

# 2016-17 INFORMATION GUIDE FOR THE 4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE COHORT



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**  
fldoe.org

Pam Stewart, Commissioner

January 2018

This document was prepared by staff in the Bureau of Accountability Reporting; Division of  
Accountability, Research, and Measurement.

Questions? Please call 850-245-0411 or e-mail [evalnrpt@fldoe.org](mailto:evalnrpt@fldoe.org).

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## Overview

Florida's high school graduation rate is based on the percentage of students who graduated with a standard diploma within four years of their first-full year of enrollment in ninth grade in the state. However, adjustments are made to this cohort over time to

- add incoming transfer students based on their grade level and year of entry;
- remove deceased students; and
- remove students who withdrew to attend school in another state, private school, or home-education program.

Each student in the resulting adjusted cohort receives a final classification as a graduate, dropout, or nongraduate.

## ***New Withdrawal Code***

Chapter 2017-116, § 27, Laws of Florida, amended section 1008.34, Florida Statutes, so that high school students who transfer to a private school with which the school district has a contractual relationship are included in the 4-year adjusted graduation rate cohort of the public high school.

To capture these students, the Department has approved a new withdrawal code: WPC. While this code will be implemented in the Student Information System for the 2017-18 school year, this code was available to use in the Graduation Rate Cohort Corrections web application for students included in the 2016-17 cohort.

## **How the Cohort is Built**

The cohort is built first by including the following:

- All first-time 9th graders in the district in fall 2013-14 membership survey.
- Incoming transfers on the same schedule to graduate
  - New 9th graders in 2013-14
  - New 10th graders in 2014-15
  - New 11th graders in 2015-16
  - New 12th graders in 2016-17

The cohort is initially established using Survey 2 data (from the Student Demographic Information format) based on students first, full-year of 9<sup>th</sup> grade four years prior to the current year. In order to be considered enrolled as a first-time 9<sup>th</sup> grade student, students must

- have course records on the Student Course Schedule format during Survey 2 of 2013-14;
- have an End-of-Year Status record indicating the student was enrolled in grade 9; and
- not have a Grade Promotion Status coded "R" (which would indicate the student was retained) in 2012-13.

Once the first-time 9<sup>th</sup> grade students have been identified, the incoming transfer students who were not in public school in Florida in 2013-14, but are on time to graduate with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort, are added to the cohort. The Student End-of-Year Status format is reviewed for each of the subsequent years to identify incoming transfers on the same schedule to graduate as students in the initial cohort.

At this point, the withdrawal codes from the Student End-of-Year Status format are identified in order to determine which students need to be removed from the cohort so that they will not be included in the denominator of the calculation.

Data elements used in this step are the following:

- District Number, Current Enrollment
- School Number, Current Enrollment
  - Except McKay Scholarship Programs, home-education programs, and private schools
- Student Number Identifier, Florida
- Grade Level

The Prior School Status/Student Attendance format is used to determine Withdrawal Codes, and the Student End-of-Year Status format is used to determine Withdrawal Reason and Diploma Type. A withdrawal status is applied based upon the withdrawal code definitions listed on pages 3-7.

### ***Adjusting the Cohort<sup>1</sup>***

The cohort is then adjusted by removing the following:

- Transfers to other public schools, excluding DJJ facilities, jails, or adult education programs (W3A)
- Transfers to other public schools out-of-state (W3B)
- Transfers to private schools (W04)
- Transfers to home-education programs (W24)
- Deceased students (W12)

### ***How to Calculate the Graduation Rate***

In order to calculate the graduation rate, the adjusted cohort becomes the denominator, and the subset of those records that count as graduates are identified by looking at the diploma codes.

The numerator consists of students who were assigned the following codes, which are defined on pages 3-8:

2016-17 and earlier: W06, W43, W52, WD1, WFT, WFW, WRW, WXL, WXT, WXW, W54, W55

2014-15 and earlier: W6A, W6B, WFA, WFB

Denominator: All students in the adjusted cohort

Total records in the file minus the previously excluded records indicating transfers out-of-state or -district (W3A, W3B), to private school or home-education programs (W04, W24), or students who have died (W12). Students with a DJJ flag of Y and withdrawal codes of W3A and W02 are converted to nongraduates at the last regular high school they attended prior to placement in the DJJ facility/jail. Students who transferred to adult education programs are included in the cohort of the last high school they attended.

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<sup>1</sup> Different rules apply for DJJ/jail students, as these students are walked back to the last Florida public school they attended prior to enrollment in a DJJ facility/jail; unless there was a break in public school service before enrollment.

