Building a Grad Nation

Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic

Annual Update
February 2013

A Report by

Civic Enterprises

Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University

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Letter from General and Mrs. Powell

We know where to channel our efforts and can learn from increasing examples of success. We need to start early preparing our children for a lifetime of learning, and we need to help keep them on track until they reach the 'starting line' of success—graduating high school.

Our country is making real progress in building a Grad Nation, particularly in recent years. In spite of this progress, too many of our students do not finish high school with their class, especially disadvantaged students. And far too many of those who do graduate lack the skills for success in post-secondary education and the 21st century workforce.

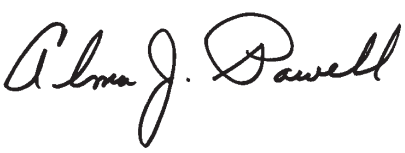
So year after year, class after class, America is still needlessly losing too much of the talent and potential of our young people to the high school dropout epidemic. In other words, we have not yet fulfilled our promises to all of America's children—promises that include loving families and caring adults; schools filled with engaging teachers and effective leaders; communities that support all aspects of a child's growth and development; and opportunities for young people to serve.

Building a Grad Nation will take all of us working together in a full-scale mobilization on behalf of *all* children, not just those in our own families or neighborhoods. Fortunately, we don't have to reinvent the wheel. We know where to channel our efforts and can learn from increasing examples of success. We need to start early preparing our children for a lifetime of learning, and we need to help keep them on track until they reach the 'starting line' of success—graduating high school. We know reaching this goal takes more than schools; it also requires commitment and collaboration from families and communities and every sector of our society.

Building on the awareness and action generated at the 105 *Dropout Prevention* Summits that America's Promise Alliance convened with our partners in all 50 states, we have focused the Grad Nation Campaign on changing lives and futures in the places of greatest need: our lowest performing high schools, which account for nearly half of all the young people who drop out. We have accelerated the use of and response to good data, and embraced a research-based Civic Marshall Plan of action with 10 planks that guide and measure the nation's progress. Partners, communities, and institutions across the country are aligning with the campaign to raise high school graduation rates, refocusing resources on what works so they can build the foundations for success that young people deserve. Like never before, we are working together in hands-on collaborations that involve educators, policymakers, business and civic leaders, young people, parents, nonprofits, and media. It is this spirit of collaboration that was the vision set forth at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, which gave rise to America's Promise Alliance nearly 16 years ago.

This is a campaign we can win. We have seen tremendous energy, commitment, and results—but we also know that we must do much more. Given the stakes to our young people, communities, economy, and nation, we have no choice but to win. With your help, we will be a Grad Nation, and ensure our future as a great nation.

General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret)
Founding Chair, America's Promise Alliance



Alma J. Powell
Chair, America's Promise Alliance

Executive Summary

This fourth annual update on America's high school dropout crisis shows that for the first time the nation is on track to meet the goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020—if the pace of improvement from 2006 to 2010 is sustained over the next 10 years. The greatest gains have occurred for the students of color and low-income students most affected by the dropout crisis. Many schools, districts and states are making significant gains in boosting high school graduation rates and putting more students on a path to college and a successful career. This progress is often the result of having better data, an understanding of why and where students drop out, a heightened awareness of the consequences to individuals and the economy, a greater understanding of effective reforms and interventions, and real-world examples of progress and collaboration. These factors have contributed to a wider understanding that the dropout crisis is solvable.

The national high school graduation rate is increasing at an accelerated pace and, for the first time, puts the nation on a path to reach the 90 percent goal by the Class of 2020.

While progress is encouraging, a deeper look at the data reveals that gains in graduation rates and declines in dropout factory high schools occurred unevenly across states and subgroups of students (e.g. economically disadvantaged, African American, Hispanic, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency). As a result, large "graduation gaps" remain in many states among students of different races, ethnicities, family incomes, disabilities and limited English proficiencies. To repeat the growth in graduation rates in the next ten years experienced in the second half of the last decade, and to ensure progress for all students, the nation must turn its attention to closing the graduation gap by accelerating progress for student subgroups most affected by the dropout crisis.

This report outlines the progress made and the challenges that remain. **Part 1: The Data** analyzes the latest graduation rates and "dropout factory" trends at the state and national levels. **Part 2: Progress and Challenge** provides an update on the nation's shared efforts to implement the Civic Marshall Plan to reach the goal of at least a 90 percent high school graduation rate for the Class of 2020 and all classes that follow. **Part 3: Paths Forward** offers recommendations on how to accelerate our work and achieve our goals, with all students prepared for college and career. The report also offers **"snapshots"** within schools, communities, and organizations from Orlando to Oakland that are making substantial gains in boosting high school graduation rates.

Part 1: Graduation Rate Data and Dropout Factory Trends

With better data and a coordinated approach, the nation is increasingly targeting efforts to stem the dropout tide by understanding who dropouts are, why they leave school, which schools are responsible for the most dropouts, and what research and real-world examples teach us about how to keep more students on track. In total, the 2010 and 2011 data, including trends, indicate that this strategy is having an effect.

- **The national high school graduation rate is increasing at an accelerated pace and, for the first time, puts the nation on a path to reach the 90 percent goal by the Class of 2020. The graduation rate, as measured by the Averaged Freshman**

Two states have a 90 percent high school graduation rate. Eighteen states are on pace to reach this goal by 2020. Seven states need to further accelerate their progress to reach this goal, and 23 states are off-pace.

More than 200,000 additional students received diplomas in 2010 than in 2006.

Graduation Rate (AFGR), increased from 71.7 percent in 2001 to 78.2 percent in 2010. The greatest gains in high school graduation rates occurred since 2006, with the national graduation rate increasing 5 percentage points over four years. **Two states—Wisconsin and Vermont—have met the 90 percent high school graduation rate goal. If this average rate of improvement of 1.25 percentage points per year from 2006 to 2010 is maintained during the second decade of this century, the nation will reach its graduation rate goal by 2020.** Students who graduated in 2010 entered high school in 2006 when efforts to reform the large, low-performing high schools that produced a disproportionate share of the nation's dropouts were spreading and intensifying and a more targeted approach to addressing the dropout challenge was emerging. Equally significant, the improvements between 2006 and 2010 were driven largely by a 10.4 percentage point increase in the graduation rate of Hispanic students and a 6.9 percentage point increase among African American students.

- **There were 583 fewer dropout factories and 1.1 million fewer students attending them in 2011 than in 2002.** From 2009 to 2011, the number of dropout factories fell from 1,634 to 1,424, down from a high of 2,007 in 2002. The rate of decline in the number of dropout factories and the number of students attending them was significantly faster between 2008 and 2011 than between 2002 and 2008. **The percentage of African American students attending dropout factory high schools has declined from nearly 50 percent in 2002 to 25 percent in 2011; for Hispanic students, the rate declined from 39 percent in 2002 to 17 percent in 2011.**

- **The Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates confirm progress.** Forty-seven states have reported the new adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate (the Cohort Rate). **Twenty-four states are at or above 80 percent.** Thirty-five states have a graduation rate of 76 percent or higher. **Twelve states have rates at or below 75 percent**, and three states—Idaho, Kentucky and Oklahoma—have yet to report graduation rates under the Cohort Rate.
- **Significant "graduation gaps" impede progress, as graduation rates among states are uneven for students of different races, ethnicities, family incomes, disabilities and with limited English proficiency.** Although there has been progress in boosting graduation rates for Hispanic and African American students in recent years, the four-year graduation rate is still 66 percent or less for African American students in 20 states and for Hispanic students in 16 states. For students from low-income families, graduation rates are at 66 percent or less in 18 states. For students with disabilities, graduation rates are below, often shockingly below, 66 percent in 30 states, and the same is true for limited English proficient students in 33 states. By contrast, there are no states in which the graduation rate for white students is below 66 percent and only four states in which it is 75 percent or less. Moreover, there are eleven states in which the graduation rate for white students is 89 percent or higher, but no state where this is true for African American, Hispanic, or economically disadvantaged students.

PART 2: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGE—The Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation

A coalition of leading U.S. organizations has been working to heighten awareness of the dropout epidemic, identify the schools from which students disproportionately drop out, host summits to

build awareness and prompt action, and support reforms and interventions that research shows are effective. This coalition developed a Civic Marshall Plan (CMP) that adopts a cohort approach that identifies and supports over time the students from the Class of 2020 (today's current fifth-graders), targets the lowest-performing schools, and builds a research-based plan to prompt those institutional changes that will ensure more students graduate prepared for the future. The *2012 Building a Grad Nation* report provided comprehensive updates on the CMP.[1] This year, we provide updates only in areas with significant improvements from the previous year.

Principle: Strategic Focus on and Accountability for Graduation Rates

While progress has been made in collecting and reporting more accurate graduation rate data and setting targets for progress, kinks in calculation methods and the underlying definitions must be addressed to ensure better measurement *and* real accountability.

- **Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia are reporting graduation rates using a common measure—the Cohort Rate the U.S. Department of Education required beginning in the 2010-11 school year.**[2] Under the Cohort Rate, students receive an individual student identifier, so that student progress can be accurately known, not estimated. The Cohort Rate calculates how many students start ninth grade and finish four years later, accounting for transfers in and out of schools in a state with documentation. States are required to differentiate among students who take four, five, and six years to graduate from high school, as well as count "regular" diplomas rather than certificates of completion and GEDs. Across most states, implementation of the Cohort Rate is proceeding well, but continued scrutiny and a commitment to common definitions will be required to reach the full apples-to-apples comparison potential of the Cohort Rate.
- **No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Flexibility Waivers to States change the landscape, and close monitoring will be required to insure graduation rate accountability is not undermined.** As a result of the failure to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), the U.S. Department of Education (ED) responded to requests from states to create flexibility through waivers from some provisions of federal law. With waivers in place, the key now is effective monitoring to help ensure states follow the intent of the waivers to allow innovation while keeping a focus on improving outcomes, including graduation rates, for disadvantaged students.

The shift to higher expectations may mean that students who are already off-track, or at risk of becoming off-track, may have further to go to get back on track.

Principle: High Expectations—the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) signal tremendous progress in the American education system.

Nearly every state has adopted CCSS.[3] The standards represent a critical step toward ensuring the national high school graduation rate goal has meaning in preparing students for college and career and in providing equality of opportunity in all areas of the country.

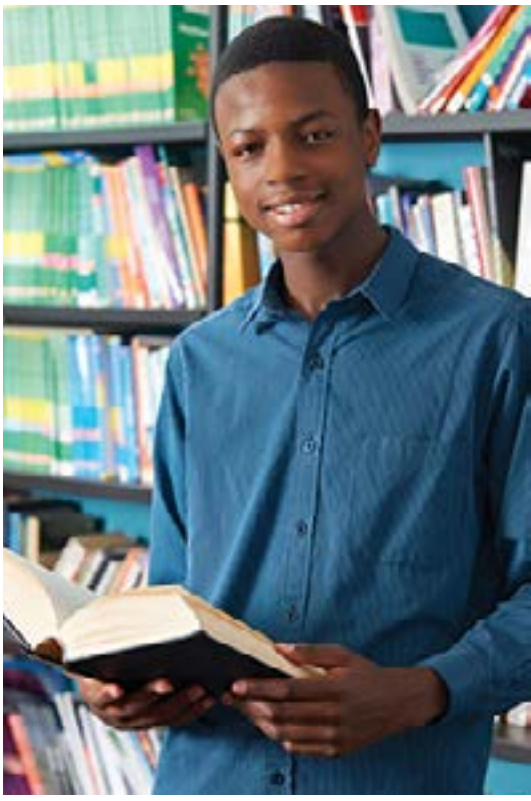
Research shows proficient reading by the end of third grade is an important predictor of school success and high school graduation.

- **Implementation challenges loom for CCSS.** The shift to higher expectations may mean that students who are already off-track, or at risk of becoming off-track, may have further to go to get back on track. Raising standards without also providing new school designs and additional supports could mean fewer graduates. At the same time, many of the school districts making significant gains in high school graduation rates have risen to a standard of excellence, giving more students access to a college-prep sequence and AP courses, early college high schools, dual enrollment, and alternative pathways to a college credential with value in the labor market.

Principle: Thoughtful Collaboration—The Planks of the Civic Marshall Plan

The Civic Marshall Plan (CMP) focuses on using evidenced-based strategies to address the dropout crisis and engages leading organizations from across sectors to align their efforts with the CMP (see Appendix J for a full list of the CMP Leadership Council). The planks that have been most significantly advanced in the previous year are:

- **Plank 1: Grade-Level Reading.** Research shows proficient reading by the end of third grade is an important predictor of school success and high school graduation. In the past year, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Network—represented in 34 states and 350 school districts—has made tremendous efforts in this area. In addition to improving instructional approaches, each of the communities has developed an action plan to address challenges beyond the schoolyard that keep low-income students from learning to read well.
- **Plank 2: Chronic Absenteeism.** Research shows that chronic absence is an early warning indicator of potential dropout and affects a student's ability to master reading, pass courses and gain credits. Efforts to combat chronic absenteeism gained considerable traction in the past year with a new report estimating that five million to 7.5 million students are chronically absent and highlighting the failure of school districts and schools to track the chronic absence of individual students. Successful strategies led by mayors and superintendents, combined with the increased availability of on-line tools and resources, are helping to raise awareness of the impact of chronic absenteeism and driving action to address it. In September 2012, Attendance Works and The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading requested that superintendents make attendance a top priority, mobilize the community around reducing chronic absence, and use data to identify students and schools in need of extra support.



- **Plank 3: Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems (EWS).** Over the past decade, schools, districts, and states have become increasingly savvy with data collection and analysis, including the use of early warning indicator and intervention systems. Recently, Race to the Top has driven states to improve the quality of their data systems and their use in driving policy and practice. To accelerate use of early

warning indicators and intervention systems, the George W. Bush Institute plans to host a series of Early Warning System Summits to accelerate the adoption and use of high-quality systems and interventions. These summits, beginning in October 2013, will highlight related research and evidence-based practices from around the country and then help leaders from states, districts, schools, and nonprofits build and utilize such systems.

- **Plank 4: The Middle Grades; Plank 6: Adult and Peer Supports.**[4] Plank 4 of the Civic Marshall Plan, redesign the middle grades to foster high student engagement, and Plank 6, provide transition support for struggling students in grades 8-10, are being addressed by the George W. Bush Institute and national organizations with networks that serve more than two million middle-school youth. To accelerate use of evidence-based interventions to keep students on the path to high school graduation in the middle grades, the George W. Bush Institute's Middle School Matters, the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk and partners are delivering a set of research-based online tools for schools and districts. In addition, 20 youth-serving networks and national out-of-school time (OST) intermediaries are working to strengthen the learning experiences of and support provided to middle-school youth outside of school hours by boosting the competencies of OST program professionals, volunteers, and mentors.

In the past year, national leaders have re-envisioned career and technical education (CTE) as a prestigious, enterprising pathway for more students.

- **Plank 9: Pathways to College and Career.** There are 29 million middle skill jobs requiring sub-baccalaureate degrees.[5] In the past year, national leaders have re-envisioned career and technical education (CTE) as a prestigious, enterprising pathway for more students. For example, Opportunity Nation released a national plan of action with input from partners in their network of 250 organizations actively engaged in connecting more young adults to school and career. The Obama Administration developed a blueprint to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, the federal government's primary investment in CTE. High-quality CTE programs of study, aligned with academic as well as technical workplace standards, have the potential to reduce high school dropout rates as students see the relevance of what they are learning to potential careers. CTE will also reduce remedial education and training costs for post-secondary institutions and employers as more qualified entrants appear. At the same time, CTE will help the nation close the skills gap and place more American's in available jobs.
- **Plank 10: Dropout Recovery.** In recent years, increased efforts have emerged to reengage the 6.7 million 16-to-24-year-olds who are disconnected from school or work, about half of whom are high school dropouts. The White House Council for Community Solutions listened to the perspectives of "opportunity youth," commissioned research to understand the economic costs of their disconnection, highlighted successful community models, produced an employer toolkit to help reconnect them, and issued a set of recommendations for the Obama Administration. The Aspen Forum on Community Solutions and its Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, Opportunity Nation, YouthBuild, Forum for Youth Investment, Jobs for the Future, Year Up, National Youth Council, and Hope Street Group, together with many other organizations, are working together to reconnect opportunity youth to school and work.

For reporting and accountability purposes, the Cohort Rate should be used. For reporting purposes, the Department of Education should also continue to collect AFGR, as it allows for longitudinal analysis.

Part 3: Paths Forward

Supplementing the comprehensive recommendations from previous years, we provide recommendations related to the core elements of this year's report: graduation rate reporting and accountability, the "graduation gap," and the Civic Marshall Plan.

- **Continue to Strengthen and Align Graduation Rate Reporting and Accountability.** The Cohort Rate should continue to be used for reporting and accountability purposes at the school, district, state, and federal levels. Rates of graduation in four, five, and six years should be calculated and reported separately, for both reporting and accountability purposes, with an emphasis on graduating students from high school within four years, college-and career-ready. States and the U.S. Department of Education should reach consensus on key issues that remain critical to true comparisons and informed policy decisions across school districts and states, including common definitions of: what is a "regular diploma"; how this applies to all students, including students with disabilities; who is a ninth grader; how to document and count transfers to other degree-granting institutions; how to code and count undocumented transfers out of state and the country; and how to account for home schooling to ensure consistent and accurate state graduation rates. For reporting purposes, the Department of Education should also continue to collect AFGR, as it allows for longitudinal analysis. Additionally, schools, districts, states, and the U.S. Department of Education should work to ensure that graduation rate data are available to the public quickly and transparently. The data on state-level graduation gaps, across sub-groups, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency, as well as the data on the extent to which graduation gaps for African American and Hispanic students were closed across states during the NCLB era, show that strong accountability for closing graduation gaps will be required for the nation to reach a 90 percent graduation rate. Lastly, the extent to which graduation rate improvement is sufficiently encouraged in state accountability systems in waiver states needs to be closely watched.

