

4-Year Graduation Cohort

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



Veronica García, Ed. D.
Secretary of Education

Sheila Hyde, Ph.D.
Deputy Education Secretary

Tom Dauphinee, Ph.D., Interim Supervisor

New Mexico Public Education Department

Academic Growth & Analysis Bureau
New Mexico Public Education Department

Cindy Gregory, Ph.D. Chief Statistician
cindy.gregory@state.nm.us

Is this the first year for a 4-year graduation rate?

No, New Mexico implemented the first 4-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2008, published in 2009. Prior to that time the state utilized a senior completion method that tracked 12th grade students to completion of graduation requirements by spring. The use of the senior completion method was discontinued after the class of 2007, as New Mexico undertook the transition to the National Governors Association (NGA) cohort computation.

Why is it the prior year's class instead of this year's?

The NGA cohort rate requires that students be given 4 full years to graduate, including the summer following their 12th grade year. In order to capture the outcomes of students completing requirements their final summer, the reporting of graduation must be lagged by one year. That is, the graduates of 2008 are reported in the spring of 2009. To shift to the one-year lagged schedule of reporting, the United States Department of Education allowed New Mexico to duplicate the graduation rates from 2007 in 2008.

Are these rates similar to prior rates?

Yes and No. The *Shared Accountability* method allows comparison to the 4-year rates published since 2009. However, between years 2008 and 2009 a break in trend prohibits useful comparisons with prior years.

What happened to the 5-year rate passed by the legislature?

Recent legislation (2009) mandated the use of a 5-year rate as the standard for New Mexico schools and districts. The longitudinal data system STARS (Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System) now contains necessary data to inform a 5-year rate. Therefore, beginning in 2010 the 5-year rate will be reported along with the 4-year rate for all classes. Separate technical documents and FAQs exist for the 5-year rate and are available on the NMPED website.

What is the NGA 4-year cohort?

In 2005 the National Governors Association convened a Task Force to make recommendations on how states could measure graduation rates in a way that was comparable across states and was based on high-quality, student-level longitudinal data. The resulting recommendation, ultimately agreed to by all 50 governors, was for all states to calculate a high school graduation rate based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{On-time graduates by year X}}{\text{[(first time 9th graders in year X-4) + (transfers in) - (transfers out)]}}$$

This graduation rate applies to students who receive standard diplomas, not certificates of completion or attendance, nor General Educational Development (GED) certificates.

What is "Shared Accountability"?

In the past, New Mexico assigned a student's graduation outcome to the school where they were last enrolled. Mobile students who attended several schools would impact only their most recent school. Moreover, only schools with a 12th grade were eligible to receive a rate. In order to hold all schools accountable for their effect on graduating students, the *shared accountability* method was developed to give feedback to all high schools, including those with only 9th or 10th grades. The method apportions a student's outcome among all schools they attended, and is adjusted by the amount of time spent at each school.

Does this mean that mobile students count more than stable students in the rates?

No, every student contributes a total count of 1.0 (100%) to the numerator and denominator of the rate for schools, districts, and state. For example, a student who attended 2 schools for equal amounts of time would contribute .50 (or 50%) of their outcome to each school.

Who else uses this method?

New Mexico is one of the first to use shared accountability, primarily because of the capabilities of our Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS) which was implemented in 2005. Students are now tracked with multiple yearly snapshots that provide a valuable history of how long the student attended each high school. Other states do not yet have adequate information systems that can provide this information.

Who is a member of the cohort?

The cohort consists of all first-time 9th graders in the first of the 4 years. They are joined by incoming 10th graders in the second year, 11th graders in the third year, and 12th graders in the fourth year. To become a member the student must have been enrolled for at least one semester during the four year period.

Are there any students who are not in the cohort of 2008?

Yes. Certain students are excluded from the cohort because they meet these criteria:

- Foreign exchange on a "J" visa
- Transferred out to a private, out-of-state, or home school
- Deceased
- Moved outside of the United States and its territories

Can students be reassigned to a different cohort?

