students who have died while enrolled in the school. A school or LEA must have written confirmation that a student is deceased to apply this code (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)). A letter from a parent or an obituary is sufficient documentation. Official written documentation of a student's death, such as a death certificate, is not necessary.

Home Schooled

Withdrawal: W9

Summer Withdrawal: S9

This code is used for students who withdraw to be taught at home. A.R.S. § 15-802(B)(3) allows a student to be taught at home after certain requirements are met. The parent must file an affidavit with the county school superintendent that the child is attending a regularly organized private or home school. Official written documentation is required to apply this code. Documentation may include a letter of withdrawal or other written confirmation from the parent or guardian, or the affidavit filed with the County School Superintendent.

Students withdrawing to participate in an Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) should be exited using the W9/S9 code. The school should record the student's ESA Application ID number on the withdrawal form, but should not ask for the full ESA Application. ESA participants are instructed not to share their full ESA Application with schools.

Grand Canyon Diploma

These codes are for students who earned a Grand Canyon Diploma (GCD). GCD students cannot count towards graduation rate calculations per Federal guidelines (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).)

Withdrawal: W17

Summer Withdrawal: S17

Student received the Grand Canyon Diploma and one of the following apply:

- Is no longer enrolled full-time at an AZ Public University.
- Is no longer enrolled in an AZ Public University.

Withdrawal: W18

Summer Withdrawal: S18

Student received the Grand Canyon Diploma but LEA may not count this student if one of the following apply:

- The student is no longer enrolled full-time at AZ Community College.
- The student is no longer enrolled in an AZ Community College.

Withdrawal: W19

Summer Withdrawal: S19

The student was eligible for the Grand Canyon Diploma but the LEA may not count this student because the student is no longer enrolled in a full-time Career Technical Education (CTE) program.

Withdrawal: W20

Summer Withdrawal: S20

The student was awarded the Grand Canyon Diploma and the student's post Grand Canyon Diploma participation is unknown or ineligible.

Not Affecting Classification

There are two exit codes for students who transfer within programs (i.e., grades) within their school. Since these codes are to be used in conjunction with enrollment codes to indicate enrollment into the new program within the school, the following codes are **not** used to determine the classification status of the student.

Transferred Grade

Withdrawal: WP

This code is used to transfer students to the next grade level within the school. If a student is promoted to another grade within the same school, use the WP withdrawal code to withdraw the student from the grade the student was enrolled in. Please note that this code does not change the student's cohort. The student should also be assigned the corresponding RP code.

Withdrawal: WD

This code is used to transfer students to the previous grade level within the school. If a student is demoted to another grade within the same school, use the WD withdrawal code to withdraw the student from the grade the student was enrolled in. Please note that this code does not change the student's cohort. The student should also be assigned the corresponding RD code.

Transferred Register

Withdrawal: WK

This code is used to transfer students to another calendar track within the same school before the scheduled end of the school year. It can also be used when students change from UE to KG status, and vice versa.

Accountability

For all accountability purposes, graduation data are lagged by one year, and each rate requires a separate end date. It is possible to calculate a four- and five-year rate using the same group of students by changing the as of date. The dates used to calculate each rate are described below:

Graduation Rate Type	Cohort	Example
4-year	2025	08/31/2025
5-year	2024	06/30/2024
6-year	2023	06/30/2023
7-year	2022	06/30/2022

Since four-year graduates may graduate after the fiscal year their cohort year ends (i.e., June 30), all graduation data are lagged by one year every year. For each fiscal year's accountability determination, the four-year rate would measure the prior fiscal year's cohort graduation; however, the prior fiscal year's cohort can represent both the four- and five-year rate based on the date of graduation. For instance, Cohort 2025 four-year graduates graduated as of August 31, 2025; any students who remain in school after August 31, 2025 and graduates before June 30, 2026 would be considered a five-year graduate. Accountability for each fiscal year and the subsequent cohort rates are described below unless indicated otherwise.

Fiscal Year (Accountability)	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
4-year cohort	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
5-year cohort	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
6-year cohort	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
7-year cohort	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026

Graduation Rate Calculation

When the graduation rate is calculated, year-end or exit codes are used to place students in the cohort into one of the three categories: graduate, non-graduate, and exited the cohort. Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation.

To compute each graduation rate, the following formula is used:

$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Graduates (G, W7, or S7) in the Cohort}}{\text{Number of Students in the Cohort}}$$

Dropout Rate Calculation

Dropouts are defined as students who are enrolled in school at any time during the school year but are not enrolled at the end of the school year and did not transfer, graduate, or die. Students withdrawn due to chronic illness are also excluded from the dropout rate calculator.

When the dropout rate is calculated, year-end or exit codes are used to determine the percentage of students who are no longer enrolled in any Arizona Public School prior to exiting as a graduate or completer. Students in grades 7-12 are included in the dropout rate calculation. Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation.

$$\text{Dropout Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of W3, W31, W4, W41, W5, W51, W11, W12, W13, S3, S31, S4, S41, S5, S51, S11, S12, S13 Students}}{\text{Number of Students Enrolled}}$$

Persistence Rate Calculation

An academically persistent student is any student who is eligible to re-enroll at the end of the previous fiscal year and re-enrolls in any Arizona public school by October 1 of the current fiscal year. Students in grades 6-12 are included in the persistence rate calculation. Students who are eligible to re-enroll have a qualifying end of year code in the previous fiscal year. The following codes denote students who are eligible to re-enroll:

- Promoted
- Retained
- Attendee
- Still Enrolled (Assessment, Course of Study, Met no requirements)

Students who are withdrawn for any reason or are coded as graduated, aged out, or deceased are not included in the persistence calculation. Students withdrawn due to a change in track become eligible when the appropriate end of year code is used in the subsequent enrollment. Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation.

$$\text{Persistence Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Students who re-enroll by Oct. 1 of CY}}{\text{Number of Eligible Students to re-enroll based on PY}}$$

Example 1:

Last year, Student A was promoted at the end of their 8th grade year at Middle School X. This year, Student A enrolls in 9th grade prior to October 1 at High School Y. Student A is eligible to persist and would count in both the numerator and denominator of the equation above.

Example 2:

Last year, Student B was still enrolled at the end of their Senior year at High School Y. This year, Student B enrolls in 12th grade again prior to October 1 at High School Y. Student B is eligible to persist and would count in both the numerator and denominator of the equation above.

Example 3:

Last year, Student C was coded as a dropout at the end of their Freshman year at High School Y. This year, Student C enrolled in 10th grade prior to October 1 at High School Z. Student C is not eligible to persist and was counted in the dropout rate calculation for High School Y. To avoid double penalizing High School Y, the student would be excluded from the numerator and denominator of the persistence equation above for High School Y.

Quick Reference Codes

[Codes for Withdrawal, Exit, Enrollment, & Entry](#)