- **Expand efforts to close the "graduation gap" among students of different races, ethnicities, income levels, disabilities and language proficiencies.** Data show that the nation must close the graduation gap in order to reach the Grad Nation goal and strengthen its commitment to equality of opportunity. Practitioners and policymakers must redouble their efforts to target policy, evidence-based interventions, and additional resources to enable low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and limited English proficiency students to graduate at rates equal to more advantaged students. Just as the nation has focused its attention on boosting high school graduation rates in low-performing schools, we need additional efforts to help students within all schools who need greater support.
- **Stay the course of the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation.** The Civic Marshall Plan includes ten research-based planks to guide the work to reach the 90 percent high school graduation goal by 2020. Since the founding of the Grad Nation Campaign, organizations representing policymakers, educators, nonprofits, foundations, businesses, communities, and the media have been mobilizing their resources and people around this plan, driving action and results in schools and communities. Policymakers and practitioners should continue to expand what works and foster significant institutional alignment with the Civic Marshall Plan. The full report also offers detailed recommendations on the ten planks of the Civic Marshall Plan.

Introduction

For the first time ever, as a nation, we are on track to meet the national goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020.

A NOTE TO THE READER: The authors of this report have shared progress and challenge on the high school dropout epidemic, including best practices and recent developments at the local, state, and national levels. Solutions exist in your school, your youth center, and your community. We are interested in learning about best practices, efforts that have been evaluated and tested, and information that may be of interest to other schools, communities, and states. If you have a suggestion, idea, or comment, please write us at gradnation@civicenterprises.net. We look forward to hearing from you.

For the first time ever, as a nation we are on track to meet the national goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020. For decades, national initiatives have proposed big goals and failed to meet them. In his 1990 State of the Union Address, President George H.W. Bush called on the nation to increase high school graduation rates to 90 percent by 2000, a goal President Clinton echoed in his *Goals 2000*.[6] That goal was not achieved. In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* into law and ushered in a new era of accountability to close the achievement gap and boost graduation rates, declaring the 90 percent goal was to be achieved by 2014. That goal will not be achieved. Now, however, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers are learning what it takes to succeed. Across the country, schools are making significant gains in boosting high school graduation rates, putting more students on a path to college and a successful career. In recent years, many schools, districts, communities and states—and now the nation—have achieved a pace that, if sustained over the next decade, will allow us to reach the Grad Nation goal.

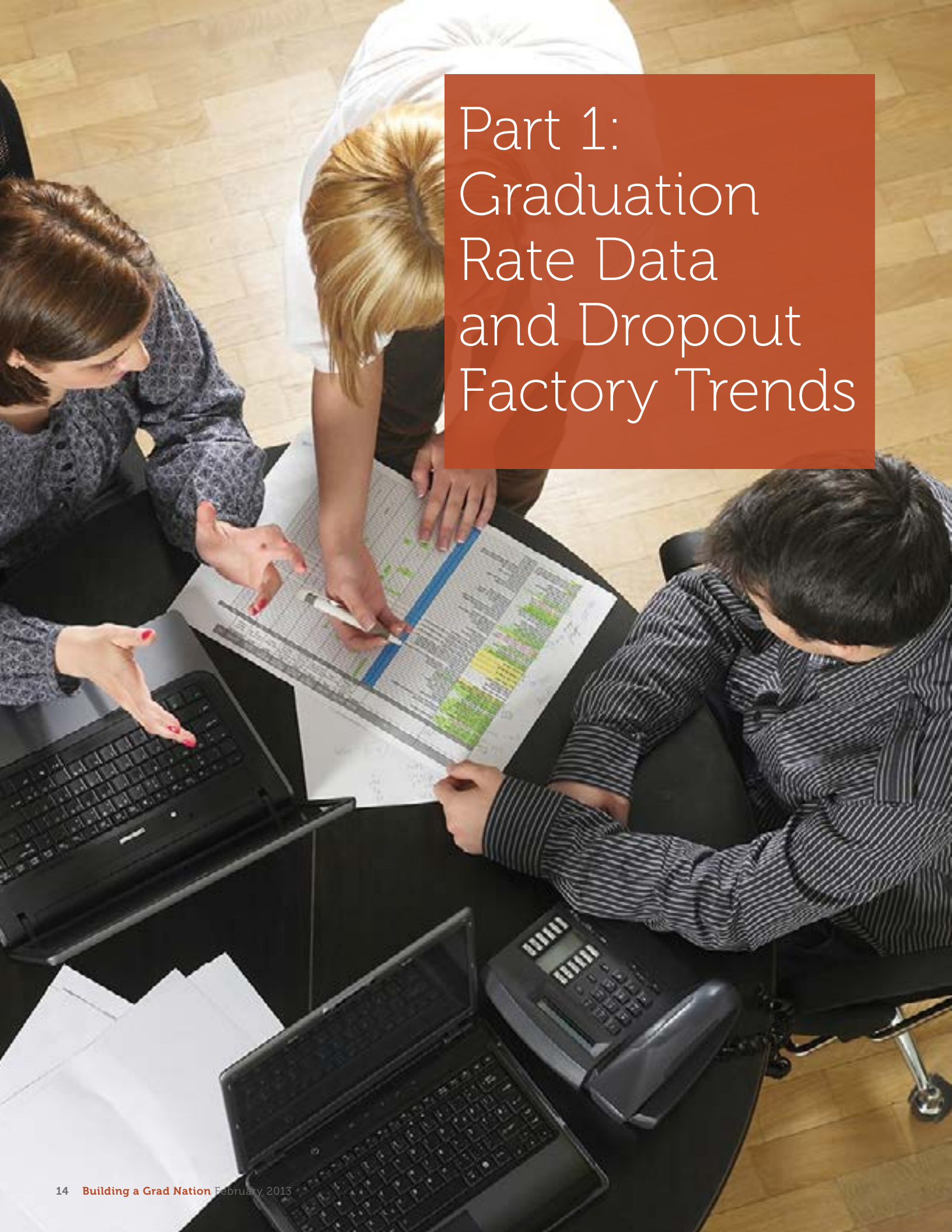
As recently as 2001, the high school graduation rate was in decline. Reported graduation rates across the nation were often overestimated and subject to different methods of calculation. In the early 2000s a small band of researchers began to draw attention to the problem. In 2004, *Locating the Dropout Crisis* highlighted the dimensions of the challenge—revealing that a small percentage of high schools, about 2,000, produced more than half the nation's dropouts and that the problem could be targeted and solved.[7] Two years later, *The Silent Epidemic* brought voices of dropouts themselves to the nation, identifying the reasons students dropped out and what would have helped them stay in school. The report gave the nation hope that most students, with the right interventions, could graduate from high school.[8]

By the middle of the past decade, high school reform efforts and better-targeted dropout prevention strategies that began in a few cities and schools were spreading broadly. Researchers, foundations, nonprofits, and governors, policymakers, school districts, communities, businesses, and others mobilized to combat this national problem in a more research-based, coordinated manner. As a result, better data, a heightened awareness of the consequences to individuals and the economy, growing collective will, implementation of evidence-based reforms and interventions, a renewed focus on high-quality instruction, new accountability for student achievement and graduation rate accountability, and real-world examples of progress and collaboration have driven progress in recent years. And, after a decade-long quest, a uniform calculation of graduation rates (the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, ACGR, or "Cohort Rate") is available for nearly all states.

A deeper look at the data, now possible as states and districts disaggregate information consistently (a very beneficial legacy of No Child Left Behind), however reveals large "graduation gaps" among subgroups in many states. The graduation rate for African Americans, Hispanics, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, or with limited English proficiency lags far behind that of other students. These gaps threaten individual prosperity, a strong economy, and a society that promotes opportunity for all. It is also clear that if these gaps are not addressed the nation will not reach its 90 percent high school graduation rate goal by 2020.

In many states, the graduation rate for African Americans, Hispanics, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, or with limited English proficiency lags far behind that of other students.

We have the opportunity to continue building a Grad Nation, accelerate success, and close the graduation gap. To sustain the rate of progress needed to become a Grad Nation, we must widely replicate successful practices and policies, especially in those states still not on pace to reach a 90 percent high school graduation rate by 2020. Likewise, we must accelerate rates of improvement for students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. The broader evidence, as highlighted in the past three *Building a Grad Nation* reports, also demonstrates that the greatest improvements in graduation rates occurred in districts and states that undertook sustained, multi-dimensional, and multi-sector efforts to increase graduation rates. These highest impact strategies have been synthesized into the Civic Marshall Plan (the CMP) to Build a Grad Nation, which is mobilizing organizations, educators, administrators, policymakers, and community and business leaders to take the national goals seriously so that at least 90 percent of today's fifth-graders—the Class of 2020—graduate from high school on time, prepared for college and an eventual career. Like its previous editions, this fourth annual update on America's high school dropout crisis provides the latest graduation rate data, an overview of the progress and challenge in our shared efforts, and paths forward to accelerate our work to build a Grad Nation.



Part 1: Graduation Rate Data and Dropout Factory Trends

WHY DOES GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL MATTER? High school graduates are more likely to be employed, make higher taxable incomes, and generate jobs than those without a high school diploma. For example, had the nation already reached our 90 percent goal, the additional graduates from a single class would have earned an estimated $5.3 billion more in income, generated more than 37,000 jobs and increased the GDP by $6.6 billion per year billion.[9] Graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or recieve social services.[10] They have better health outcomes and higher life expectancies.[11] Furthermore, high school graduates are more likely to be civically engaged. Strong evidence links increased educational attainment with higher voting and volunteering rates.[12] Finally, this issue even affects national security, since only graduates can be accepted to serve in the armed forces.[13]

Evidence consistently shows that boosting graduation rates benefits individuals, communities, and the nation. In the past year, new data provide an updated picture of the nation's efforts to address the high school dropout epidemic over the last decade. This section uses three data sources to provide a comprehensive picture: the just-released Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) data, to look at trends over time; the Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (Cohort Rate) data available for the first time this year to examine graduation rates across states and subgroups; and promoting power data to detail the progress the nation is making in reducing the number of, and enrollment in, dropout factory high schools. (See Part 2 of this report for additional information on the progress and challenge of the Cohort Rate, as well as the FAQ in the appendices, which provide detailed information on graduation rate definitions and related terms.)

Overall, the most recent data show that the nation is on the move, making real progress in increasing high school graduation rates. For the first time, the country is on pace to achieve a 90 percent high school graduation rate. Moreover, the recent gains have been driven by improvements in the outcomes for Hispanic and African American students, groups who have felt the impact of the dropout crisis most acutely.

The data also reveal the need for sober optimism about maintaining this pace of improvement. Despite substantial progress, the overall graduation rate for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficiency students, remains often shockingly low in too many states. (See Appendix H for subgroup definitions used in this report.) As the nation becomes more diverse, these students collectively will represent the majority of students attending public high schools in many states. To reach a 90 percent graduation rate in 2020, we will need to make good on the nation's commitment to opportunity for all, and accelerate our efforts to provide all students with pathways to high school graduation and college and adult success.

Progress

High School Graduation Rates Are Improving at an Accelerated Pace, Nation Now on Course to Reach 90 percent by Class of 2020

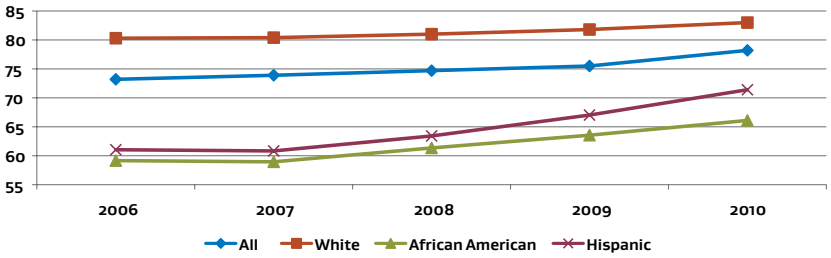
The most recent data indicate that the modest but steady improvements reported in earlier *Building A Grad Nation* reports are accelerating. As seen in Figure 1, the national Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) rose sharply from 75.5 in 2009 to 78.2 in 2010, a 2.7 percentage point increase. As a result, the nation's high school graduation rate increased by 6.5 percentage points from 2001 to 2010. This is the first significant and sustained improvement in the national high school graduation rate in more than 40 years.[14] The greatest gains in high school graduation rates, moreover, have occurred since 2006 with the national graduation rate increasing five percentage points over the following four years. This translates into an average rate of improvement of 1.25 percentage points per year. If we can maintain this rate of improvement through 2020, the nation will reach a 90 percent high school graduation rate.

Equally significant, the improvements between 2006 and 2010 were driven largely by a 10.4 percentage point increase in the graduation rate of Hispanic students and a 6.9 percentage point increase among African American students (See Figure 1). The graduation rate for white students, by contrast, increased 2.7 points. What is even more striking is that this progress occurred during a decade in which it became harder to graduate from high school. State after state raised graduation requirements, adopted college prep sequences of required courses, increased credit requirements, and required passing exit and end-of-course exams for graduation.

Celebration of this progress, however, should be tempered by a sobering fact: in an era of limited opportunities for those without a high school diploma to find jobs that will support a family, one-third of African American and 30 percent of Hispanic students still are not graduating from high school.

Figure 1: U.S. High School Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates (AFGR), by Race and Ethnicity, 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
All	73.2	73.9	74.7	75.5	78.2
White	80.3	80.4	81.0	81.8	83.0
African American	59.2	59.0	61.4	63.6	66.1
Hispanic	61.0	60.8	63.4	67.0	71.4



Source: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

HOW DID WE GET ON PACE TO REACH 90 PERCENT BY 2020? AND HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET TO 90 PERCENT?

For the first time, the nation is on track to meet the goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020, based on the rate of progress made from 2006 to 2010 (the most recent data available). These accelerating improvements require more detailed analyses, but it is worth noting that students who graduated in 2010 entered high school in 2006—at the height of initiatives to raise awareness of the depths of the dropout crisis and high school reform efforts in the United States. By 2006, federal policy and resources, state reform efforts, numerous school districts, foundations, and nonprofits were working in concert to break up, reform, and replace large high schools with low graduation rates—the nation's dropout factories. This period was also when the education community began to more widely understand the importance of a successful ninth grade in determining a student's odds of graduating. As this understanding spread throughout the nation, it brought concerted efforts to improve students' experiences in the ninth grade and to build a knowledge base of what works and what does not. At the same time, the next generation of dropout recovery and alternative pathways to graduation for over-age and under-credited students had begun. More broadly, while there is no silver bullet to raising rates, the evidence consistently shows that the greatest improvements in graduation rates occur in schools, districts, and states where active, sustained, multi-dimensional, and multi-sector efforts were undertaken with the dual goals of increased standards of excellence and increased graduation rates. In short, graduation rates improved in locales where it was widely recognized that graduation rates needed to improve, which then organized themselves to do so, and improved and sustained their efforts over time. The evidence also shows that the gains have been driven by increased rates for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students—those most affected by the dropout crisis. Despite these gains, in order to reach the 90 percent goal by 2020, the rate of progress among these communities must be accelerated. In short, the nation must continue to accelerate proven efforts, with a specific focus on closing "graduation gaps" that remain and a focus on ensuring more equitable outcomes for *all* students. (These highest impact strategies have been synthesized into the Civic Marshall Plan to build a Grad Nation (the CMP), which is detailed in Part 2 of this report.)

WHAT IS A DROPOUT FACTORY?

A dropout factory is a high school in which twelfth grade enrollment is 60 percent or less of ninth grade enrollment three years earlier.

The Number of Dropout Factories and Students Attending Them Continues to Decline

Some evidence that the high school reform efforts of the mid-2000s, noted in the sidebar, are at least in part responsible for the gains in the national graduation rate can be seen in the other good news—the continued decline in dropout factories. As Table 1 shows, the number of high schools with promoting power of 60 percent or less declined to 1,424 in 2011. As a result, since 2002, when the number of dropout factories reached an all-time high, there are 583 fewer high schools where graduation is not the norm (a 29 percent decline). Most of these improvements, like the gains in graduation rates, have occurred since the middle of the last decade.

By far the greatest declines have occurred in the South. In 2004, five southern states—Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina—were identified as the states with both the greatest number and highest concentrations of dropout factories, accounting for 38 percent of the total nationwide.[7] Each state had more than 100 high schools with promoting power of 60 percent or below. Florida and Georgia each had more than 150 of these schools, while Texas had 240. These states, plus Alabama and Tennessee, experienced the greatest declines in the number of dropout factory high schools between

Table 1: Total Number and Change in Number of Dropout Factory High Schools

	Total Number of High Schools with a Promoting Power At or Below 60%
Class of 2002	2007
Class of 2011	**1424**

	Change in the Number of High Schools with a Promoting Power At or Below 60%
Change 2002 to 2011	**-583**

Percent Change 2002 to 2011	**29% fewer in 2011 than 2002**

Source: The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys. The 2011 numbers include all regular and vocational schools with 300+ students.

Table 2: Change in the Number of Students Attending Dropout Factory High Schools

	Change in the Number of Students Enrolled in High Schools with a Promoting Power At or Below 60%
2002	2,644,000
2011	1,550,000
2002 to 2011	**-1.094.000**

Percent Change 2002 to 2011	**-41%**

Source: the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys. All numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Table 3: States with a Decline of 35+ Dropout Factory High Schools, 2002-2011

	2002 Total Number of Schools[i]	2011 Total Number of Schools	Change	Change in the Number of High School Students Attending Schools with Promoting Power At or Below 60%
Texas	240	108	-132	-172,792
Florida	162	69	-93	-185,652
Alabama	71	22	-49	-34,390
Georgia	156	108	-48	-58,234
North Carolina	106	63	-43	-52,100
South Carolina	101	62	-39	-34,599
Tennessee	58	23	-35	-33,940

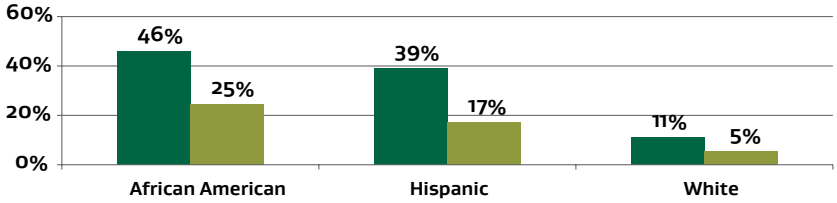
i High school size varies by state.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys.

