

A green, curved line representing a hill. On the hill, there are five black silhouettes of people walking upwards from left to right. The first is a small child, followed by a person, then a person, then a person, and finally a person in a graduation cap and gown.

**Indiana  
Department of Education**

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## **Graduation Rate: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **How is a student assigned a cohort year?**

A student is assigned a cohort year (or expected graduation year) when a student is first enrolled in Indiana (grades 9, 10, 11, or 12). The expected graduation year, or cohort year, does not change. The reports utilized to assign a student to a cohort (or expected graduation year) are the Real Time (RT) collection (for public schools) and the Enrollment Mobility (EM) collection (for non-public schools). The Pupil Enrollment (PE) collection, which is a verified snapshot of RT/EM, is utilized each fall to first assign 9<sup>th</sup> graders to a cohort.

### **How are students assigned to a school's cohort?**

Students are assigned to a school's cohort based on the last reported school at which the student was enrolled, using the real time (public schools) or enrollment mobility report (non-public school). On Real Time, the school of accountability field is utilized to determine cohort placement.

### **How are students moved out of the cohort?**

By law, students can only be moved out of a cohort for certain mobility reasons. A list of dropout and mobility codes are posted on the doe website at <http://www.doe.in.gov/accountability/graduation-rate>. Dropout and mobility codes are reported to the IDOE by the schools via the RT/EM collections.

**Why is the graduation rate a four-year rate?**

State law (IC 20-26-13-6) indicates that the graduation rate is the percentage of students within a cohort who graduate during their expected graduation year, and expected graduation year is defined as three years after a student is first considered to have entered grade 9.

**I have a student who was a 9th grader last year but was retained and was still a 9th grader in the current year. Does that retained student now join a later cohort?**

No. Students don't "jump" cohorts; they always belong to the same cohort, or expected graduation year. A student always has the same "expected graduation year", which is defined as "the reporting year beginning three years after the reporting year in which a student is first considered by a school corporation to have entered Grade 9" (IC 20-26-13-4).

By law, Indiana's published graduation rate is a four-year rate. Therefore, if a student is retained or for some other reason does not graduate within four years, then the student will not be counted as a graduate of his or her cohort. Indiana law also states that a student must be counted for only one cohort (IC 20-26-13-10.7). Students who are retained stay in the same cohort; they are just considered non-graduates.

**I am reporting the graduates for this past school year and I notice that not all of these students appear on that year's cohort.**

This most likely represents a difference between expected graduation year (cohort year) and their actual graduation year. Students should be reported on the Graduate Report (DOE-GR) in the year they actually graduate. They may appear on a prior cohort year or may appear in a future cohort year in the case of an early graduate.

**What happens to early graduates? Does a school not get credit for them?**

A school gets credit for early graduates. However, those students remain part of their expected cohort and will be counted as graduates in the year in which they were expected to graduate. The student's cohort status on the cohort report will be "Early Graduate."

**What about a student who graduates in five years? Does a school get credit for that student?**

By law, the official graduation rate is a four-year rate. However, students who graduate after four years should be reported on the DOE-GR (Graduate) report. Those students will count toward a school's five- or six- (or subsequent year) graduation rate, but the student will not count toward his or her four year cohort's rate.

**Are special education students who receive a certificate of completion or students who receive a GED diploma considered graduates?**

No. By state law and state board rule, graduates are only those who have obtained a high school diploma as defined in 511 IAC 6-7 (IC 20-26-13-5). The term "graduate" or "graduation" does not include the granting of a general educational development diploma under IC 20-20-6 or a certificate of completion under 511 IAC 7-43. These students are not considered dropouts; however, for the purposes of graduation rate calculation, these students are not considered graduates.

**By which date must a student have completed all requirements for receiving a diploma in order to be reported as a graduate?**

A student must have completed all diploma requirements by October 1 of their expected graduation year, or cohort year, in order to be considered a graduate of that reporting year. For example, a student who is in the 2019 cohort must complete all graduation requirements by October 1 of 2019 in order to count

toward the schools 2019 four year graduation rate. If the student graduates after that time, the student should still be reported as a graduate and will count towards the 5-year graduation rate.

**What about students who receive special education services that receive a Certificate of Completion, yet continue to attend school up until age 22?**

Schools should report students who complete a certificate of completion as a mobility code of 34-Midyear Graduate on the RT/EM. The student will continue to appear on their original 4-year expected graduation year (cohort year) report and will be listed as "Still in School" for that year as a certificate of completion does not count as a graduate.

**What about students who transfer out of the country?**

Students who transfer to a school out of the country should be coded as 25- Transferred Out of State on the RT/EM. You will need a signed statement from the parent interview with the name and location of the school, including the country. Foreign exchange students who are returning to their country of origin should be reported as 27-Forieign Exchange on the RT/EM.

**What do I do if I am unable to obtain the necessary documentation?**

Schools should take the necessary steps to obtain the necessary documentation for each of the mobility codes, otherwise a dropout code of 14-Unknown should be utilized or a code of 15-Truancy should be utilized. If a school knows that the student moved out of state or out of the country, it should take steps to obtain the necessary documentation and document the steps that it has taken to collect the documentation. In the case of an audit, students for whom there is improper documentation may be returned to the cohort. Students should be reported utilizing the dropout or mobility code that best represents what actually happened to them.

### **What is the graduation rate audit?**

For any school where the difference between the estimated graduation rate and the reported four-year cohort graduation rate is more than five percent, IDOE must request the written documentation from the schools, which supports removing a student from the cohort because of transfer or any of the other circumstances enumerated in IC 20-26-13-10. Schools may also pursue a voluntary a graduation rate audit as part of the A-F audit process. The documentation needed for each mobility code can be located at <http://www.doe.in.gov/accountability/graduation-rate>.