

ABOUT THE GRADUATION INDICATOR

Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are required to include goals for high school graduation of all students and federally defined subgroups of students. The Graduation indicator for high schools looks at how Oklahoma schools are providing the guidance and supports students need to graduate. Schools earn up to 10 points for this indicator based on students graduating within four, five or six years. (Six-year graduates will be included in this indicator in school year 2018-19.)



WHAT IS BEING MEASURED?



The Graduation indicator is comprised of two measures: the four-year graduation rate and a graduation improvement score. The improvement score is not a “rate” but rather a measure of students who graduated in their fifth (or sixth, beginning in the 2018-19) year. The inclusion of this improvement score recognizes and celebrates schools’ efforts to provide supports and services to students who may take longer than four years to graduate.

WHY IS THIS INDICATOR IMPORTANT?

High school graduation is an essential milestone for many students. Graduating from high school enables students to choose a future path – whether at a two- or four-year college, technical school, workforce training program or military – that aligns with their talents and passions. Further, while all students deserve the opportunity to graduate high school, certain students – including those who have had their education disrupted or who have other special circumstances – may require longer than four years to meet graduation requirements. The Graduation indicator provides greater insight into how schools are supporting all students in attainment of a high school diploma, even when requiring more than four years.

HOW IS THE INDICATOR MEASURED?

The two metrics comprising the Graduation indicator are the four-year graduation rate and the improvement score. The four-year graduation rate uses a federally required definition determined by dividing the number of graduates in a given cohort year by the number of students in that cohort. Students are assigned a cohort year upon entering high school, generally four years after their initial enrollment. The student remains in this cohort year even across school or district transfers to another diploma-issuing school. The final cohort used in the denominator of the four-year graduation rate, known as the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), accounts for students who have exited the cohort. For additional information on cohort adjustment, see the first question in the FAQs on the next page.)

For additional information on understanding the Graduation indicator, see e-learning module 6.

The improvement score captures additional students who graduated their fifth year. Please note that this calculation will be modified beginning in 2018-19 to account for sixth-year graduates. For the 2018 school report card, the improvement score is the number of students who graduated in their fifth year divided by the number of students in that cohort. The cohort class used in the graduation improvement score is the cohort that precedes the one used in the four-year graduation rate. For example, the 2018 school report cards include the 2017 four-year graduation rate and the graduation improvement score for the 2016 cohort (i.e., students in cohort 2016 who graduated by the end of school year 2017).

The four-year graduation rate and the improvement score are summed to yield the overall Graduation indicator score.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does it mean to “adjust” a cohort?

A student’s cohort year refers to the initial entry to an Oklahoma high school. This cohort year remains unchanged for the remainder of the student’s enrollment in Oklahoma. The U.S. Department of Education defines this adjustment of removing students from a school’s cohort. Therefore, students may only be removed from a school’s four-year graduation rate if they meet specific criteria. The remaining cohort class is considered the adjusted cohort.

By when does a student need to graduate to be considered “on time”?

The four-year graduation rate for a school includes all students in the given cohort year who met graduation requirements by September 30 of the cohort year. Therefore, the rate includes students who graduated early and those who graduated over the summer.

What if a school has a low graduation rate?

High schools with a four-year graduation rate of 67 percent or lower are identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) as required by ESSA. Due to the number of small schools in Oklahoma, a three-year average is used to account for volatility among small cohort sizes. As a result, high schools with a three-year average four-year graduation rate of 67 percent or lower are provided supports and services through the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s Office of School Support and Improvement.

What is the data source for this indicator?

Data for the Graduation indicator is collected in three phases. As previously described, a student’s cohort year is assigned based on enrollment in an Oklahoma high school. This transition and secondary enrollment is collected in two district-certified reports – the October 1 Consolidated Report and the Supplemental Membership Annual Reporting Totals (SMART) Report. To adjust a school’s cohort using the federally defined criteria, the exit reason for each student is collected every year in the certified Comprehensive Exit Report. This report determines students eligible to exit a cohort based on transfer to another diploma-issuing institution, emigration, transfer to a prison facility or death. Finally, the Historical Adjusted Graduation Cohort Report is the certified report of a school’s cohort and the final status (graduated, transferred, dropout, etc.) for each student. This report generates the final four-year graduation rate and serves as the foundation of the graduation improvement score. The graduation improvement score uses the Comprehensive Exit Report to identify students who graduated after their cohort year has passed.