2002 and 2011 (see Table 3). Together, these seven Southern states had 439 fewer dropout factories in 2011 than in 2002, a 49 percent decline.

Moreover, we have witnessed an even greater decrease in the number of students attending low-graduation rate high schools (see Table 2). In 2011, the nation reached an important milestone: one million fewer students now attend dropout factories than in 2002. Sixty-three percent of this improvement occurred for the graduating classes of 2009, 2010, and 2011. These are students who would have entered high school between 2005 and 2007. The decline can be traced to both the overall reduction in the number of dropout factories and reduced enrollments in those that remain.

Figure 2: Percentage of U.S. Students Attending Dropout Factory High Schools, by Race and Ethnicity, 2002 and 2011



Source: The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys.

Students of color and students from low-income families, who make up the largest group of students in low graduation rate high schools, have benefited the most from the decline in dropout factories (see Figure 2). In 2002, 39 percent of Hispanic and nearly 50 percent of African American students attending regular or vocational high schools with 300 or more students were in schools that could be classified as dropout factories. By 2011, the number of African Americans attending dropout factory high schools had been cut in half, to 25 percent; for Hispanics the decline was even greater, to 17 percent. This is a remarkable rate of improvement. Occurring in less than a decade, it demonstrates that focused efforts can yield rapid improvements.

On the other hand, much work remains. Even with the improvements from 2002 to 2011, one in four African American and one in six Hispanic students (compared to just one in 20 white students) still attend high schools where graduating is not the norm. Moreover, the remaining 1,424 dropout factory high schools still account for about half of all African American and Hispanic dropouts.

The national high school graduation rate increased 6.5 percentage points since 2001, with an average growth of 1.25 percentage points each year from 2006-2010, to 78.2. As a result of this accelerated pace, more than 200,000 additional students received diplomas in 2010 than in 2006.

Progress and Challenge

Common Cohort Graduation Rate Measures Are Available for Nearly All Schools but Some Measurement Glitches Remain

In 2012, for the first time, 47 states released data on their Cohort Rate. Required by 2008 U.S. Department of Education regulations and building on the pioneering work of the National Governors Association, the Cohort Rate is the first graduation rate that tracks individual students through high school to obtaining a diploma. For the first time, we will be able to make accurate comparisons across states, districts, and schools.

As a result, we can identify successful schools that can serve as models for others. It will also cast a light on the schools in need of extra support, reform, or replacement. The Cohort Rate will enable states, districts and communities to develop more specific and resource-efficient efforts to meet their graduation challenges and graduate all students prepared for college and career (see Appendices C and I for more information). Cohort graduation rates will also enable close tracking of progress toward state and community goals, as well as better identification of which strategies are the most effective in which schools and communities.

As with all new systems, the first release contains a few bugs that need to be fixed. Our analysis of the initial Cohort Rate indicates that differences remain in how some states calculate the rate. The differences are in three broad areas: who is a first-time ninth-grader; what constitutes a legitimate transfer out of the cohort; and what constitutes a regular high school diploma. As a result, we are not quite able to make consistent comparisons among states, as these issues appear to impact a state's reported Cohort Rate by more than five percentage points. The case study of Texas (see page 21) offers a detailed analysis of some of these issues and their impact.

At the moment, the best way to understand a state's graduation rate is to triangulate all existing measures. When all these measures indicate similar results, we can have more confidence in the reported graduation rates. Where the available measures disagree or are inconsistent, a more detailed analysis of how the Cohort Rate is being measured may be required. Table 4 shows the Cohort Rates reported by states in 2012 for the Class of 2011. Three states, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Idaho, are still not reporting these rates. Table 4 also shows the extent to which each state's reported Cohort Rate is consistent or inconsistent with other reported measures. In addition, see Appendix B for a table of both the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (Cohort Rate) and Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) for all available years for each state. These data are also shown graphically in the *Building A Grad Nation State Indices* available at www.every1graduates.org.

In most states we found a high degree of consistency between the state-reported adjusted Cohort Rate and federal estimates provided by the AFGR. We note five states (Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Mississippi, and Texas), however, in which reported Cohort Rates are five or more percentage points greater, over multiple years, than the federal estimates provided by AFGR. We found four states (Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, and Oregon), where the opposite was true, with Cohort Rates being consistently and considerably lower than the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate estimates. In either case, it will be important for the U.S. Department of Education and the states to work together to understand the source of the inconsistency. If necessary, the states may need to adjust their rules for calculating the Cohort Rate (see page 23 for more information on the importance of common business rules when measuring graduation rates).

Table 4: U.S. Public High Schools, Class of 2011, Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR), Rank-Ordered by State and their Consistency with Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates (AFGR)

		2011 ACGR (%)	ACGR Consistent with AFGR
85% - 89%	Iowa	88.3	Consistent
	Vermont	87.5	Consistent
	Wisconsin	87.0	Consistent
	North Dakota	86.3	Consistent
	New Hampshire	86.1	Consistent
	Nebraska	86.0	Consistent
	Texas	85.9	Inconsistent
	Indiana	85.7	Inconsistent
	Tennessee	85.5	Not enough data
80% - 84%	Illinois	83.8	Consistent
	Maine	83.8	Consistent
	Massachusetts	83.4	Consistent
	South Dakota	83.4	Consistent
	New Jersey	83.2	Consistent
	Connecticut	83.0	Inconsistent
	Kansas	83.0	Consistent
	Maryland	82.8	Consistent
	Pennsylvania	82.6	Consistent
	Montana	82.2	Consistent
	Virginia	82.0	Consistent
	Missouri	81.3	Consistent
	Arkansas	80.7	Inconsistent
	Hawaii	80.0	Consistent
	Ohio	80.0	Consistent
75% - 79%	Wyoming	79.7	Consistent
	Delaware	78.5	Consistent
	Arizona	77.9	Consistent
	North Carolina	77.9	Consistent
	Rhode Island	77.3	Consistent
	Minnesota	76.9	Inconsistent
	New York	76.8	Consistent
	Washington	76.6	Consistent
	West Virginia	76.5	Consistent
	California	76.3	Consistent
	Utah	76.0	Consistent
70% - 74%	Michigan	74.3	Consistent
	Colorado	73.9	Inconsistent
	Mississippi	73.7	Inconsistent
	South Carolina	73.6	Consistent
	Alabama	72.0	Consistent
	Louisiana	70.9	Consistent
	Florida	70.6	Consistent
65% - 69%	Alaska	68.0	Not enough data
	Oregon	67.7	Inconsistent
	Georgia	67.5	Inconsistent
60% - 64%	New Mexico	63.0	Consistent
	Nevada	62.0	Consistent
	Idaho	–	–
	Kentucky	–	–
	Oklahoma	–	–

States were defined as inconsistent when the difference between their reported ACGR and Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) was ± 5 percentage points in any two years from 2009 to 2011. Because 2011 AFGR have not yet been released, 2011 ACGR were compared to 2010 AFGR. States that only reported 2011 ACGR, but displayed a ± 5 percentage point difference between their 2011 ACGR and their 2010 AFGR did not have enough data to determine consistency in graduation rates.

Sources: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Department of Education (2012). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Case Study: Texas Matters

Texas matters to the U. S. graduation rate because of the sheer and increasing numbers of students, and the large and increasingly better-performing African American and Hispanic populations. With a still-booming economy, it is one of only six states where enrollment grew steadily in grades 9 to 12 from 2003-2010. In those grades, Texas educates:

- Nine percent of the nation's students (second most per state, at 1.3 million);
- Eight percent of the nation's African American students (first among the states, at 182,370);
- Twenty percent of the nation's Hispanic students (second, at 559,062).

There is great reason for hope. Texas graduation rates have climbed seven to eight percentage points since 2007 by either of two metrics (AFGR, or Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate, and ACGR, Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate). If Texas maintains its current rates, it is "On Pace" to reach the national graduation rate goal of 90 percent by 2020.

Two Measures of Texas High School Graduation Rates, 2007-2011

Year	AFGR (%)	ACGR (%)	Difference (% Points)
2007	71.9	78.0	6.1
2008	73.1	79.1	6.0
2009	75.4	80.6	5.2
2010	78.9	84.3	5.4
2011	–	85.9	–
Increase	7.0	7.9	–

Note. AFGR stands for the Four-Year Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate. ACGR stands for Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate.

Sources: Stillwell & Sable (2013). Texas Education Agency (2007-2012). U.S. Department of Education (2012).

Texas AFGR and ACGR, By Subgroup, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change (% Point)
ACGR White (%)	88.2	88.8	89.7	91.6	92	3.8
ACGR African American (%)	70.7	71.8	73.8	78.8	80.9	10.2
ACGR Hispanic (%)	68.5	70.8	73.5	78.8	81.8	13.3
Gap between White and African American (% Point)	17.5	17	15.9	12.8	11.1	-6.4
Gap between White and Hispanic (% Point)	19.7	18	16.2	12.8	10.2	-9.5
AFGR White (%)	81.2	81.6	82.7	82.8	–	1.6
AFGR African American (%)	64.7	65.8	68	69.4	–	4.7
AFGR Hispanic (%)	63.1	65.9	69.6	77.4	–	14.3
Gap between White and African American (% Point)	16.5	15.8	14.8	13.4	–	-3.1
Gap between White and Hispanic (% Point)	18.1	15.7	13.1	5.4	–	-12.7

Note: AFGR stands for the Four-Year Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate. ACGR stands for Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate.

Sources: Stillwell & Sable (2013). Texas Education Agency (2007-2012). U.S. Department of Education (2012).

The progress in Texas, moreover, has been driven by progress in raising African American and Hispanic graduation rates.

This consistent upward trend indicates that Texas is doing many things well. Significant improvement efforts over the past 25 years include one of first strong data systems, an evolving and rigorous assessment and accountability system, dropout reduction programs, and competitive and focused large-scale grants driven by governors, legislators, and philanthropists, and carried out by local districts and schools using innovative practices. No Child Left Behind was pioneered in Texas, with an explicit insistence on highly detailed, disaggregated and transparent data, and a centralized system of annual reporting, audits of district data and documentation of requirements, explanation of language, and analyses. Advocacy groups have kept the pressure on to improve the accuracy of data reporting and push for more equitable school funding, to address the students with the highest needs.

Both graduation rate measures (AFGR and ACGR) broadly agree on the rate and level of progress achieved by Hispanic students. There is, however, a consistent five-to-six percentage point difference in overall graduation rates produced by the two different metrics and a ten-point divergence on the graduation rate for African Americans, which gives pause.

Many national experts expected graduation rates to go down, rather than up, once the ACGR was used, as "counting" requirements and definitions were considered stricter: only graduates who received "regular diplomas" in four years or less would be counted; GED recipients were excluded; special education students were to receive regular diplomas; and justification for transfers was thought to be tightly defined. In the majority of states this seems to be working: however, there are nine states (see Table 4 on page 20) in which the two metrics show five or more percentage points difference.

Texas is one of only five states in which ACGR has been persistently higher than the AFGR, raising the question of "why?" Is there something in how Texas treats the ACGR formula, understands and codes the definitions behind the calculations, or documents students that leads the ACGR to be persistently higher than the AFGR?

Looking at a breakout of the numbers for the Texas Class of 2010-11 and the Texas Education Agency's excellent annual report on Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools raises questions and issues that need to be worked through and understood:

Entering ninth graders	356,183	Dropouts	21,813
Transfer in over three years	22,589	Data errors	5,646
Leave and do not re-enter within 4 years	1,088	Graduates before four years	7,174
"Other leavers" without status	53,538	Graduates in 2010-2011	267,388

The "other leavers" include: 19,430 students enrolled in schools outside Texas; 14,991 to homeschooling; 9,942 who moved out of the country; 7,116 who enrolled in private schools; and 2,059 "other."[17]

- Why, during a period of continued population growth, are twice as many students leaving the cohort as are entering it?
- How many students who are reported as non-dropout leavers were classified based on external documentation; i.e. a request for a transcript from a new school? If not, how are principals verifying their classifications?
- Does it give pause that nearly 15,000 students in the cohort left to be homeschooled and hence were removed from the cohort, and nearly half of these students were over-age for grade?
- Does it give pause that the greatest number of students who left to enroll in a private school did so in the twelfth grade?
- Why does an accurate graduation rate matter? It can be viewed competitively—which states are better and best? But more importantly, having correct information about the numbers and percentages of students in need of stronger support to reach college and career readiness has clear implications for legislation, funding, and district and school practices. Having the right numbers and percentages for subgroups who trail and those who gain is an important piece of feedback on which efforts are working for whom, and which efforts need to be stepped up.

Clearly, to know what pace of change is required to achieve the 2020 graduation rate goal of 90 percent for all students and subgroups in Texas, it matters which graduation rate calculation is correct. And it matters—not only to Texas but also to the nation—how the "other leavers" are counted. Texas is not alone in needing to get its definitions right, but as some would argue, it is among the biggest and the best, and so it really matters that it gets things right.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMON BUSINESS RULES WHEN MEASURING GRADUATION RATES

To turn federal regulations into an actual graduation rate calculation, and to reconcile the regulations with existing state legislation and regulations, existing practice, and anticipated local issues, state departments of education develop what are known as business rules. Although a case can be made for the importance of some local flexibility in designing business rules, too much latitude across states can undermine a core value—the ability to compare progress across states—of having a common graduation rate measure. In at least three critical areas, different business rules can lead to different numbers for graduation rates.

Who is a first-time ninth-grader? One way to determine this is to roll forward all students who completed eighth grade that are eligible to attend ninth grade (i.e., are not being retained) and then adjust for any known transfers in and out over the summer. Another way is to set a date, often October 1, and say that all students who are enrolled in ninth grade for the first time, as of this date, are first-time ninth-graders. The latter method will miss any student who attends ninth grade but drops out before the cut date or who drops out after eighth grade. Recent data from California demonstrates that this can be a substantial number of students.[18]

Who is removed from the cohort? The intent of the 2008 U.S. Department of Education regulations, following the NGA compact, was that students can only be removed from the cohort if they transfer to another school from which they could receive a regular high school diploma, and that the transfer is verified in writing. Exceptions were made for transfers-out-of-country. Different business rules across states, however, on who can be removed from the cohort under what circumstances and what type of verification is required for different types of transfers have led to an inconsistent implementation of the regulations. Some states have adopted the view that all students who leave are assumed to be dropouts until proven otherwise, usually by verifiable evidence like a request for a transcript. Other states treat students who leave a school as "leavers," for which dropping out is one of several possible classifications. It is up to the school to assign students to the appropriate category. In some cases, a written summary of verbal verification, even by third parties, is allowed to meet the verification requirement, (i.e. a school administrator can write that he or she talked to a responsible person who reports the student moved out of the country or state). It is becoming increasingly clear that what is set as the default, in this case, dropout or "leaver," can greatly influence what gets reported.

In other cases, the actual drafting of the regulations has left room for interpretation. Homeschooling is a case in point. The USDOE regulations on transfers say students can be removed from the cohort if "the student enrolled in another school or in an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma." Because home schooling is viewed as a school (and the wording of the regulation separates "school" from "culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma" with an "or"), states can treat students who say they are leaving high school to be homeschooled as transfers to another school. They can then remove these students from the cohort even though home schooling does not typically grant the equivalent of a regular high school diploma based on state standards or those of an accrediting body. In some states, like Indiana, where drivers' license privileges are tied to regular school enrollment and attendance, stating an intention to transfer to homeschooling can be a means for students who would otherwise drop out to retain their driving privileges. In a number of states we have seen a significant number of late transfers in the eleventh and twelfth grades to homeschooling. This seems quite different than someone who has been homeschooled throughout high school. If not accounted for in cohort rate calculations, transfers to homeschooling, and late grade transfers in particular, have the potential to make the meaning of adjusted cohort rates

unclear. For this reason, Indiana has started reporting cohort graduation rates with and without transfers to homeschooling.

What is a regular high school diploma? States vary in how tightly they define what needs to be accomplished to receive a regular high school diploma. Some mandate uniform statewide requirements; others have base-level requirements, and then enable local communities to add additional requirements. Special education students have different levels of exemptions from diploma requirements in different states. In some states, if a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) says he or she will require five years to graduate, the student is still reassigned to a later cohort (creating in the very first year the cohort rate is reported an artificial bump in the state graduation rate), even though this is specifically called out as not appropriate in USDOE guidance. Other states rigorously expect that students with disabilities will meet all the requirements of a four-year "regular" diploma with no exemptions or diversification into alternate courses and time periods. Given that on average students with disabilities account for 15 percent of the students in a state, these differences in state interpretation and implementation of the cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities can result in substantial variations in reported cohort graduation rates across states.