## Student Withdrawal Codes

Please refer to the Appendix A and Appendix B of the Student Database Manuals for a complete list of withdrawal codes: (<http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/database-manuals-updates/2016-17-student-info-system/index.stml>). Graduate codes that are not valid after 2014-15 were removed from the appendices prior to the 2016-17 school year, but remain listed below as a student could have graduated early with one of those diploma codes.

Withdrawal Code/Diploma Type and Definition	How Withdrawal Code is Counted in the Graduation Rate Calculation
<b>DNE</b> – Any KG-12 student who was expected to attend a school but did not enter as expected for unknown reasons and required documented efforts to locate the student are maintained per s. 1003.26, Florida Statutes.	Dropout
<b>W01</b> – Any PK-12 student promoted, retained or transferred to another attendance reporting unit in the same school.	Nongraduate; still in school thus counted as a nongraduate.
<b>W02</b> <sup>2</sup> – Any PK-12 student promoted, retained or transferred to another school in the same district.	Nongraduate
<b>W3A</b> <sup>3</sup> – Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend a public school in another district in Florida.	Transferred out of cohort
<b>W3B</b> – Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend another public school out-of-state or out-of-country.	Transferred out of cohort
<b>W04</b> – Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend a nonpublic school in- or out-of-state or out-of-country.	Transferred out of cohort
<b>W05</b> – Any student age 16 or older who leaves school voluntarily with no intention of returning and has filed a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment per s. 1003.21, Florida Statutes.	Dropout
<b>W06</b> – Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma.	Graduate
<b>W6A</b> – Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma, based on the 18-credit college preparatory graduation option.	Graduate; not valid after 2014-15.

<sup>2</sup> The W02 is counted as a nongraduate if the code is at the last school of enrollment for the student.

<sup>3</sup> The W3A is converted to a nongraduate for DJJ/jail students if it is walked back to the most recent regular high school and the home high school has no other completion code. That school or another school should have a more recent withdrawal code. If the DJJ facility/jail has a W3A, then this student should already be counted at a regular high school. If not, it means this student is still in school.

Withdrawal Code/Diploma Type and Definition	How Withdrawal Code is Counted in the Graduation Rate Calculation
<b>W6B</b> – Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma, based on the 18-credit career preparatory graduation option.	Graduate; not valid after 2014-15.
<b>W07</b> – Any student who graduated from school with a special diploma based on option one - as referenced in State Board of Education Rule 6A-1.09961.	Nongraduate
<b>W08</b> – Any student who received a (24-credit option) certificate of completion. The student met the minimum credits and local requirements, but did not pass the state approved graduation test or a concordant and/or comparative score, and/or did not achieve the required GPA.	Nongraduate
<b>W8A</b> – Any student who met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma (24-credit option) except passing the State approved graduation test and received a certificate of completion and is eligible to take the common placement test and be admitted to developmental education or credit courses at a state community college as appropriate	Nongraduate
<b>W8B</b> – Any student who received a certificate of completion. The student met the minimum credits, but did not pass the state approved graduation test or a concordant and/or comparative score, and/or did not achieve the required GPA.	Nongraduate
<b>W8C</b> – Any student who met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma (18-credit option) except passing the State approved graduation test and received a certificate of completion and is eligible to take the common placement test and be admitted to developmental education or credit courses at a state community college as appropriate.	Nongraduate; not valid after 2014-15.
<b>W09</b> – Any student who received a special certificate of completion, is properly classified as an eligible exceptional education student, met applicable local requirements, and was unable to meet appropriate special state minimum requirements.	Nongraduate

