

STATES REPORT NEW HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES USING MORE ACCURATE, COMMON MEASURE

The U.S. Department of Education released data today detailing state four-year high school graduation rates in 2010-11 – the first year for which all states used a common, rigorous measure. The varying methods formerly used by states to report graduation rates made comparisons between states unreliable, while the new, common metric can be used by states, districts and schools to promote greater accountability and to develop strategies that will reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates in schools nationwide.

The new, uniform rate calculation is not comparable in absolute terms to previously reported rates. Therefore, while 26 states reported lower graduation rates and 24 states reported unchanged or increased rates under the new metric, these changes should not be viewed as measures of progress but rather as a more accurate snapshot.

“By using this new measure, states will be more honest in holding schools accountable and ensuring that students succeed,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “Ultimately, these data will help states target support to ensure more students graduate on time, college and career ready.”

The transition to a common, adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate reflects states’ efforts to create greater uniformity and transparency in reporting high school graduation data, and it meets the requirements of October 2008 federal regulations. A key goal of these regulations was to develop a graduation rate that provides parents, educators and community members with better information on their school’s progress while allowing for meaningful comparisons of graduation rates across states and school districts. The new graduation rate measurement also accurately accounts for students who drop out or who do not earn a regular high school diploma.

In 2011, states began individually reporting 2010-11 high school graduation rates, but this is the first time the Department has compiled these rates in one public document. These 2010-11 graduation rates are preliminary, state-reported data, and the Department plans to release final rates in the coming months. Beginning with data for the 2011-12 school year, graduation rates calculated using this new method will become a key element of state accountability systems, including for states that have been approved for ESEA flexibility.

To view the data released today, see the attached document. The rates will also be posted in the coming days on ED Data Express: <http://www.eddataexpress.ed.gov/>.