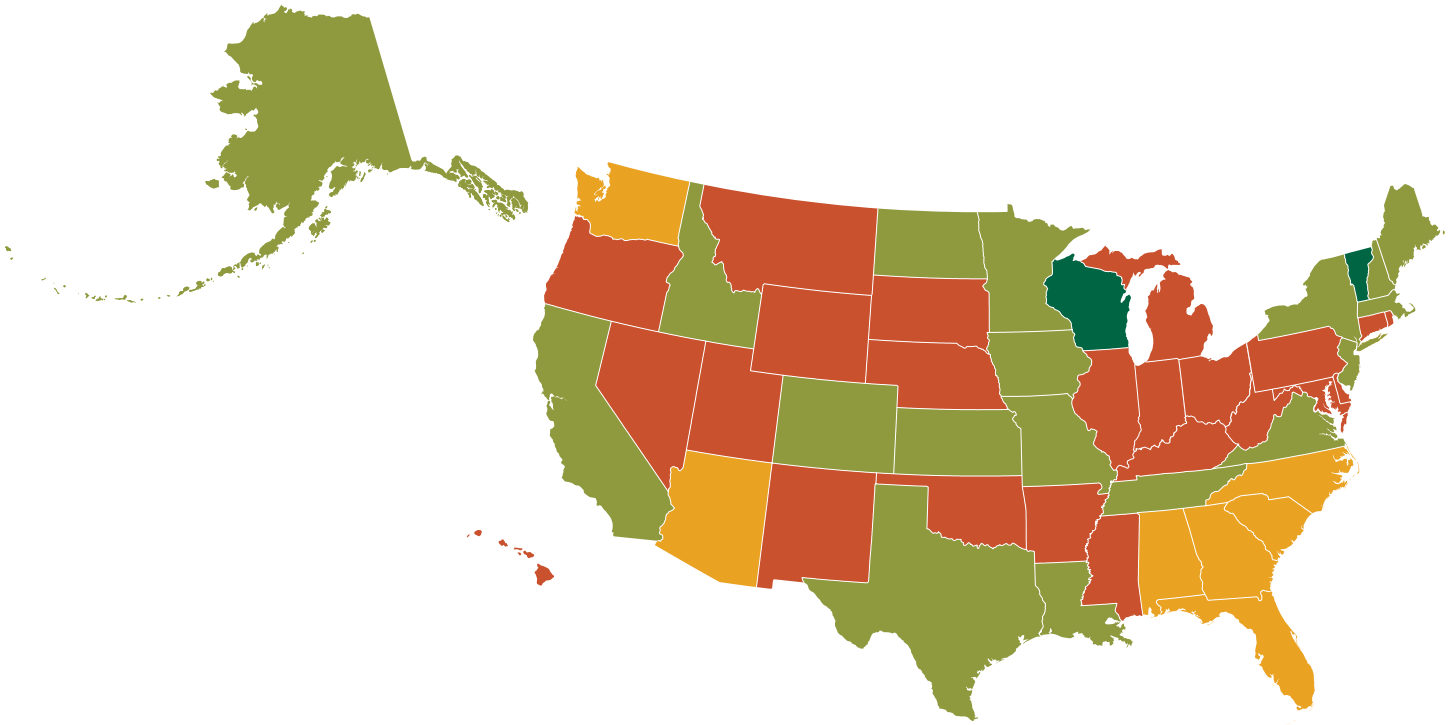
Challenge

Not All States Are on Pace to Reach 90 Percent by 2020

Prior *Building a Grad Nation* reports noted that not all states are progressing at the same rate. Some have seen considerable improvements; others have not. The good news: the number of states making progress is growing. Last year, for example, California was noted as a state that had declining graduation rates as of 2009. By 2010, California appeared to have halted its slide and is now on pace to reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020. Texas has also moved from a state with limited improvement to one making more rapid gains, and now it is also on track to a 90 percent graduation rate. The bad news: If the states making no or only limited progress don't improve, the nation will struggle to reach the 2020 goal. We can best maintain or accelerate the current rate of improvement if we pinpoint the states, districts, and schools in which students are progressing too slowly toward higher graduation rates, and support and encourage their improvement work. There remains considerable variation across states in rates of progress. The map in Figure 3 groups states into four categories:

1. the two states that reached 90 percent graduation rates by 2010;
2. the 18 states on pace to reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020, based on their average rate of growth over the past four years;
3. the seven states that have made substantial progress, growing at an average rate of at least one percentage point a year, but because of their low initial graduation rate, need to further accelerate their progress to reach 90 percent by 2020; and
4. 23 states that are off-pace, either because they have made only small to modest gains in graduation rates and have a great distance to go to reach 90 percent or they have stalled or falling graduation rates.

Figure 3: Are States on Pace to Reach 90% Graduation Rate Goal by 2020?



At 90%

Vermont	Wisconsin

On Pace: States are on pace to reach 90%, if they can keep up their rate of gain over the past four years

Alaska	Idaho	Louisiana	Minnesota	New Jersey	Tennessee
California	Iowa	Maine	Missouri	New York	Texas
Colorado	Kansas	Massachusetts	New Hampshire	North Dakota	Virginia

Further Accelerate: States are improving, but need to accelerate progress to reach 90%

Alabama	Florida	North Carolina	Washington
Arizona	Georgia	South Carolina	

Off Pace: States are off pace to reach 90% at their current rate of growth

Arkansas	Illinois	Michigan	Nevada	Oregon	Utah
Connecticut	Indiana	Mississippi	New Mexico	Pennsylvania	West Virginia
Delaware	Kentucky	Montana	Ohio	Rhode Island	Wyoming
Hawaii	Maryland	Nebraska	Oklahoma	South Dakota	

Progress is measured by change in Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates (AFGR) from 2006-2010.

States were defined as on pace if their AFGR average annual rate of growth between 2006 and 2010 was greater than or equal to the average rate of growth necessary to reach a 90 percent AFGR by 2020. States were defined as needing to further accelerate their improvement if their AFGR average annual rate of growth between 2006 and 2010 was at least one percentage point, but because of a low baseline AFGR, their rate of growth was not great enough to reach 90 percent by 2020. States were defined as off pace if their AFGR declined between 2006 and 2010 or if their AFGR average annual rate of growth between 2006 and 2010 was less than one percentage point and less than the rate needed to reach 90 percent by 2020.

Source: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Figure 3: Are States on Pace to Reach 90% Graduation Rate Goal by 2020?

State	Average Annual Growth in AFGR, 2006–2010 (% Point)	2010 AFGR (%)
Nation	**1.25**	**78.2**
Tennessee	2.45	80.4
Louisiana	2.33	68.8
Vermont	2.28	91.4
Alaska	2.25	75.5
California	2.25	78.2
New York	2.15	76.0
South Carolina[i]	2.03	68.2
Georgia	1.88	69.9
Florida	1.80	70.8
Kansas	1.73	84.5
Virginia	1.68	81.2
Maine	1.63	82.8
Texas	1.61	78.9
North Dakota	1.58	88.4
Alabama	1.41	71.8
New Hampshire	1.30	86.3
North Carolina	1.28	76.9
Colorado	1.08	79.8
Washington	1.08	77.2
Arizona	1.05	74.7
Indiana	0.97	77.2
Michigan	0.93	75.9
Wisconsin	0.91	91.1
Wyoming	0.90	80.3

State	Average Annual Growth in AFGR, 2006–2010 (% Point)	2010 AFGR (%)
Idaho	0.88	84.0
Oregon	0.82	76.3
Massachusetts	0.78	82.6
Kentucky	0.68	79.9
Missouri	0.68	83.7
New Jersey	0.60	87.2
Maryland	0.57	82.2
Illinois	0.55	81.9
Ohio	0.55	81.4
Minnesota	0.50	88.2
Nevada	0.50	57.8
Pennsylvania[i]	0.40	84.1
West Virginia	0.35	78.3
Iowa	0.25	87.9
Oklahoma	0.18	78.5
Mississippi	0.07	63.8
New Mexico	0.01	67.3
Montana	0.00	81.9
Utah	0.00	78.6
Hawaii	-0.02	75.4
Delaware	-0.20	75.5
Rhode Island	-0.35	76.4
South Dakota	-0.68	81.8
Nebraska	-0.80	83.8
Arkansas	-1.35	75.0
Connecticut	-1.68	75.1

AFGR is the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate.

i No 2006 AFGR, used 2005 AFGR

Source: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education.

Challenge

Despite the progress of the past decade, graduation rates for African American and Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency remain very low in many states, and significant graduation gaps persist.

As noted earlier, the Cohort Rate data allow us to examine not only overall graduation rates and how they vary by student subgroup, but also how well students with disabilities and limited English proficiency students are faring. This ability is critical, since all of these populations make up a growing percentage of students attending public high schools, and collectively will soon represent the majority of students in public high schools. This threshold has already been reached in some states. The sub-group data reveal significant challenges and indicate that unless we make substantial and accelerating improvements with these populations, the nation will not achieve a 90 percent graduation rate.[19]

Cohort Graduation Rates by Sub-Group

In the strong majority of states—30 states for students with disabilities and 33 for students with limited English proficiency—the four-year cohort graduation rate is below 66 percent. As Table 4 shows, the cohort graduation rate is below (often by a considerable amount) 50 percent in twelve states for students with disabilities, and in nine states for students with limited English proficiency.

Similar distressing patterns appear for African American and Hispanic students. Table 6 shows that, in too many states, graduation rates remain far too low for these students.

The four-year cohort graduation rate is below 66 percent in 20 states for African Americans and in 16 states for Hispanics. By contrast, in no state is the rate for white students this low.

In Florida, Georgia, New York, and California, which together educate more than 25 percent of the nation's African Americans, their graduation rates continue to hover around 60 percent. Moreover, in seven states for African Americans and six states for Hispanics, the Cohort Rates remain in the 50s (or in a few cases even in the 40s). Though the white graduation rate is 89 percent or higher in eleven states, there are no states where this is true for African American and Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, or those with disabilities or limited English proficiency.

Table 5: States in which the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for Students with Disabilities or Limited English Proficiency is at or Below 66%

	2011 ACGR, Students with Disabilities (%)
Illinois	66
Maine	66
Massachusetts	66
Indiana	65
Connecticut	61
California	59
Hawaii	59
Utah	59
Rhode Island	58
Maryland	57
North Carolina	57
West Virginia	57
Wyoming	57
Delaware	56
Minnesota	56
Washington	56
Colorado	53
Michigan	52
New York	48
New Mexico	47
Virginia	47
Florida	44
Oregon	42
Alaska	40
South Carolina	39
Alabama	30
Georgia	30
Louisiana	29
Mississippi	23
Nevada	23
Total States	**30**

	2011 ACGR, Students with Limited English Proficiency (%)
Wisconsin	66
Delaware	65
Pennsylvania	63
Michigan	62
Missouri	62
South Carolina	62
Wyoming	62
North Dakota	61
California	60
Hawaii	60
Connecticut	59
Texas	58
Montana	57
Massachusetts	56
New Mexico	56
Virginia	55
Maryland	54
Colorado	53
Florida	53
Ohio	53
Minnesota	52
Nebraska	52
Oregon	52
Washington	51
North Carolina	48
New York	46
Utah	45
Louisiana	43
Alaska	41
Alabama	36
Georgia	32
Nevada	29
Arizona	25
Total States	**33**

Source: U.S. Department of Education. Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Table 6: States in which the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for African American or Hispanic Students is at or Below 66%

	2011 ACGR, African American Students (%)
Missouri	66
Colorado	65
Pennsylvania	65
Washington	65
Louisiana	64
New York	64
Wisconsin	64
Alabama	63
Alaska	63
California	63
Utah	61
Georgia	60
New Mexico	60
Florida	59
Ohio	59
Wyoming	58
Michigan	57
Oregon	54
Minnesota	49
Nevada	43
Total States	**20**

	2011 ACGR, Hispanic Students (%)
Alabama	66
Ohio	66
Pennsylvania	65
Connecticut	64
Michigan	63
New York	63
Washington	63
Alaska	62
Massachusetts	62
Colorado	60
New Mexico	59
Georgia	58
Oregon	58
Utah	57
Nevada	53
Minnesota	51
Total States	**16**

Source: The U.S. Department of Education. (2012). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Cohort Rate Graduation Gaps

As Table 7 shows, at the state-level graduation gaps vary widely between African American and Hispanic students and white students, and between students with disabilities and limited English proficiency students, and all students. (See Appendix C for more information.) The states with larger graduation gaps have gaps twice the size of the states with smaller gaps. States also vary across the subgroups, with some doing better with some subgroups, and worse with others.

Some states with relatively high graduation rates still have large graduation gaps. Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, for example, are among the states with the highest overall graduation rates, with rates near 90 percent for white students. Each, however, is among the ten states with the largest gaps for either African American or Hispanic students. Southern states are heavily represented among those with the biggest graduation gaps for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency. For students with disabilities, this gap results in part from a practice by some southern states that award certificates of completion, not high school diplomas, to many of their students with disabilities. The graduation gap data make it clear that southern states will not be able to continue the rate of progress they have achieved if they fail to build pathways to graduation for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

Table 7: 2011 Cohort Graduation Rate Gaps, by State and Subgroup

	White Student	African American Students	
	Rate (%)	Rate (%)	Difference (% Points)
Minnesota	84	49	35
Nevada	71	43	28
Wisconsin	91	64	27
Ohio	85	59	26
Wyoming	82	58	24
Michigan	80	57	23
Pennsylvania	88	65	23
New York	86	64	22
California	85	63	22
New Jersey	90	69	21
Nebraska	90	70	20
Utah	80	61	19
Missouri	85	66	19
Massachusetts	89	71	18
Connecticut	89	71	18
Florida	76	59	17
Iowa	90	73	17
Colorado	81	65	16
Georgia	76	60	16
North Dakota	90	74	16
Oregon	70	54	16
Alabama	78	63	15
Illinois	89	74	15
South Dakota	88	73	15
Rhode Island	82	67	15
Washington	79	65	14
Kansas	86	72	14
New Hampshire	87	73	14
Mississippi	82	68	14
Maryland	89	76	13
Virginia	86	73	13
New Mexico	73	60	13
Indiana	88	75	13
Louisiana	77	64	13
Alaska	75	63	12
North Carolina	83	72	11
Arizona	85	74	11
Arkansas	84	73	11
Tennessee	89	78	11
Texas	92	81	11
Delaware	82	73	9
South Carolina	77	70	7
Maine	84	77	7
West Virginia	77	72	5
Montana	85	81	4
Hawaii	78	77	1
Idaho	†	†	†
Kentucky	†	†	†
Oklahoma	–	–	–
Vermont	–	–	–

	White Student	Hispanic Students	
	Rate (%)	Rate (%)	Difference (% Points)
Minnesota	84	51	33
Massachusetts	89	62	27
Connecticut	89	64	25
Utah	80	57	23
New York	86	63	23
Pennsylvania	88	65	23
Colorado	81	60	21
Wisconsin	91	72	19
Ohio	85	66	19
Georgia	76	58	18
Nevada	71	53	18
Michigan	80	63	17
New Jersey	90	73	17
Maryland	89	72	17
Nebraska	90	74	16
Washington	79	63	16
California	85	70	15
Iowa	90	75	15
South Dakota	88	73	15
Virginia	86	71	15
Rhode Island	82	67	15
North Dakota	90	76	14
New Hampshire	87	73	14
New Mexico	73	59	14
North Carolina	83	69	14
Kansas	86	73	13
Alaska	75	62	13
Arizona	85	72	13
Oregon	70	58	12
Alabama	78	66	12
Illinois	89	77	12
Delaware	82	71	11
Missouri	85	75	10
Tennessee	89	79	10
Texas	92	82	10
Wyoming	82	74	8
South Carolina	77	69	8
Florida	76	69	7
Mississippi	82	75	7
Indiana	88	81	7
Louisiana	77	70	7
Arkansas	84	77	7
Montana	85	78	7
West Virginia	77	71	6
Hawaii	78	79	-1
Maine	84	87	-3
Idaho	†	†	†
Kentucky	†	†	†
Oklahoma	–	–	–
Vermont	–	–	–

Table 7: 2011 Cohort Graduation Rate Gaps, by State and Subgroup continued

	All students	Students with Disabilities	
	Rate (%)	Rate (%)	Difference (% Points)
Mississippi	75	23	52
Alabama	72	30	42
Louisiana	71	29	42
Nevada	62	23	39
Georgia	67	30	37
South Carolina	74	39	35
Virginia	82	47	35
New York	77	48	29
Alaska	68	40	28
Florida	71	44	27
Maryland	83	57	26
Oregon	68	42	26
Wyoming	80	57	23
Connecticut	83	61	22
Michigan	74	52	22
Delaware	78	56	22
North Carolina	78	57	21
Colorado	74	53	21
Hawaii	80	59	21
Indiana	86	65	21
Minnesota	77	56	21
Wisconsin	87	67	20
Washington	76	56	20
Rhode Island	77	58	19
West Virginia	76	57	19
North Dakota	86	67	19
Tennessee	86	67	19
Illinois	84	66	18
Iowa	88	70	18
Maine	84	66	18
Vermont	87	69	18
California	76	59	17
Massachusetts	83	66	17
New Hampshire	86	69	17
Utah	76	59	17
Nebraska	86	70	16
New Mexico	63	47	16
Missouri	81	68	13
Montana	82	69	13
Ohio	80	67	13
Pennsylvania	83	71	12
Arizona	78	67	11
Kansas	83	73	10
New Jersey	83	73	10
Texas	86	77	9
Arkansas	81	75	6
South Dakota	83	84	-1
Idaho	†	†	†
Kentucky	†	†	†
Oklahoma	–	–	–

	All students	Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	
	Rate (%)	Rate (%)	Difference (% Points)
Arizona	78	25	53
Alabama	72	36	36
Georgia	67	32	35
Nebraska	86	52	34
Nevada	62	29	33
New York	77	46	31
Utah	76	45	31
North Carolina	78	48	30
Maryland	83	54	29
Texas	86	58	28
Louisiana	71	43	28
Alaska	68	41	27
Ohio	80	53	27
Massachusetts	83	56	27
Virginia	82	55	27
Montana	82	57	25
Minnesota	77	52	25
North Dakota	86	61	25
Washington	76	51	25
Connecticut	83	59	24
Colorado	74	53	21
Wisconsin	87	66	21
Hawaii	80	60	20
Pennsylvania	83	63	20
Missouri	81	62	19
Florida	71	53	18
Iowa	88	70	18
Wyoming	80	62	18
California	76	60	16
Illinois	84	68	16
Oregon	68	52	16
New Jersey	83	68	15
Tennessee	86	71	15
Indiana	86	73	13
Kansas	83	70	13
New Hampshire	86	73	13
Delaware	78	65	13
Michigan	74	62	12
South Carolina	74	62	12
Rhode Island	77	68	9
Mississippi	75	67	8
New Mexico	63	56	7
Maine	84	78	6
Arkansas	81	76	5
Vermont	87	82	5
South Dakota	83	82	1
West Virginia	76	79	-3
Idaho	†	†	†
Kentucky	†	†	†
Oklahoma	–	–	–

– Data were not reported to the Department in time for inclusion in the file, or the category is not used by the SEA.
† Not applicable: Data are not expected to be reported by the SEA for SY2010-11.
Source: U.S. Department of Education (2012). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Improvements in Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates for African American and Hispanic Students

Equally important to the preceding analysis of the current magnitude of graduation gaps (made possible by the Cohort Rate) is an understanding of the rate at which states have seen improvement over the last decade, and the impact this has had on closing their graduation gaps. Table 8 looks at rates of progress of states in improving the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate of African American and Hispanic students and closing their graduation gap with white students during the era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (the mid-2000s). The goal of NCLB was for all students to reach a common level of performance, and in so doing, close performance gaps between more and less advantaged students. NCLB also marked the first time, on a national basis, that schools and school districts were held accountable for graduation rates. The accountability pressure exerted to raise graduation rates, however, was largely muted when the states were allowed to determine how they would measure graduation rates, and set the graduation rate goals and rates of progress expected from their schools.