Withdrawal Code/Diploma Type and Definition	How Withdrawal Code is Counted in the Graduation Rate Calculation
<b>W10</b> – Any student who completed the Performance-Based Exit Option Model Program requirements, passed the Performance-Based Exit Option Tests and the state approved graduation test, and was awarded a State of Florida High School Performance-Based Diploma.	Nongraduate
<b>W12</b> – Any PK-12 student withdrawn from school due to death.	Transferred out of cohort.
<b>W13</b> – Any KG-12 student withdrawn from school due to court action. (This code does not apply to DJJ placement.)	Dropout
<b>W15</b> – Any KG-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to nonattendance after all procedures outlined in sections 1003.26 and 1003.27, Florida Statutes, have been followed.	Dropout
<b>W18</b> – Any KG-12 student who withdraws from school due to medical reasons and the student is unable to receive educational services, such as those provided through the hospital/homebound program.	Dropout
<b>W21</b> – Any KG-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to being expelled with no educational services.	Dropout
<b>W22</b> – Any KG-12 student whose whereabouts is unknown and required documented efforts to locate the student are maintained per s. 1003.26, Florida Statutes.	Dropout
<b>W23</b> – Any KG-12 student who withdraws from school for any reason other than W01 - W22 or W24 - W27.	Dropout
<b>W24</b> – Any KG-12 student who withdraws from school to attend a Home Education program.	Transferred out of cohort.
<b>W26<sup>4</sup></b> – Any student who withdraws from school to enter the adult education program prior to completion of graduation requirements.	Nongraduate; remains in the cohort.
<b>W27</b> – Any student who graduated from school with a special diploma based on option two-mastery of employment and community competencies.	Nongraduate
<b>W43</b> – Any adult student who graduated from school with a standard diploma, 24-Credit Option.	Graduate
<b>W45</b> – Any adult student who left school with a State of Florida diploma (GED).	Nongraduate

<sup>4</sup> Transfers to adult education centers in another district or state must be coded W26 – not W3A or W3B.

Withdrawal Code/Diploma Type and Definition	How Withdrawal Code is Counted in the Graduation Rate Calculation
<b>W52</b> – Any adult student who graduated from school with a standard diploma and satisfied the graduation test requirement through a concordant and/or comparative score, 24-credit option.	Graduate
<b>W54</b> – Adult standard high school diploma (ACCEL) 18-credit option.	Graduate; added in 2013-14.
<b>W55</b> – Adult standard high school diploma (ACCEL), state concordant and/or comparative score, 18-credit option.	Graduate; added 2013-14.
<b>WD1</b> – Any student with disabilities who met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma who deferred receipt of the diploma to remain eligible for FAPE, per section 1003.4282(10)(c), F.S.	Graduate; added in 2014-15.
<b>WFA</b> – Any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on an 18-credit college preparatory graduation option and satisfied the state approved graduation test requirement through a concordant and/or comparative score.	Graduate; not valid after 2014-15.
<b>WFB</b> – Any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on an 18-credit career preparatory graduation option and satisfied the state approved graduation test requirement through a concordant and/or comparative score.	Graduate; not valid after 2014-15.
<b>WFT</b> – Any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma and satisfied the state approved graduation test requirement through a concordant and/or comparative score.	Graduate
<b>WFW</b> – Any student with disabilities who graduated from school with a standard diploma and an FCAT Waiver.	Graduate; valid only for students who entered 9 <sup>th</sup> grade prior to the 2013-14 school year.
<b>WGA</b> – Any student who completed the Performance-Based Exit Option Model Program requirements, passed the Performance-Based Exit Option Tests, satisfied the state approved graduation test requirement through a concordant and/or comparative score, and was awarded a State of Florida High School Performance-Based Diploma.	Nongraduate
<b>WGD</b> – Any student who completed the Performance-Based Exit Option Model Program requirements and passed the Performance-Based Exit Option Tests, but did not pass the state approved graduation test and was awarded a State of Florida diploma.	Nongraduate



Withdrawal Code/Diploma Type and Definition	How Withdrawal Code is Counted in the Graduation Rate Calculation
<b>WPC</b> – Any student who transfers from a high school to a private school with which the school district has a contractual relationship as referenced in s. 1008.34(3)(d)3., F.S.	Nongraduate; added in 2017
<b>WPO</b> – Any student who is withdrawn from school without receiving a standard diploma and subsequent to receiving a W07, W08, W8A, W8B, W09, or W27 during the student’s year of high school completion.	Nongraduate
<b>WRW</b> – Any student with disabilities who graduated from school with a standard diploma and a Statewide Standardized Assessment Results Waiver.	Graduate; added in 2014-15.
<b>WXL</b> – Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma based on the Academically Challenging Curriculum to enhance Learning (ACCEL) options, F.S. 1002.3105(5).	Graduate; added in 2013-14.
<b>WXT</b> – Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma based on the Academically Challenging Curriculum to enhance Learning (ACCEL) options, F.S. 1002.3105(5) and satisfied the state graduation test requirement through an approved state concordant and/or comparative score.	Graduate; added in 2013-14.
<b>WXW</b> – Any student with disabilities who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma based on the Academically Challenging Curriculum to enhance Learning (ACCEL) options, F.S. 1002.3105(5) and satisfied the state graduation test requirement with an approved statewide assessment waiver.	Graduate; added in 2013-14.