In general, students cannot be reassigned to a different cohort once they have become a member. However there are certain conditions that will permit a student extra time to graduate provided that the reason is documented during high school:

- Incarceration where there are no educational programs
- Student with a disability (SWD)
- Pregnancy
- Significant medical or family emergency

What about students who graduate early?

Students who graduate early will count in the cohort to which they were originally assigned.

NGA allows certain students with disabilities or English language learners extra time. Does New Mexico follow this guideline?

Yes, In 2009 New Mexico began allowing extra time for students with disabilities who's IEP indicates that they need longer than 4 years to complete high school. The rule for English language learners applies only to recent immigrants, and will be implemented for the cohort of 2010.

Does every high school receive a graduation rate?

Yes, every school with any grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 will receive a rate. That includes 9th grade academies, schools configured with additional lower grades such as K-12, and regular high schools. There are a small number of new schools whose students have not yet reached the age of 4-year graduation, and these schools cannot yet be rated.

How does the graduation rate relate to ESEA (formerly NCLB) requirements?

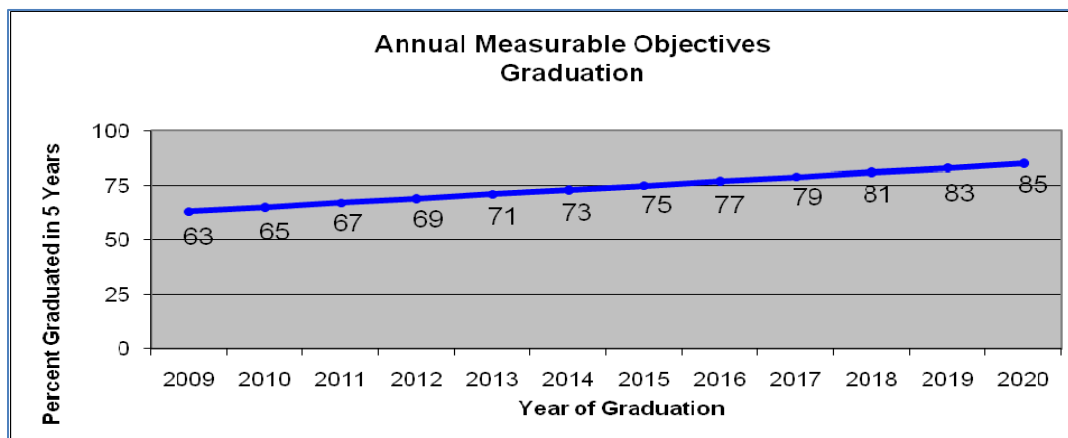
Graduation continues to serve as the AYP *Additional Academic Indicator* for high schools with a 12th grade, and for all districts. All other schools continue to have attendance rates evaluated as the additional indicator.

How were graduation targets set?

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for the cohort graduation rate were set in 2009 to increase from a baseline of 63% for the cohort of 2008 toward a graduation goal of 85% for the cohort of 2020. A 52%

baseline in 2008 was adjusted to account for the inability to apply NGA flexibility for English language learners and students with disabilities. The State is awaiting approval from the U.S. Department of Education to continue these targets.

Graduating Class of												
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
% Graduated	63%	65%	67%	69%	71%	73%	75%	77%	79%	81%	83%	85%
Reporting Yr	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021



Can some students take longer to graduate?

Specialized groups may be allowed 5, 6, or 7 years to graduate, such as special education students whose IEP allocates additional time, or recent immigrants that do not speak English. These students are reassigned to a later cohort.

Who is considered a “graduate”?

Graduates are students who graduate with a standard diploma (including the Career and Ability pathways). Students who get a GED or a Certificate of Completion (complete course requirements but do not pass all portions of the high school exit exam) are considered “non-graduates” in the computation of the graduation rate.

Is the dropout rate related to the cohort rate?

No. The federal definition for a dropout differs from a non-graduate and therefore the rates are not complementary. To be excused from the dropout rate a student can be still enrolled after 4 years, receive a GED, or finish high school with a certificate of completion (did not pass the comprehensive exam). None of these conditions are allowed in the graduation rate.