Not until the U.S. Department of Education's 2008 graduation rate regulations were all states required, beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, to report a common graduation rate measure and to set ambitious graduation rate goals and rates of progress for all students and all subgroups. Thus, the data below represent the impact of NCLB on the coalition of the willing—states and districts that took seriously the goal of raising graduation rates for all students.

About 40 percent of the states rose to the challenge and made significant progress in raising graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students and closing the graduation gap with white students. Roughly another 40 percent, however, made limited or no progress in raising graduation rates for African American and Hispanic students and closing gaps. And in some cases graduation rates for African American and Hispanic students declined, and gaps widened. The remaining states made limited progress. For the nation to continue moving forward and for graduation rates to keep rising, we will need to move beyond the states that took the initiative in the previous decade and spread what works—and the will to implement it—more broadly across the nation.

Table 8: Graduation Rate Progress among African American Students from the Mid-2000s through 2010

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS			
	Time Period	Change in African Americans' AFGR (% Points)	Change in African American-White AFGR Gap (% Points)
South			
Alabama	2003 - 2010	9.3	-3.0
Arkansas	2003 - 2010	-2.0	-0.4
Delaware	2003 - 2010	4.7	-1.9
Florida	2003 - 2010	9.0	-7.8
Georgia	2003 - 2010	12.0	-4.2
Kentucky	2003 - 2010	14.1	-7.6
Louisiana	2003 - 2010	6.8	-4.4
Maryland	2003 - 2010	4.7	-0.8
Mississippi	2003 - 2010	2.0	-0.5
North Carolina	2003 - 2010	8.1	-1.7
Oklahoma	2003 - 2010	0.3	3.9
South Carolina	2007 - 2010	10.8	-4.2
Texas	2003 - 2010	-0.8	2.2
Virginia	2005 - 2010	2.1	0.5
West Virginia	2003 - 2010	1.8	0.8
Northeast			
Connecticut	2004 - 2010	-3.9	-0.2
Maine[i]	2003 - 2010	11.0	1.9
Massachusetts	2006 - 2010	4.4	-1.0
New Hampshire[ii]	2007 - 2010	-21.5	-10.9
New Jersey	2004 - 2010	-0.4	2.6
New York	2006 - 2010	12.1	-6.4
Rhode Island	2003 - 2010	-1.1	0.0
Vermont[i]	2004 - 2010	9.3	-5.8

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS			
	Time Period	Change in African Americans' AFGR (% Points)	Change in African American-White AFGR Gap (% Points)
Midwest			
Illinois	2003 - 2010	16.8	-13.2
Indiana	2003 - 2010	6.4	-5.3
Iowa	2003 - 2010	-1.7	3.7
Kansas	2003 - 2010	4.7	-0.8
Michigan	2004 - 2010	9.5	-7.1
Minnesota	2004 - 2010	9.9	-5.6
Missouri	2003 - 2010	6.4	-0.9
Nebraska	2003 - 2010	-2.2	2.5
North Dakota [iii]	2004 - 2010	14.8	5.3
Ohio	2003 - 2010	3.2	3.2
South Dakota	2003 - 2010	9.7	-10.2
Wisconsin	2003 - 2010	17.5	-12.7
West			
Alaska	2003 - 2010	-3.6	10.5
Arizona[i]	2004 - 2010	8.0	0.5
California	2003 - 2010	2.4	1.1
Colorado	2004 - 2010	5.1	-2.7
Hawaii[ii]	2003 - 2010	-3.2	1.8
Idaho[ii]	2007 - 2010	-7.0	9.8
Montana	2003 - 2010	-5.0	6.0
Nevada	2003 - 2010	-12.9	6.4
New Mexico	2003 - 2010	4.8	-4.7
Utah	2003 - 2010	0.7	-0.5
Washington	2006 - 2010	1.9	1.1
Wyoming[ii]	2003 - 2010	-26.4	17.1

Table 8: Graduation Rate Progress among Hispanic Students from the Mid-2000s through 2010 continued

HISPANIC STUDENTS			
	Time Period	Change in Hispanics' AFGR (% Points)	Change in Hispanic-White AFGR Gap (% Points)
South			
Alabama	2003 - 2010	2.1	4.3
Arkansas[i]	2003 - 2010	-10.7	-8.3
Delaware	2003 - 2010	2.7	0.1
Florida	2003 - 2010	3.8	-2.5
Georgia	2003 - 2010	12.7	-4.9
Kentucky[i]	2003 - 2010	-18.9	-25.4
Louisiana[i]	2003 - 2010	3.6	1.2
Maryland[ii]	2003 - 2010	-7.2	9.2
Mississippi	2003 - 2010	-4.1	5.5
North Carolina	2003 - 2010	-0.9	7.3
Oklahoma	2003 - 2010	1.0	3.2
South Carolina	2007 - 2010	21.7	-15.0
Texas	2003 - 2010	8.7	-7.3
Virginia	2005 - 2010	-0.5	3.1
West Virginia	2003 - 2010	6.8	-4.2
Northeast			
Connecticut	2004 - 2010	-6.0	1.9
Maine[i]	2003 - 2010	-3.9	-13.0
Massachusetts	2006 - 2010	1.5	1.9
New Hampshire[iii]	2007 - 2010	40.0	-27.7
New Jersey	2004 - 2010	-3.0	5.2
New York	2006 - 2010	11.8	-6.1
Rhode Island	2003 - 2010	3.8	-4.9
Vermont[i]	2004 - 2010	0.0	-15.1

HISPANIC STUDENTS			
	Time Period	Change in Hispanics' AFGR (% Points)	Change in Hispanic-White AFGR Gap (% Points)
Midwest			
Illinois	2003 - 2010	11.3	-7.7
Indiana	2003 - 2010	0.8	0.3
Iowa	2003 - 2010	15.5	-13.6
Kansas	2003 - 2010	17.9	-14.0
Michigan	2004 - 2010	4.0	-1.6
Minnesota	2004 - 2010	3.7	0.6
Missouri[ii]	2003 - 2010	-8.5	-3.4
Nebraska	2003 - 2010	7.8	-7.5
North Dakota	2004 - 2010	-21.0	23.7
Ohio	2003 - 2010	-3.7	10.1
South Dakota	2003 - 2010	-2.5	2.0
Wisconsin	2003 - 2010	8.6	-3.8
West			
Alaska[iii]	2003 - 2010	17.9	3.7
Arizona	2004 - 2010	5.7	1.8
California	2003 - 2010	7.5	-4.0
Colorado	2004 - 2010	1.9	0.5
Hawaii[iii]	2003 - 2010	5.5	-0.3
Idaho	2007 - 2010	11.4	-8.2
Montana	2003 - 2010	-8.6	9.5
Nevada	2003 - 2010	-10.9	4.5
New Mexico	2003 - 2010	6.7	-6.7
Utah	2003 - 2010	-1.8	2.0
Washington	2006 - 2010	1.0	2.0
Wyoming	2003 - 2010	12.4	-5.5

Greatest improvement in increasing African American/Hispanic graduation rates and/or decreasing African American/Hispanic-white graduation gaps (AFGR increased by 5.5 or more percentage points; and/or AFGR gap between white students and African American/Hispanic students decreased by 3 or more percentage points).

Modest improvement in increasing African American/Hispanic graduation rates and/or decreasing African American/Hispanic-white graduation gaps (AFGR increased by 2 - 5.4 percentage points; and/or AFGR gap between white students and African American/Hispanic decreased by 1 - 2.9 percentage points).

Little to no improvement or decline in African American/Hispanic graduation rates and/or African American/Hispanic-white graduation gaps (AFGR increased by less than 2 percentage points; and/or AFGR gap between white students and African American/Hispanic decreased by less than 1 percentage point).

Note. AFGR is the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate. Data for Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Tennessee are not available.

i African American/Hispanic students consistently had higher AFGR than white students.

ii Graduation gap reversed. African American/Hispanic students had higher AFGR than white students in mid-2000s. In 2010, white students had higher AFGR than African American/Hispanic students.

iii Graduation gap reversed. White students had higher AFGR than African American/Hispanic students in mid-2000s. In 2010, African American/Hispanic students had higher AFGR than white students.

Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) by race/ethnicity, gender, state or jurisdiction, and year: School years 2002-03 through 2008-09. Retrieved from **http://nces.ed.gov/CCD/data_tables.asp.**

What's Next?

In total, the 2010 and 2011 graduation rate and dropout factory data show that the nation is making progress. To sustain its current rate of progress and achieve a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020, the data also indicate that the nation needs to make good on the promise of No Child Left Behind, the 2008 Department of Education graduation rate regulations, and the education initiatives of the first Obama Administration, and propel all students to high school graduation, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, disability, or limited English proficiency. Otherwise, the nation will not get to 90 percent by 2020, and progress will stall.

Tables 9 and 10 help us determine next steps in achieving the nation's goal of a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020 and model a process that could be used at the state and local levels, as well as among subgroups. Tables like these could help state and local officials determine where efforts, resources, and accountabilities need to be focused. The tables show the 15 states in which most of the nation's African American and Hispanic students attend public high schools. They indicate the current graduation rate for these students, current rates of progress, and the acceleration needed to reach 90 percent. This enables specific goal setting in the states that matter the most for each group of students. For example, the 15 states that collectively educate 75 percent of the nation's African Americans need to improve their average graduation rates from 2.6 percentage points annually in Maryland to 4.0 points per year in Ohio if those states are to achieve a 90 percent graduation rate for their African American students by 2020. Rates of progress over the past decade in Florida, South Carolina, New York, and Louisiana show this level and pace of improvement are possible, but the data make clear that states will have to greatly accelerate their efforts to achieve this goal.

A similar story holds true for Hispanics across the 15 states that educate 88 percent of these students, with rates of progress ranging from 2.3 percentage points in Texas to 5.3 points per year in Nevada needed to reach a 90 percent high school graduation rate by 2020. California, Texas, and Florida, which educate 60 percent of the nation's Hispanic students, and have seen steady improvements in recent years, need to achieve annual rates of progress from 2.3 to 2.9 percentage points.

The bottom half of these tables updates previous research on the number of high schools in each state from which at least half of African American and Hispanic students are lost. In states with the most African American and Hispanic students, a small subset of high schools continues to be at the heart of the dropout crisis. In California and Texas, for example, which currently educate about half of the nation's Hispanic students, about 200 high schools with promoting power of 60 percent or less are producing half of all Hispanic dropouts. In Illinois, 57 high schools and in Michigan 64 high schools produce about three-fourths of the African American dropouts. The table also shows that the most effective graduation rate cut point to capture the high schools that have the biggest impact on the state's graduation rate will vary from state to state, but in almost all cases will fall somewhere in the 60s. In short, the decade-long focus on high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent remains largely on target. Some states, however, will also need to include schools with graduation rates between 60 and 70 percent, as well as former "dropout factories" that made only modest improvements in their rate. Higher performing schools with large graduation gaps among subgroups will also have work to do to reach the 90 percent goal. Detailed recommendations to achieve this goal are provided in the Paths Forward section of the report.

Table 9: High School Graduation Rates and Promoting Power in States with the Largest African American Student Populations

	African American Students, Grades 9–12, 2010			African American Students' ACGR, 2011	African American Students' AFGR, 2010	Average Annual Change Needed for African American Students' AFGR to reach 90% by 2020	Average Annual Change in African American Students' AFGR, 2006 - 2010
	#	% of Total Enrollment	% of U.S. Total African American Student Enrollment	%	%	% Point	% Point
All States	**2,371,154**	**16%**	**–**	**†**	**66.1**	**3.4**	**1.8**
Texas	182,370	14%	8%	81.0	69.4	3.1	0.8
Florida	180,760	23%	8%	59.0	63.6	3.6	3.1
Georgia	180,401	38%	8%	60.0	62.9	3.7	2.2
California	146,732	7%	6%	63.0	65.4	3.5	1.6
New York	143,413	17%	6%	64.0	61.7	3.8	3.2
North Carolina[ii]	134,139	31%	6%	72.0	69.5	3.1	0.8
Illinois	117,662	18%	5%	74.0	68.7	3.1	2.0
Michigan	102,766	19%	4%	57.0	59.2	4.1	2.1
Maryland	101,661	38%	4%	76.0	74.1	2.6	0.7
Virginia	96,797	25%	4%	73.0	71.0	2.9	2.0
Ohio	90,505	17%	4%	59.0	60.2	4.0	0.0
South Carolina[iii]	80,044	38%	3%	70.0	61.5	3.9	3.6
Pennsylvania[iv]	78,903	14%	3%	65.0	68.3	3.2	–
Louisiana	76,676	42%	3%	64.0	61.9	3.8	3.7
Alabama	73,580	34%	3%	63.0	65.4	3.5	2.0

Table 9: High School Graduation Rates and Promoting Power in States with the Largest African American Student Populations continued

	Total High Schools[i]	High Schools with Promoting Power at or Below 65%[i]		% African American Attrition Attributed to Schools with PP at or Below 65%[i]	High Schools with Promoting Power at or Below 60%[i]		% African American Attrition Attributed to Schools with PP at or Below 60%[i]
		#	%	%	#	%	%
All States	**12,513**	**2,091**	**16.7%**	**64.6%**	**1,424**	**11.4%**	**52.6%**
Texas	860	183	21.3%	60.7%	108	12.6%	40.0%
Florida	458	114	24.9%	53.2%	69	15.1%	36.2%
Georgia	356	158	44.4%	78.4%	108	30.3%	62.5%
California	1,047	156	14.9%	55.8%	106	10.1%	42.2%
New York[ii]	971	161	16.6%	76.4%	133	13.7%	71.9%
North Carolina	395	98	24.8%	49.9%	63	15.9%	36.0%
Illinois	449	72	16.0%	67.6%	57	12.7%	77.1%
Michigan	513	88	17.2%	85.8%	64	12.5%	77.1%
Maryland	194	30	15.5%	47.5%	22	11.3%	38.5%
Virginia	290	31	10.7%	46.7%	19	6.6%	35.9%
Ohio	612	205	33.5%	84.7%	152	24.8%	80.2%
South Carolina[iii]	186	87	46.8%	76.5%	62	33.3%	61.6%
Pennsylvania[iv]	600	56	9.3%	66.1%	43	7.2%	60.7%
Louisiana	244	68	27.9%	62.8%	40	16.4%	45.2%
Alabama	329	41	12.5%	55.7%	22	6.7%	41.2%

† indicates that the data are not applicable.

– indicates that the data are missing.

i Includes only regular and vocational high schools with 300+ students, open during school year 2010/11.

ii Calculated North Carolina's average annual rate of change in AFGR using 2005 and 2010 data.

iii Calculated South Carolina's average annual rate of change in AFGR using 2007 and 2010 data.

iv Pennsylvania did not have data available to calculate the average annual rate of change in AFGR.