## District Documentation of Withdrawal Codes

Districts must ensure they have proper documentation, such as a records request, before finalizing any withdrawal codes that would transfer a student out of the cohort, per the guidelines in the [Automated Student Attendance Recordkeeping System Handbook](#):

Each district shall maintain attendance, absence, and withdrawal information on students enrolled in the district and be able to prepare, upon request, a record of each student's entry, reentry, and withdrawal dates as well as that student's days present and absent.

The handbook further stipulates:

A withdrawal is official when one or more of the following occurs:

1. A parent or legal guardian notifies the school that the child is permanently leaving the school to enroll in another school or in home education;
2. A request for the student's school record is received from a public or private school, in- or out-of-state, in which the student is enrolled or plans to enroll;
3. The student has been transferred within the school or district by school officials;
4. The student has been promoted, graduated, has earned a certificate of completion or special certificate of completion, or holds a valid certificate of exemption from the superintendent as provided under Section 1003.21(3), Florida Statutes.
5. The student has died;
6. A student formally terminates school enrollment and the school satisfies the requirements of section 1003.21(1)(c), Florida Statutes. (This should include information to the student related to driving privileges, CINS/FINS (Child-in-Need-of-Services/Families-in-Need-of-Services) providers, and the Learnfare Program;
7. A school executes and documents that the requirements of sections 1003.26 and 1003.27, Florida Statutes, have been attempted in good faith and that the student left school voluntarily with no intention of returning or that the student's whereabouts cannot be determined.

A school is not authorized to withdraw a student from enrollment due to nonattendance as long as the student attends school, even if the student attends sporadically. A student may only be withdrawn from school due to nonattendance (W15) or withdrawn from school due to whereabouts unknown (W22) after all procedures outlined in sections 1003.26 and 1003.27, Florida Statutes have been followed. Withdrawal due to other reasons (W23) should not be used unless all other avenues have been exhausted and the district specifically approves its use.

8. At the end of the school year, appropriate withdrawal codes must be recorded on the day after the last day of school for all students who are in membership on the last day of the regular 180 day school year. On the day after the last day of summer school, the appropriate withdrawal code must also be assigned to all students who are in membership on the last day of summer school.

For those students for whom requests for records are received over the summer or during the break prior to the beginning of the next regular school year, changes should be made in the withdrawal codes that will be part of the normal process for withdrawing students. Those withdrawals should be entered on the day following the last day of the school year or summer school, whichever is appropriate.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Florida's Cohort Graduation Rates

### ***What is the "federal or uniform" graduation rate?***

As defined in 34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(i)-(iv), "the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (hereafter referred to as 'the four-year graduation rate') is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently 'adjusted' by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the 9th grade and the next three years, subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during that same period."

Only standard diploma recipients are counted as graduates, and transfers can only be removed from the cohort if the student transfers to an educational program that culminates with a standard diploma.

Florida already had the tracking system in place to calculate the cohort graduation rate. However, Florida had to adjust its list of applicable graduates and transfers in order to fully comply with the new rules as set forth in Section 200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)(1).

Federal guidelines stipulate that only students who transfer to another school or educational program that *culminates with a standard diploma* can be removed from the cohort.

### ***What is a cohort?***

For graduation rate purposes, a cohort is a group of students who enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the same time and on the same schedule to graduate four years later.

### ***How is the cohort graduation rate calculated?***

The graduation rate is the number of standard diploma recipients (numerator) divided by the total number of students in the adjusted cohort (denominator).

The denominator (adjusted cohort) is attained by compiling and classifying four years of individual student records to determine which students entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time four years prior to the year of the rate calculation; which students transferred into the cohort as 9<sup>th</sup> graders in year one, 10<sup>th</sup> graders in year two, 11<sup>th</sup> graders in year three, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in year four; and which students from the group transferred out or died.

The numerator is the number of standard diploma recipients from the adjusted cohort.

### ***What are the advantages to using a cohort graduation rate method?***

The cohort method allows for the adjustment of student mobility, thus providing a more accurate picture of the students' progress and outcomes. Additionally, the method used by FLDOE follows federal guidelines for calculation, which are used to calculate graduation rates in

all states. This uniform method of calculation allows for more accurate comparisons among schools, districts, and states.

***There is a school listed that has been closed. Why is that?***

It is possible for students to be coded as dropouts prior to the closing of a school. In these circumstances, data for that school is still included in the district's graduation rate calculation and a rate is calculated for that school.

***Where can I find a complete list of the withdrawal and diploma codes used in Florida?***

Appendices A and B in the Database Manuals for the Automated Student Database System, online at <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/database-manuals-updates/2016-17-student-info-system/index.stml>, define all the withdrawal and diploma codes.