Sources: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys; U.S. Department of Education (2012). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Table 10: High School Graduation Rates and Promoting Power in States with the Largest Hispanic Student Populations

	Hispanic Students, Grades 9-12, 2010			Hispanic Students' ACGR, 2011	Hispanic Students' AFGR, 2010	Average Annual Change Needed for Hispanic Students' AFGR to reach 90% by 2020	Average Annual Change in Hispanic Students' AFGR, 2006 - 2010
	#	% of Total Enrollment	% of U.S. Total Hispanic Student Enrollment	%	%	% Point	% Point
All States	**2,826,252**	**19%**	**–**	†	**71.4**	**2.9**	**2.5**
California	943,719	47%	33%	70.0	71.7	2.8	3.2
Texas	559,062	42%	20%	82.0	77.4	2.3	3.4
Florida	190,664	24%	7%	69.0	71.1	2.9	2.5
New York	149,161	17%	5%	63.0	60.7	3.9	3.1
Arizona	118,649	37%	4%	72.0	70.6	2.9	1.6
Illinois	111,615	17%	4%	77.0	76.0	2.4	2.4
New Jersey	73,474	18%	3%	73.0	77.1	2.3	0.2
Colorado	60,543	25%	2%	60.0	65.9	3.4	2.0
New Mexico	50,731	51%	2%	59.0	65.3	3.5	0.9
Washington	42,534	13%	2%	63.0	64.1	3.6	0.2
Nevada	41,422	34%	1%	53.0	47.2	5.3	0.6
Georgia	40,428	9%	1%	58.0	66.3	3.4	3.8
Massachusetts	39,354	14%	1%	62.0	65.0	3.5	0.4
Pennsylvania[ii]	37,045	6%	1%	65.0	70.4	3.0	–
North Carolina[iii]	34,230	8%	1%	69.0	67.4	3.3	0.1

Table 10: High School Graduation Rates and Promoting Power in States with the Largest Hispanic Student Populations continued

	Total High Schools[i]	High Schools with Promoting Power at or Below 65%[i]		% Hispanic Attrition Attributed to Schools with PP at or Below 65%[i]	High Schools with Promoting Power at or Below 60%[i]		% Hispanic Attrition Attributed to Schools with PP at or Below 60%[i]
		#	%	%	#	%	%
All States	**12,513**	**2,091**	**16.7%**	**62.9%**	**1,424**	**11.4%**	**49.8%**
California	1,047	156	14.9%	55.8%	106	10.1%	45.2%
Texas	860	183	21.3%	65.4%	108	12.6%	46.9%
Florida	458	114	24.9%	43.2%	69	15.1%	31.1%
New York	971	161	16.6%	82.4%	133	13.7%	75.4%
Arizona	221	30	13.6%	75.7%	21	9.5%	49.1%
Illinois	449	72	16.0%	64.9%	57	12.7%	60.3%
New Jersey	346	23	6.6%	49.1%	15	4.3%	40.9%
Colorado	198	21	10.6%	58.8%	14	7.1%	44.1%
New Mexico	78	33	42.3%	75.1%	21	26.9%	62.8%
Washington	244	23	9.4%	89.0%	17	7.0%	79.7%
Nevada	69	32	46.4%	81.9%	18	26.1%	56.1%
Georgia	356	158	44.4%	80.5%	108	30.3%	61.8%
Massachusetts	317	32	10.1%	58.9%	24	7.6%	51.2%
Pennsylvania[ii]	600	56	9.3%	80.8%	43	7.2%	66.9%
North Carolina[iii]	395	98	24.8%	51.9%	63	15.9%	38.9%

† indicates that the data are not applicable.

– indicates that the data are missing.

i Includes only regular and vocational high schools with 300+ students, open during school year 2010/11.

ii Pennsylvania did not have data available to calculate the average annual rate of change in AFGR.

iii Calculated North Carolina's average annual rate of change in AFGR using 2005 and 2010 data.

Sources: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys; U.S. Department of Education (2012). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

Case Study: The South—Regional Drive and Effort to Produce Results

Results are in, and southern states[40] have outpaced the nation in most aspects of graduation rate improvement. Beginning with low baselines (for the most part below much of the rest of the nation), these states have experienced greater gains than the nation as a whole, and the number of dropout factories has diminished. Graduation gaps between white students and students of color are narrowing, especially for Hispanic students. Most notable are the narrowing gaps in Florida and Texas,[21] which together educate 27 percent of the nation's Hispanic students in grades 9-12, making them the key contributors to the Hispanic graduation rate.

- SETTING THE PACE TO REACH THE NATIONAL GRADUATION RATE GOAL OF 90 PERCENT BY 2020. Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia are among the 18 states that are on pace to reach this goal (see Map on page 25/Figure 3). In addition, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina are in the "Further Acceleration" category, showing good progress from low graduation rate baselines five years ago.
- GRADUATION RATE GAINS: Between 2003 and 2010, the southern states' graduation rate improved from 70.8 to 75.4, an annual change of 0.7 percentage point and a total change of 4.6 percentage points, higher than the national increase (using the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate, or AFGR). The annual rate of change was substantial in Alabama and North Carolina (1.0), South Carolina and Kentucky (1.2), Georgia (1.3) and Tennessee, the nation's leader (2.4).[22]
- EXCEEDING NATIONAL GRADUATION RATE AVERAGES FOR ALL STUDENTS. Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia posted AFGRs equal to or above the national average of 78.2, with Maryland, Tennessee, and Virginia above 80 percent in 2010. Using the recently released Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), five states exceeded 80 percent (Arkansas, Maryland, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia).
- ELIMINATING DROPOUT FACTORIES. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas each reduced the number of dropout factories by more than 35 (Texas by 132 and Florida by 93), and accounted for 75 percent of the decrease (439 of 583) across the country from 2002 to 2011.
- GRADUATING AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS. Fifty-six percent of the 2010 high school diplomas awarded to African American students were in the South, with Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas accounting for 27 percent of them. The national average AFGR for African American students is 66.1 percent, 16.9 percentage points lower than that for white students. More than half of the southern states equal or exceed this rate.
- GRADUATING HISPANIC STUDENTS. One-third of Hispanic students in grades 9-12 live in the South. Eight southern states exceed the national average AFGR (71.4) for Hispanic students.
- NARROWING HISPANIC/WHITE GRADUATION GAPS. Florida and Texas show AFGRs for Hispanic students that are within one and five percentage points, respectively, of those for white students in their states. The Texas gain of 8.7 percentage points for Hispanic students since 2003 makes it among the nation's leaders. Three states with low percentages of Hispanic students—Arkansas, Kentucky, and Louisiana—record AFGRs for Hispanic students that are greater than those of white students. As a result, the South is leading the nation in improving graduation rates. With greater numbers of students of color than other regions, the South is key to achieving a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020.

Why has the South made such progress? It is difficult to identify a single cause for the improvement in graduation rates because it has been a holistic effort.[23] It appears, however, that a combination of organized and sustained efforts reflecting a collective will have been key.

Well over a century ago, African American and white communities began to build public education in the South. The early Commission on Biracial Cooperation became the Southern Regional Council in the 1940s, Voter registration projects, and civil rights campaigns and battles of the 1950s and 1960s led to acceptance of integration in the 1970s and 1980s, contributing to educational improvement, as a hard-won civil rights advancement.

From a different angle, the Southern Regional Education Board, founded in 1948 by governors and legislators as a 16-state compact for advancing education as the underpinning of economic advancement in an impoverished region, was also an important contributor. SREB's work—policy, research, and practice addressing local and state needs—provides a backbone for sustained educational focus across leadership changes and a forum for states to share lessons. In addition, a bipartisan galaxy of southern education governors pushed reform agendas and garnered sustained funding for educational initiatives in partnership with legislatures. Accountability and assessment were prevalent well before No Child Left Behind, although NCLB clearly accelerated the focus on accountability for both achievement gaps and graduation rates. State and local organizations—SCORE in Tennessee, the Georgia Partnership for Excellent Education, A+ in Mobile, AL, the New Schools Project, and the Public School Forum in North Carolina, to name a few—joined by the burgeoning business community, have sponsored innovative approaches to educational advancement within their communities. Key large districts have built capacity and sustained improvement efforts despite superintendent changes. A number of districts have won, or been runners-up for, the Broad Urban Prize for reducing achievement gaps and raising overall educational outcomes.

What next? The largest challenge continues to be learning how to educate children from poverty well. Far too many African American students are still not succeeding. This is a critical challenge in a region that educates 56 percent of the nation's 2.3 million African American students, in grades nine to twelve.[24] Analyses of several states' data reveal that African American children are suspended at two and three times the rate of white or Hispanic children, and other research shows that even one suspension in ninth grade substantially increases the likelihood of dropping out. While graduation rates are moving upward for Hispanic students, they remain below those of white students. This is especially important because the numbers of Hispanic students have steadily increased. Students with disabilities fail to graduate at shockingly high rates in several southern states. In short, the need is clear: We must sustain and increase focus, support, and high expectations for disadvantaged students and the schools and communities that educate them.

Snapshot: Shelbyville, Indiana—
From Dropout Poster School to Graduation Star

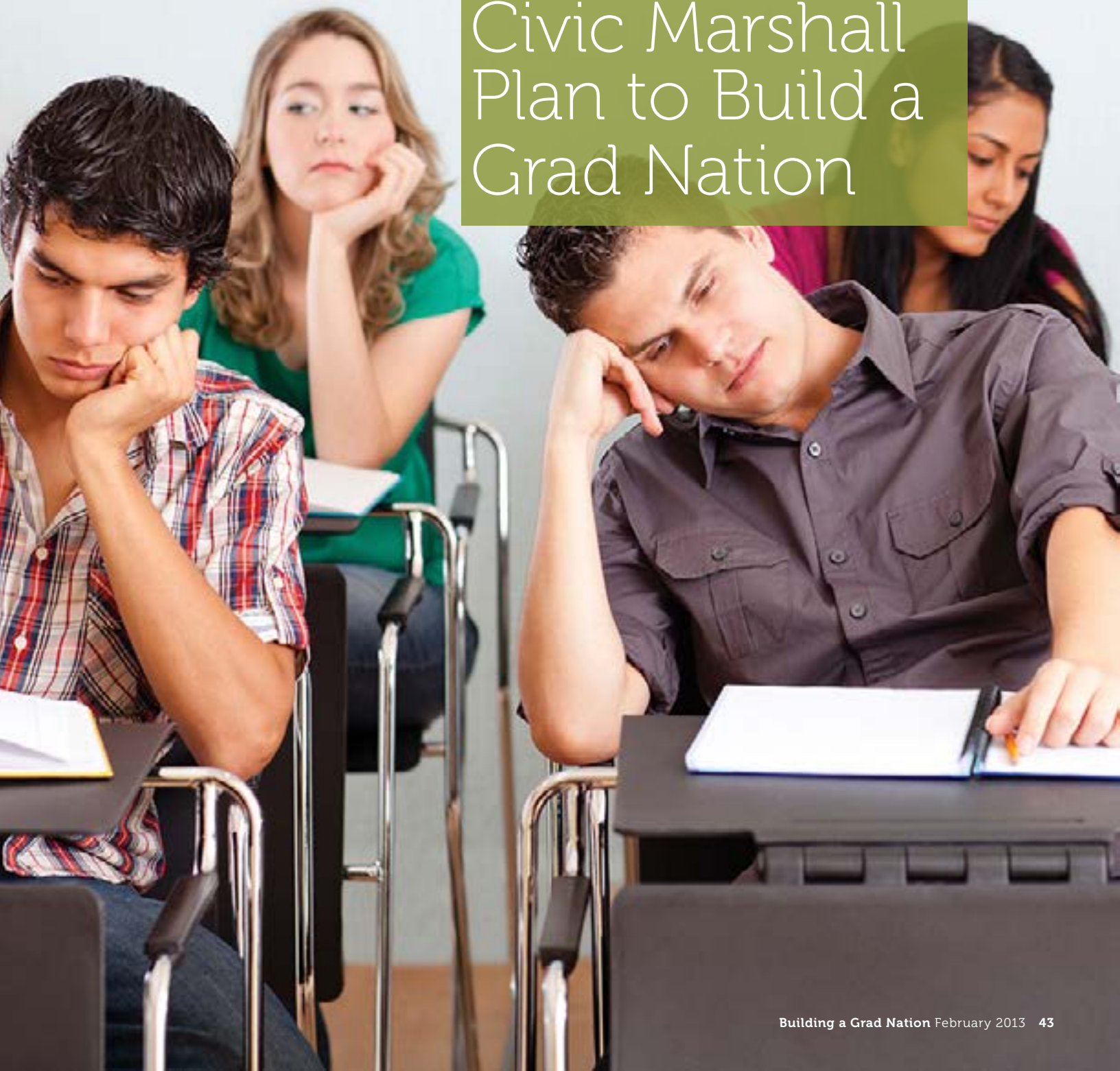
In 2006, *TIME* magazine ran the cover story "Dropout Nation," prompted by *The Silent Epidemic* report. The cover of TIME featured a student from Shelbyville, Indiana, to highlight the severity of the dropout crisis in the United States.[25] The article reported that one in three students that year would not graduate from Shelbyville Senior High School, part of Shelbyville Central School District.[26] Six years later, Shelbyville is once again in the news, but this time to showcase the tremendous progress the district has made in confronting its dropout crisis. For the 2010-2011 school year, according to the Indiana Department of Education,[27] nine in ten students graduated from Shelbyville Senior High School. This includes conferring Core 40 or Honors diplomas to two-thirds of its graduates (a diploma with more rigorous requirements) and general diplomas to one-third of its students (requires fewer credits than a Core 40 or Honors diploma, but still meets state graduation requirements and allows for enrollment in one- and two-year postsecondary degree programs).[28] For at least the past three years, Shelbyville's graduation rate has outpaced the state.[29]

IME and the Red Border Design are registered trademarks of Time Inc. Used with permission.

Shelbyville has a population of more than 19,000 with a youth poverty rate of nearly 22 percent.[30] Meanwhile, the number of students eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program has increased since 2006 from 34 to 51 percent.[31] Despite this socioeconomic downturn, Shelbyville has still managed to raise its graduation rate and provide more of its students opportunities for a brighter future.

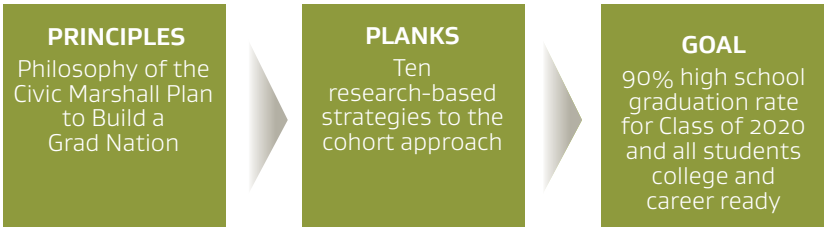
To accomplish their graduation gains, the message from teachers and administrators is clear: the top priority is keeping students in school and on track.[32] Shelbyville has made significant changes, including shifting the culture of its schools to a more positive environment that supports and expects the success of every student.[33] They implemented an early warning system that collects and closely monitors data on each student, beginning the spring before kindergarten and continuing through high school so that educators appropriately respond to student needs.[34] Teachers, counselors, and administrators meet regularly to discuss progress and challenge related to the individual students identified as falling behind. Shelbyville leadership also emphasizes that a strong and committed teacher force is key to success.[35] Alternative learning environments were created to help those students who were not succeeding in the traditional high school, including those students who had to work in the afternoons to support themselves and their families. The teachers and administrators of Shelbyville Central Schools concede that there is no secret ingredient to improve graduation rates. Rather, as they have shown us, a clear focus on increasing graduation rates from the superintendent on down, an unrelenting belief in the abilities of all students to make it, the use of more personalized learning environments, the collection and use of early warning data, and dedication to results are ingredients for success.

Part 2: Progress and Challenge—The Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation



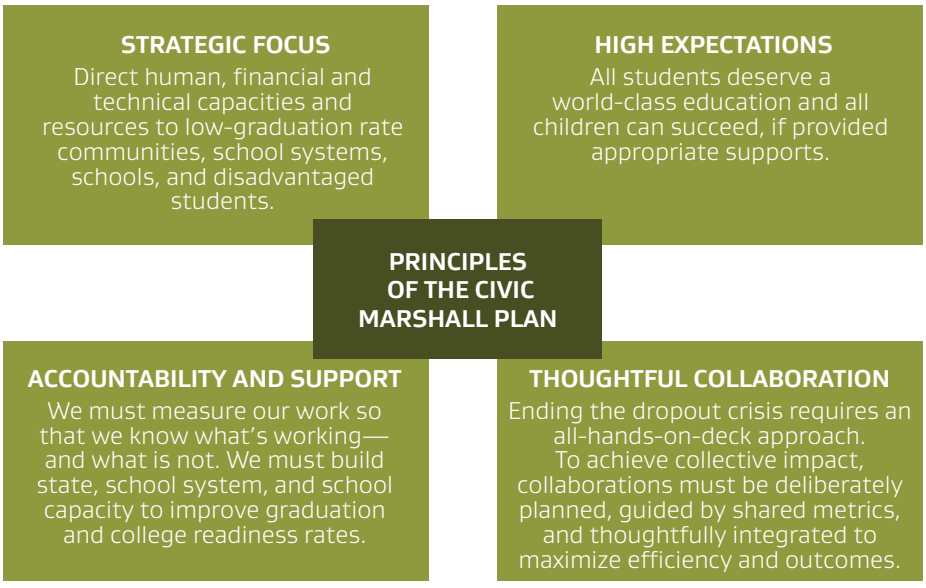
EVERY SCHOOL IN EVERY COMMUNITY HAS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCELERATE ACHIEVEMENT FOR THEIR CHILDREN. To do so, stakeholders at every level require a set of appropriate solutions for its unique needs. In March of 2010, a coalition of leading U.S. organizations gathered to develop a plan of action for ending the dropout crisis in America once and for all. The strategies for achieving this goal became known as the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation (CMP).

The Civic Marshall Plan is not meant to be a prescription, but rather an iterative, evolving, dynamic, solutions-oriented campaign to end America's dropout crisis. The 2012 report gave comprehensive updates on the CMP. This year, we provide updates on this shared work on areas of significant change, as reform efforts have taken root, and the educational landscape has been reconfigured. These updates are framed around two areas: (1) the CMP's four leading principles (strategic focus, high expectations, accountability, and support, and thoughtful collaboration) and (2) the CMP's ten planks (research-based strategies). This theory of change is explained in the chart that follows.



The Civic Marshall Plan's Leading Principles

The Civic Marshall Plan is organized around four leading principles: focus, high expectations, accountability, and collaboration. The principles offer stakeholders key themes that can guide all of their work and are described in detail in the chart that follows. The report provides updates on significant progress around the principles. First, we offer an update on the Cohort Rate as well as Department of Education waiver flexibility policies. Next, we provide updates on the Common Core State Standards and the progress and challenges they represent for our work to build a Grad Nation. Finally, we provide updates on the Civic Marshall Plan's research-based planks. (See Appendices I and J for additional information on the CMP.)