***If a dropout re-enrolls in another high school, how is this student counted in the four-year graduation rate?***

The goal of the cohort graduation rate is to determine the final educational outcome for all students during the four-year window. So, for graduation rate purposes, a prior dropout should be updated by the district to a transfer, if the student is later found enrolled in another school.

***How are students who are retained handled?***

The student remains in the same cohort no matter how many times he or she is retained. Again, an accurate graduation rate can only occur when students are counted in only one cohort. Unless the retained student can "catch up" with his cohort by making up credits, etc., the student will be a nongraduate in the cohort rate.

***What happens if a student who was retained in 9<sup>th</sup> grade in year one of the cohort transfers to another school in the district in year two of the cohort?***

This student remains in the original cohort. The student does not "start over" in another cohort. The graduation rate is based upon the student's initial entry into 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the district; it is not based upon his/her initial entry into 9<sup>th</sup> grade at a particular school. An accurate graduation rate reflects the final outcome of all students four years after their initial entry into 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Cohort-based graduation rates are accurate only if each student is assigned to a single cohort.

The USED's Non-Regulatory Guidance paper for NCLB addresses this issue:

If a student who has repeated a grade transfers into a school, the student should be assigned to the cohort in which the student started 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time. This assignment prevents the student from being included in two separate cohorts of 9<sup>th</sup> graders—the cohort in which the student originally started 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the cohort in which the student was assigned in the school to which he or she transferred. Unless the student skipped a grade later in high school or caught up with the original cohort in

some other manner, that student could not graduate within four years of starting 9<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>5</sup>

***How are students who graduated early, such as those who graduate with the 18 credit hour diploma, counted?***

Students who graduate early are still counted in the cohort for which they were originally assigned. Example: A student entered ninth 9<sup>th</sup> in 2014-15. She is expected to graduate within four years, by 2017-18. She graduated a year early (2016-17) but will not be counted until 2017-18. The department looks for the educational outcome during the four-year period.

***How should students completing credits through virtual school be coded for graduation? Should the virtual school number or their zoned school number be used?***

If the virtual school is coded and reported as the school of enrollment and can issue diplomas, then a rate is calculated for that school. If the zoned school is the student's school of enrollment, the virtual courses should be reported as school of instruction.

The school of enrollment issues the diploma and is used for cohort purposes. A virtual school can issue a diploma for a student who is full-time at the virtual school.

***What about students who take longer than four years to graduate?***

Students taking longer than four years to graduate would be considered nongraduates in the four-year cohort graduation rate.

***Are summer graduates included in the graduation rate?***

Yes, summer graduates are counted if they graduate by the end of the current school year, which includes summer school.

***If a student gets a certificate of completion at the end of the year but takes a course in summer school to earn the 2.0 GPA, does the student count in the graduation rate if the student gets the GPA before June 30?***

Yes, if the student is reported with an applicable diploma type on the Student End of Year Status records submitted to the FDOE for that school year. If the student is not reported with a diploma on the end-of-year records for that year, the student would not be counted as a graduate.

***Does the student who earns a certificate of completion but has not passed the FCAT 2.0 count if the student takes the ACT or SAT in June and gets the concordant score before June 30?***

The student will count if the student is awarded a diploma by the district and it is reported with a diploma code on the end-of-year record for the applicable school year.

The FDOE will identify graduates for the graduation rate based on the [diploma type](#) reported for students on the [Student End of Year Status](#) record format. Survey 5 data collected on end-

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<sup>5</sup> NCLB High School Graduation Rate, Non-Regulatory Guidance, December 2008.

of-year records covers students who were enrolled at any time during the 180-day school year as well as during the school year's associated summer session, as reported by the districts. A student who is not reported with a diploma type on end-of-year records would not be counted as a graduate. A student's status is determined by the most recently reported withdrawal code, certificate type, or diploma type on the end-of-year records.

***Why can't the graduation rate and the dropout rate be added together to get 100%?***

The rates apply to different periods of measurement.

Graduation rate is a four-year, cohort-based indicator.

Dropout rate is a single-year indicator.

The rates apply to different populations.

Graduation rate tracks the progress of a group of students who entered the same grade at the same time over a four-year period.

Dropout rate tracks ***all*** students in grades 9 through 12 in a ***single*** year.

Not all nongraduates in the cohort are dropouts. Some students have been retained and are still in school, or some students received certificates of completion. These completers are considered nongraduates, not dropouts.