Snapshot: Orlando, Florida: Leveraging National Service to Engage the Community and Build A Culture of Student Achievement

Recognizing the importance of community partnerships in advancing student success, school leaders in Orlando have teamed up with AmeriCorps VISTA to recruit faith and community partners to help turn around their low-performing schools. More than half of the students in Orlando's Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (63 percent). The district's Memorial Middle School and its three feeder elementary schools (Catalina, Richmond Heights, and Palmetto) have even higher percentages of free and reduced-price lunch eligibility (68–79 percent). At these four schools, at least half of the students are below proficiency in math, reading, and science[36]—a key indicator that many students are off track to graduate. To help increase student performance, Orlando and OCPS joined with community and faith-based partners to become the first of seven demonstration sites for Together For Tomorrow—an initiative of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the U.S. Department of Education. The initiative brings together principals, teachers, and school staff with parents, community organizations and volunteers, using national service resources to advance community partnerships to support school improvement. The Heart of Florida United Way facilitated the partnership, providing supervision and training to six AmeriCorps VISTA members who helped establish and support a coalition to build capacity, coordinate programming, manage volunteers, and facilitate interaction between schools and community partners.[37] The VISTA members focus on building partnerships that boost key measurable student outcomes—attendance, behavior and course performance—and improve low-performing schools. An initial assessment conducted by the Center for Public and Nonprofit Management at the University of Central Florida found that in the first year, this new community coalition successfully engaged 392 volunteers that contributed approximately 900 hours to assist students and teachers at the target schools.

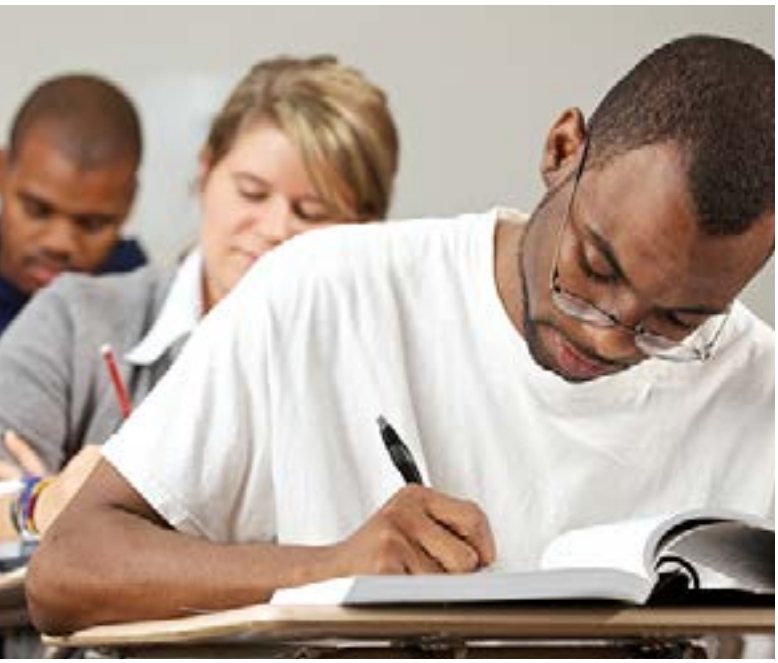
Principles: Focus and Accountability—The Cohort Graduation Rate, the Waiver Process, and Accountability Systems

The accelerating progress the nation is making in raising graduation rates, as well as the challenges that remain, make clear how important accurate and common calculation of graduation rates are and how essential it is to have accountability systems that propel states, districts and schools to focus on the schools and students who need the most assistance. The Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation targets the lowest-performing schools. We need good data to know which schools are which. As a result of the failure to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), the U.S. Department of Education (ED) responded to requests from states to create flexibility through waivers from some of the provisions of federal law. This waiver process required states to adopt a core set of education reforms—implementation of the common core standards,

turn-arounds of their lowest-performing schools, and teacher and principal evaluation systems. Both the implementation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate and flexibility waivers from NCLB hold promise and challenges in the quest for accurate graduation rate data and effective accountability systems that propel all students toward graduation. The FAQ in the appendix gives additional details on the history, definitions, formulae, and use of graduation rates.

Progress: Almost all states are reporting graduation rates using the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate.

Widespread use of the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate formula itself represents tremendous progress. Using the Cohort Rate means that states no longer estimate graduation rates from aggregate numbers of enrollment in grades, but are actually counting the students who graduate in a given time period. Historically, high school graduation rates have been calculated using multiple formulae that varied by state or researcher, based on multiple different definitions of the student baseline, of a diploma, and of a graduate. Even the federal government used different definitions. In 2005, members of the National Governors Association, deeply concerned about strategies for improving schools, reached consensus that high school graduation rates should be calculated in a uniform way across the states; then, in a pioneering compact, they generated a formula for doing so. The formula and associated definitions were later refined in a rulemaking document released by the U.S. Department of Education in December 2008. States were expected to report graduation rates using the Cohort Rate beginning with school year 2010-2011.



Additionally, for many years, the U.S. Department of Education has also used a different calculation method, the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR), agreed on by a panel of experts as the best available estimate. It is the only rate for which longitudinal data are available.

Challenge: We have not yet achieved consistency across states on how key components of the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate are defined.

As noted in the prior data section, some bugs remain in this new system of tracking and calculating graduation rates. It is essential that they be identified and resolved. Otherwise, we can not have full confidence in the data and will not be able to always determine which schools, districts, and states are making progress and can serve as models for others, and which are in need of extra attention and support to succeed in raising graduation rates. For fidelity to the spirit and language of the federal regulations, the Cohort Rate depends on careful definitions at the state level, in state regulations or legislation. Transfer-in and transfer-out students appear not to be well documented in some states, a few states continue to count GEDs and alternative diplomas under certain circumstances, and a number of states may be removing students with disabilities from the initial cohort or allowing a number of exceptions regarding "regular diplomas." The least well-defined or documented area in many but not all states is in "transfers out" who are out of state, and/or out of country. While in general, implementation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate is proceeding smoothly in most states, consistent application of definitions across all states may require additional discussion and action between the U.S. Department of Education and a number of states.

Waivers from NCLB and Graduation Rate Accountability

With the timely reauthorization of NCLB stalled in Congress, and with NCLB in need of improvements, in 2012 the Department of Education (ED) created a flexibility policy for states ("waivers") to create some positive revisions to NCLB in the absence of legislative action and to "better focus on improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction."[38] The goal of the waivers is to "provide educators and

state and local leaders with flexibility regarding specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction."[38]

Within this flexibility policy, ED is maintaining the *reporting* requirements under the 2008 regulations. (e.g., states will have to report the Cohort Rate for all students and subgroups).[39] It also requires all states with waivers to mount ambitious reforms in high schools that receive Title I funding with Cohort Rates below 60 percent. Where there has been some contention is the extent to which waivers are advancing or undercutting accountability for raising graduation rates, in particular among subgroups.

The most recent data on graduation rates and the challenges that remain for the nation to reach a 90 percent high school graduation rate provide support for ED's continued push through flexibility waivers and the school improvement grant program for dramatic reforms in high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent. These data also suggest the need for federal policy to maintain and strengthen accountability for raising the graduation rates of low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. The data on the challenges that remain in the 15 states educating more than three-fourths of the nation's African American and Hispanic students show that aggressively targeting the high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent for major overhauls is essential to improving the graduation rates of students from disadvantaged subgroups. The same data also show, however, that in a good number of these states, and in the remaining states as well, there are schools with graduation rates between 61 and 69 percent (above the waiver cut point for major reform), that are equally problematic. Finally, the data on state-level graduation gaps, across subgroups, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency, as well as the data on the extent to which graduation gaps for African American and Hispanic students were closed across states during the NCLB era, show that strong accountability for closing graduation gaps will be required for the nation to reach a 90 percent graduation rate. (See sidebar below.)

ARE FLEXIBILITY WAIVERS IN YOUR STATE ON TRACK TO RAISE GRADUATION RATES?

With waivers in place, the key is effective monitoring to help ensure states stay with the intent of waivers to allow innovation while still keeping a focus on improving the outcomes, including graduation rates for low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. Here are some key questions to help monitor progress and challenge:

Is the four-year graduation rate easy to find and prominently displayed on school report cards? This addresses a concern that states might create graduation indexes that contain multiple measures and blur the importance of making progress on four-year graduation rates.

Are graduation rates being given sufficient weight in State accountability systems to strongly encourage progress? Are negative incentives being avoided? If schools with

low, stagnant, or declining graduation rates are being recognized as improving within the state accountability system (i.e., moving up a letter grade, or a category in the accountability system), this means the new state accountability system is not prioritizing the importance of raising graduation rates. Moreover, it is important to check for negative incentives. If the weight given to graduation rates in an index system is too low, (i.e., 10–15 percent) then some schools may perceive that pushing out low-performing students would gain them more on the achievement portions of the index than they lose in not graduating more students. If test scores go up and graduation rates go down, this may be happening.

Are high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent engaging in ambitious reforms and are high schools with graduation gaps, or low graduation rates for subgroups over multiple years, being compelled to address them? To gain waivers, states had to pledge to launch ambitious reforms in most of their high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent. Is there evidence that this is occurring? Moreover, if a school fails to reach its graduation rate improvement target for all students or for subgroups for two years in row, districts or schools are supposed to take action. Is this occurring? And is it easy to determine which schools in the state should be taking action to close graduation gaps? Communities must hold states and districts accountable for ensuring that all schools in need are receiving the support they need to improve.

Principle: High Expectations—The Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort with bipartisan roots that provides a "college and career ready" academic framework. Forty-five states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards.[40] Common Core closely aligns with the vision of Grad Nation, as the campaign's goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate is tightly tied to a strong call for an increase in graduation rates tied to a system where all students are prepared for college and career.

Common Core State Standards signal tremendous progress in the vision of the American education system.

Common Core State Standards are an in-depth revision of existing voluntary discipline-specific and/or state standards, and a focused, coherent progression of standards from year to year. Carefully developed and research-based, the standards focus on the essential concepts all students must master to graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and workforce

A Letter from Young Leaders

If you want us to succeed, start by expecting that we are capable of greatness.

Dear Adults,

Dr. Benjamin Mays, the legendary former president of Morehouse College and mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said, "Not failure, but low aim is a sin." The expectations held for students play a huge role in shaping whether they graduate and go to college. Students perform in the way that the adults in their lives expect them to perform. The faith that parents, teachers, counselors, and coaches have in students is crucial to their success. In the classroom as well in the community, there is tremendous power in simply expecting students to be the best they can be. On the other hand, when teachers, school administrations, or policy makers set low expectations, students may lack confidence in their own potential. If educators do not believe we are capable of great achievements, how can anyone expect us to believe in ourselves?

We have heard a great deal of recent discussion focused on initiatives to raise expectations, such as the Common Core State Standards. While there is concern among some that already struggling schools will not have the ability to provide the necessary resources to allow students to meet these higher expectations, we believe that all of our nation's students are highly capable. If done thoughtfully, raising expectations will have a positive effect on student retention, academic success, the achievement gap, and the graduation gap. We believe a good comparison is to athletics: in academics, as in weight training, the key to being able to increase your strength is to set a high goal, establish milestones along the way, and then to move there steadily. Even if you do not reach your goal, you have improved yourself for trying. Putting forth great effort, discovering your limitations, and coping with the difficulties when you fall short teaches important life lessons and builds character, which can have a positive effect on both personal and academic development.

While we believe that raising standards will have a positive effect on students, we cannot ignore that some students may fail to reach these higher expectations. Teachers, administrators, and policymakers must develop ways to smooth the transition to higher standards and to have alternative options to help students if they fall short. While we have the power to push students to success, we also have the power to push struggling students out of the school system completely without proper and thoughtful implementation of raising standards. We have to do the former, not the latter. We must raise standards and have faith in all students so that they will have faith in themselves—and we have to do it right.

The earlier quote from Benjamin Mays is commonly used, but often not used in its entirety. He continues, "Die young, die middle-aged, die old, but remember that the most useful life and most abundant life is the one in which one dreams a dream which will never completely come true, and chooses ideals that forever beckon but forever elude. To seek a goal so worthy, so all-embracing, so all-consuming, and so challenging that one can never completely attain it, is the life magnificent; it is the only life worth living." Like Mays had faith in the potential of our country, have faith in us. Trust that we are capable. High expectations may not ensure that we will reach our full potential, but a lack of high expectations will ensure that we will not.

Sincerely,

Janil Alvares, Michael Bock, Deon Jones, Christina Kelly, and Jordyn Schara
Young Leaders of America's Promise Alliance Impact Network

training programs.[41] These standards have the potential to transform the meaning of a high school diploma so that *all* students will have not only a paper degree, but also the skills and knowledge to succeed in postsecondary endeavors. This is critical because among the students who graduate high school and enter postsecondary education, at least 20 percent in their first year report having taken a remedial course, with even higher rates at community colleges typical.[42] With consistent standards, best practices can be widely disseminated and adopted by educators in all Common Core states, so that all students are getting additional opportunities to acquire the best possible education. This is already happening in several areas, including resources for parents[43] and schools.[44] For example, the Basal Alignment Project, an initiative launched by the Council of the Great City Schools and Student Achievement Partners, provides dozens of free revised questions and tasks for widely used 3rd-5th grade texts in the basal reading series,[45] and the Council of Great City Schools and the National PTA are providing Common Core parent guides.[46]

Challenge: Common Core Implementation

Some schools are already at high levels of implementation; others, particularly low-performing schools, which often lack adequate resources and leadership, are still not started. School personnel in some districts and states have been required to participate in extensive professional development as Common Core standards increasingly inform instruction, while the process is slow in others.[47] To support implementation, teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and nonprofit partners all require additional information presented in ways that are appropriate for each audience.

In addition, raising standards could actually reduce the number of graduates unless low-performing students receive additional interventions and support. The shift to higher expectations may mean that students who are already off-track, or at risk of becoming off-track, may have farther to go to get back on track. Acknowledging and mitigating this risk will be essential for the nation to be able to graduate at least 90 percent of its students prepared for college and career. As the most recent graduation rate data show, the students furthest from this goal are those who will need the most help to meet the Common Core State Standards—students who are economically disadvantaged, have disabilities, or have limited English proficiency.

As CCSS are more uniformly implemented, it will become sharply apparent that the majority of students in high poverty-high schools enter ninth grade with skills and knowledge below grade level—often substantially so. States, districts, community providers, and agencies must recognize this gap and provide extra supports and interventions to students of the right type and intensity. Data-driven, evidence-based interventions and supports will be key to mitigating the risk that a shift to higher expectations could increase dropout rates. Substantial school redesign, and associated in- and out-of-school interventions reaching back at least to the middle grades, will enable students who enter adolescence with below-grade-level skills (and, often, declining academic motivations) to succeed in Common Core-based work.

Snapshot: National Academy Foundation—Standards for Career Readiness

Although Common Core outlines standards specific to ELA and mathematics, and will eventually do so for science and social studies, many educators believe standards should be developed for other areas of study[48] and student competencies. The standards, for example, do not define: how teachers should teach; all that can or should be taught; the nature of advanced work beyond the core; the interventions needed for students well below grade level; the full range of support for English learners and students with special needs; and everything needed for students to be college- and career-ready.[49] The National Academy Foundation (NAF) is addressing one such gap. NAF is a network of 500 career-themed academies in public high schools across the country serving 60,000 students each year. As part of its 30th anniversary, NAF announced a goal of graduating 100,000 college- and career-ready students by 2020. To reach this goal, NAF launched a new student certification assessment system that includes multiple methods to assess a broad range of career-related content and skills and allows students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.

These assessments aim to be a valuable complement to the state assessments being designed in support of the Common Core State Standards. NAF carefully defined the elements of career readiness: core career content knowledge, foundational skills for postsecondary and career success, interpersonal skills, and self-management. They partnered with WestEd, a leading educational research, development, and service agency, to develop a student certification assessment system that includes end-of-course exams and project assessments tied to NAF's industry-validated curricula and supervisors' assessments of students' performance in compensated internships. The NAF assessments offer stronger measures of career readiness and offer additional evidence of the student proficiencies needed for both postsecondary study and the workplace. Most of the foundational skills and dispositions measured by the NAF Student Certification Assessment System are also recognized as being important for college readiness. The complete assessment system, which was pilot tested, is available for NAF academies. It is anticipated that the first cohort of students to complete all components and earn the NAF certificate will graduate in the spring of 2014.

Snapshot: Public Media, Schools, Community Partnerships, and National Initiatives Working Together for American Graduates

The city of Oakland, California, has a population of over 390,000 people, 34.5 percent of whom are white, 28 percent African American, 16.8 percent Asian, and 25.4 percent Hispanic.[50] Although this diverse community has a youth poverty rate of just below 30 percent,[51] the graduation rate for Oakland Unified School District has been increasing since 2010. It currently stands at 59.1 percent for the Class of 2011, up from 55.2 percent for the Class of 2010.[52] The pace of these gains, if sustained through 2020, would ensure Oakland meets the 90 percent high school graduation rate goal, and is a result of the collaborative efforts of the community in- and out- of the classroom.

One part of the community efforts in Oakland is public television and radio station KQED's work building education partnerships across the Bay area as part of their participation in the CPB-funded public media American Graduate initiative.[53] KQED's "Teacher Town Hall" brought together more than 250 teachers and partners to discuss how the dropout issue manifests in classrooms.[54] Further, to help make real-world connections for students, KQED launched a teacher professional development program to integrate public media content and production tools into classroom programs and gave students a voice through the "Rise Up" film festival about how young people experience dropout in their own lives and in the community.[54] KQED is also working with Oakland Unified School and district leaders to advance STEM learning.

The American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen! initiative, made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), is helping local communities identify and implement solutions to this national issue. More than 75 public radio and television stations in more than 30 states, working with over 800 partners and 200 at-risk schools, have launched on-the-ground efforts to keep students on track to high school graduation and prepared for college and career. As a result, communities are strengthening their capacity to work together toward a successful future for everyone.

Like KQED, many American Graduate stations provide local forums for young people to examine the consequences of dropping out. Chicago's WTTW and Free Spirit Media provide direct training to students in documentary media production, and WHYY in Philadelphia offers media training through summer camps and local after school programs.

American Graduate stations are also convening diverse community stakeholder groups and school districts to collaborate in new ways. In St. Louis, Nine Network leads a network of more than 50 community partners to align key strategies and supports for students' success along the path to graduation.

Public television and radio stations are leveraging their megaphone as broadcasters to share the stories of, individuals most affected, highlight solutions, and empower every community member with knowledge and critical resources to help improve outcomes for youth.

Principle: Thoughtful Collaboration—The Planks of the Civic Marshall Plan

Ending the dropout crisis requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. To ensure the class of 2020 reaches our goal of a 90 percent graduation rate, the Civic Marshall Plan Leadership Council established a phased approach with clear goals and benchmarks for the years ahead. The Civic Marshall Plan (CMP) focuses on using evidenced-based strategies to address the dropout crisis. The CMP provides ten key planks to achieve progress, and many organizations across the country are aligning their work to this plan. (See the sidebar for a full list of the planks of the CMP and the appendices for additional information on the CMP.) In last year's report, we provided a comprehensive update on each of the ten planks. **This year, we provide updates on planks for which we have seen significant progress over the past year:**

Plank 1: Grade-Level Reading;

Plank 2: Chronic Absenteeism;

Planks 4 and 6: Middle Grades Redesign and Transitions;

Plank 9: Pathways to College and Career; and

Plank 10: Dropout Recovery.

As organizations continue working to end the dropout crisis, we must steadily advance the leading principles outlined in the Civic Marshall Plan: strategic focus on communities with low graduation rates, high expectations for all students, accountability and support for what is working, and collaborations that are carefully planned, guided by shared metrics and thoughtfully integrated to maximize impact.

Plank 1: Grade-Level Reading

We must substantially increase the number of students reading at grade level, because research shows that an important predictor of school success and high school graduation is grade-level reading by the end of third grade. Students who do not reach proficiency by that point are more likely to struggle academically and are four times more likely to drop out of high school.[56] In the past year, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has encouraged tremendous progress in this area. The GLR Campaign is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, states, and communities working to ensure that more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. In the past year, the campaign has worked with 124 cities, counties, and towns across the country. Each of the communities involved has committed to pursue solutions that will support local schools in ensuring that more low-income children learn to read well by the end of third grade.

Each of the communities has also developed a community solution action plan to complement efforts of local schools by addressing challenges beyond the schoolyard—such as chronic absenteeism, summer learning loss, and lack of school readiness—that deter low-income students from learning to read well. The communities have formed coalitions to tackle these problems, while the campaign and its partners provide access to experts, technical assistance, policymakers, and potential funders.

Plank 2: Chronic Absenteeism

We will not fully close graduation gaps until we make progress on getting all students to attend school regularly. Research shows that students are far less likely to master reading, pass courses, and gain credits when they are regularly absent. This is particularly true for low-income students, who are both more apt

The 10 Planks of the Civic Marshall Plan

Elementary and Middle School Years:	
1. Grade-level reading	Substantially increase the number of students reading with proficiency by fourth grade.
2. Chronic absenteeism	Reduce chronic absenteeism (missing 20 days or being absent ten percent or more of school days), a key early warning indicator of a student being "off track" to graduate.
3. Early Warning Systems	Establish early warning indicators and intervention systems that use the early predictors of dropping out (attendance, behavior, and course performance in reading and math).
4. The Middle Grades	Redesign the middle grades to foster high student engagement and preparation for rigorous high school courses.
5. Adult and Peer Supports	Provide sustained and quality adult and peer support to all students who want and need it, continual supports from adults serving in schools as "success coaches" for all off-track students, and intensive wraparound supports for the highest-need students.
High School Years:	
6. Transition Supports	Provide transition supports for struggling students in grades 8-10 in all schools with graduation rates below 75 percent, as well as their feeder middle and elementary schools.
7. Effective Schools	Transform or replace the nation's high school dropout factories with effective schools.
8. Compulsory School Age	Raise the compulsory school attendance age to graduation or 18 in all states, coupled with support for struggling students.
9. Pathways to College/Career	Provide all youth (including those who have dropped out) clear pathways from high school to college and career.
10. Dropout Recovery	Support comprehensive dropout recovery programs for disconnected youth.

to be chronically absent in the early grades[58] and less likely to develop literacy skills because of the lost time on task.[59]

Chronic absence, defined as missing at least ten percent of school days for any reason, is a key early warning indicator that a student is "off track" to graduate.[60] Attendance Works, an initiative that promotes awareness of the important role of school attendance, recommends that schools monitor for the ten-percent figure rather than for a specified number of days absent, because this measure promotes early identification before students have missed too much time in the classroom. It also allows for better comparisons across districts and states with school years of different lengths. Too many school districts miss the chronic absence warning light because they are tracking average daily attendance or truancy, not the total days that students miss in excused and unexcused absences.

Efforts in this area gained considerable traction in the past year with new research demonstrating the effects of chronic absenteeism. *The Importance of Being in School*, a study released last May, underscored the scale of the problem nationwide, estimating that five million to 7.5 million students are chronically absent.[61] Statewide analyses in Oregon, Indiana, and Utah demonstrated how chronic absenteeism tracks with high school graduation. For example, in Utah, 36 percent of students who were chronically absent for any single year between eighth and twelfth grades dropped out; if chronic absence occurred for any four years, the dropout rate was more than 60 percent.[62] These state studies also showed that the effects of poor attendance begin as early as kindergarten.[63] Likewise, new research from the Baltimore Education Research Consortium found that students with low attendance in both Pre-K and kindergarten are more likely to be retained by third grade and to perform more poorly in school than peers who attended school more regularly in these pivotal early years.[64]

The issue continues to attract public attention. The Chicago Tribune recently published a multi-part series on chronic absenteeism, with gripping stories to illustrate the problem.[65] New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's interagency task force to combat chronic absenteeism has launched a website with strategies and tools.[66]

Snapshot: Chronic Absenteeism—Attendance Works and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

Attendance Works advances efforts to reduce chronic absence on three levels: nurturing local innovation, advancing state action, and building national will to address the problem. Over the past year, its work with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has been especially successful. The Campaign has made chronic absence one of the three pillars of its community-based approach to increasing the number of low-income students reading proficiently by the end of third grade. With support from Attendance Works, the Campaign has used an awards process, webinars, and on-line resources to cultivate interest in chronic absence across 124 cities, counties and towns. Those efforts paid off in June 2012, when the U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously approved a resolution urging its members to raise awareness of the pernicious effects of chronic absenteeism and engage the community to help parents get children to school regularly. In September, Attendance Works and the Campaign launched a call to action asking superintendents to make attendance a top priority starting in the early grades, to mobilize their communities around reducing chronic absence, and to use data to identify students and schools in need of intervention.

Attendance Works uses its peer learning network and online platform to help communities learn from each other. Oakland, California, for example, has been recognized for its data-driven approach. The school district has identified the schools, grades, and neighborhoods with the highest absenteeism rates. Administrators have set goals for improvement, created an attendance manual to guide practice, and invited community partners to help reach out to students whose poor attendance record places them at risk. Peer learning webinars have also highlighted the effective use of data to identify the scope of the chronic absence problem in such states as Indiana, Utah, and Oregon.

Attendance Works, along with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Civic Enterprises, America's Promise Alliance, and other partners are now planning the first National Attendance Awareness Month for September 2013. Schools and communities will be invited to participate in activities that will promote data-driven solutions, parent engagement, and positive messaging.

Plank 3: Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems

Over the past decade, schools, districts, and states have become increasingly savvy with data collection and analysis. Recently, Race to the Top has also helped states to improve the quality and use of their data systems. Early warning indicator and intervention systems are at the cutting edge of the data-driven, outcomes-focused, high-impact education movement. Identifying students early in their educational careers who are at risk of falling off-track to earn diplomas will have a profound effect on graduation rates, as these students can get the academic and non-academic support they need to stay in school and graduate.

Now, as a nation, we must take the next step: implementing early warning systems at scale. To support this effort, researchers and practitioners are continuing to share best practices. States, districts, and schools are providing professional development for their staff, and are developing strategies to align interventions with identified needs. For example, after a year of research and convenings with key leaders in the field, Data Quality Campaign (DQC) will release *Using Early Warning Data to Keep Students on Track Toward College and Careers*—a guide for states to advance their work related to early warning indicator and interventions systems (EWS).[67] The previously published *On Track for Success* profiled successful state and district EWS systems across the country, including snapshots of effective and developing systems within local communities.[68]

Plank 4: the Middle Grades and Plank 6: Adult and Peer Supports[69]

Planks 4 and 6 of the Civic Marshall Plan are being addressed in a variety of promising, innovative ways. Key approaches have included increasing supports and expanding learning opportunities for middle school students, such as quality afterschool programs, summer programs, and reimagining the traditional calendar of 180, six-and-a-half to seven-hour days. Many students need more time to master concepts and to enjoy a broad range of experiences. Today more than 1,000 schools, including many middle schools, use a longer and restructured schedule to prepare students for success.[70] These programs have intensive academics, but they also offer enrichment activities, health and wellness, and other services that address the needs of adolescents. To cite one example, starting in the 2012/13 school year, Chicago Public

Snapshot: Middle School Matters Summit Series—A Focus on Early Warning Systems

The George W. Bush Institute's Middle School Matters program focuses on improving the middle grades to (a) ensure students possess the academic foundation needed to successfully complete high school coursework and be on track to meet graduation requirements, and (b) proactively address the student risk factors associated with dropping out of school when they first arise, which can be as early as sixth grade. Through an intense focus on improving the middle grades and leveraging the best available research and evidence-based academic and social support interventions, the Bush Institute seeks to dramatically increase the number of students who earn a diploma and are prepared to enter college or the workforce upon graduation. As a first step, educators should use data to identify students who are at risk of dropping out, beginning in the middle grades. The critical next step is applying strong research-based responses in both academics and student support. Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems (EWS), which address both of these important steps, have grown from a powerful idea into an actionable, high-priority, research-based reform effort. The nation must have high-quality implementation of EWS at scale. Therefore, the Bush Institute has partnered with Civic Enterprises, the Everyone Graduates Center and The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk to host a series of EWS summits. These summits, beginning in October 2013, will help education leaders build frameworks that identify which students are on or off track for graduation, with specific attention to those schools with the highest dropout rates. The leaders will then be trained on research-based interventions for those students identified as at risk.

Schools (CPS) extended the school day by 90 minutes.[71] Formerly, CPS students had the shortest school day in the nation, just five hours and 45 minutes, well below the national average of 6.7 hours. Elementary school students will now be in class for seven hours and high school students for 7.5 hours on all but one day each week.[72] The longer day results in an "overall bell-to-bell increase of 75 minutes" (22 percent more time spent in school).[73]

Another approach focuses on out-of-school time (OST). In September 2012, twelve national organizations serving more than three million middle school youth began discussing four evidence-informed practices that would increase the effectiveness of OST services for middle school youth. Since that meeting, senior leaders from 20 youth-serving networks and national OST time intermediaries have committed in principle to strengthen the competencies of adults serving middle school youth: Alliance for Children and Families, American Camp Association, A World Fit for Kids, After School All Stars, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Boy Scouts of America, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Camp Fire, Catholic Charities USA, Communities In Schools, Forum for Youth Investment, Girl Scouts of the USA, Girls, Inc., MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, The Afterschool Alliance, The National Summer Learning Association, United Neighborhood Centers of America, United Way Worldwide, Up2Us, and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.

These groups have agreed to work on a single, evidence-based practice that enhances the skills of OST professionals, volunteers, and mentors so they deliver services and programs more effectively. The national organizations will advance this practice within their networks over the next year, including by collaborating with each other and by drawing on support from the National Human Services Assembly, which is facilitating exchanges among organizations. This shared work will focus on students who are struggling academically (e.g., problematic attendance or behaviors or poor grades). A wide array of OST interventions (mentoring, summer learning programs, service-learning, to name a few) have been shown to help struggling students get back on track *if* delivered effectively. Member organizations will work within their networks to help more youth development professionals, mentors, and OST volunteers acquire the knowledge and skills needed to provide effective services to middle school youth.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America has moved this strategy into action with the launch of its Impact U learning management (technology) system. Designed to deliver effective, efficient, and high-quality training/development opportunities for all BBBS volunteers and professional staff network-wide, Impact U contributes a standard, integrated solution that focuses on the critical human capital of successful youth development programs. For example, the organization's standards and practices require training/development opportunities for volunteers and program certification for all staff. Collectively, the National Human Services Assembly is facilitating exchanges among the organizations about specific competencies that enable adults to best serve youth in the middle school years and innovative ways to build that know-how. The organizations also are pursuing a shared solution for developing OST adults' core competencies, including the ability to partner with middle school officials to identify struggling students who would benefit from youth development and additional support services from the community.

Snapshot: Portland, Oregon—Self-Enhancement: Creating a Generation of Positive Contributing Citizens

The Albina neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, has historically had high rates of violence and poverty and low rates of academic success.[74] Thirty-one years ago, Self-Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) was created to address these problems and support youth to become *Positive Contributing Citizens*. What began as a one-week basketball camp quickly developed into a multi-service organization that today provides supports to 3,000 students and 5,000 families, from second grade through age 25—in school, after school, at home, over the summer, and after high school graduation.[75] Upwards of 90 percent of these youth have been assessed to be at medium or high risk socially and/or academically.[76] In addition, approximately three-quarters of the participating youth live in single-parent homes, and 85 percent receive free or reduced priced lunches.[77]

SEI'S WORK INVOLVES FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. *Positive relationships* between youth and adults
2. *A culture of success* for all children, youth, and adults
3. *A comprehensive approach to risk and resiliency*
4. *A continuum of support*, taking the "long view" with the youth

SEI coordinators are a keystone to its in-school efforts. Acting as teacher, mentor, and parent for their portfolio of youth, the coordinators say, "We put our last name on these children." The coordinators are based at one of twelve low-performing, Title I schools with which SEI partners, including SEI Academy, a charter middle school based at SEI's main center. The coordinators are embedded within the life of the schools and the life of the youth, working on a 24/7, 365-day schedule.[78]

The coordinators work with each student to create an Individual Success Plan (ISP) that includes an academic, social, and personal goal. In addition to monthly check-ins, coordinators continually interact with the students by being visible in the halls, in the cafeteria, and at sporting and cultural events. The coordinators build such trust with the youth, the teachers, and the families that they serve as the bridge among all three—whether attending a meeting in place of a parent who was not able to be there, smoothing relations between the parent and child, or ensuring that the youth and teachers are on the same page.[79]

The supports for the youth do not stop with the coordinator. Once the final school bell rings, youth attend after-school programming, which includes academic, social, arts, and sports. In addition, the youth attend a six-to-ten-week summer program. The family services department works with the families to ensure that they have basic supports for housing, electricity, water, and food. Parent coordinators conduct site visits at the homes at key points of entry or transition for the youth, and as needed.[80]

This comprehensive set of supports produces results. According to one evaluation of SEI, over the course of seven years, 97 percent of SEI youth graduated high school. Ninety-nine percent of SEI youth who complete ninth grade go on to tenth grade.[82] Another evaluation, conducted in the Northeast Regional Educational Laboratory, found that between 83 percent and 97 percent of SEI students in elementary, middle and high school maintained or exceeded 90 percent school attendance, and between 97 percent and 100 percent earned on-time promotion.[83]

Plank 9: Pathways to College and Career

We know now, more than ever, that everyone needs some postsecondary training for the 21st century labor market. The second goal of the Grad Nation campaign is for our nation to again lead the world in college completion—which includes two- and four-year degrees. While the emphasis on a traditional four-year degree remains important, it is equally important to recognize that other degree types can well prepare students for the jobs of the future.[84] For example, estimates suggest that there are currently 29 million jobs that pay middle-class wages that require more than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree.[85]

Career and technical education programs (CTE), which combine academic and technical skills, offer students a pathway to many of these careers. While CTE and vocational education programs have existed for decades, high-quality CTE programs can reduce high school dropout rates, in part because students are more engaged in the material and see the relevance of what they are learning.[86] Over the past year, we have seen significant progress in increasing the strength, scale, and impact of CTE programs.

On the policy front, recognizing the need to expand the number of high-quality CTE programs around the country, the Obama Administration in 2012 released its blueprint for reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Act, which represents the federal government's primary investment in CTE. The push for reauthorization highlights the need for increased alignment between academic and labor market needs, improved collaboration among secondary and postsecondary institutions, stronger accountability for schools and students, and support for innovative programs at the local level. Meanwhile last year, Opportunity Nation (ON) released a national plan of action to connect more young adults to school and career. ON is a bipartisan, cross-sector national campaign made up of more than 250 nonprofits, businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations working together to expand economic opportunity and close the opportunity gap in America. Their plan of action included a focus on CTE, including advocacy for the creation of an Enterprising Pathways Innovation Program to fund CTE programs and spur innovation at the state and local levels.[87]

Programmatically, states, communities, and individual schools are expanding the availability of high-quality CTE programs that can prepare students for college and careers. In California, a dozen school districts have implemented Linked Learning programs that embrace four core program components: challenging academics that prepare students for success in postsecondary programs; demanding technical courses that deliver concrete knowledge and skills; work-based learning that offers opportunities to learn through real-world experiences; and, support services that include counseling, transportation, and other supports to help students succeed. An evaluation by MDRC showed that earlier forms of this model, then known as career academies, affected student outcomes, including higher completion rates for challenging academic courses and higher high school graduation rates and that eight years after graduation, males who participated in career academy programs earned $2,100 more annually than their peers.[88]

Through the recently launched Illinois Pathways Initiative, Illinois has begun transforming its CTE system. This initiative, funded through the state's Race to the Top funds, will increase collaboration

Snapshot: A Business Case for Building a Grad Nation – AT&T Rethinking High School Success through Collective Impact

Employers struggle to find skilled talent. A survey of 2,000 U.S. companies found that two-thirds report difficulty in filling job vacancies due to unsuitable work habits and insufficient experience.[89] In an effort to close this skills gap, U.S. companies spend an estimated $485 billion annually on formal and informal education and training.[90] Despite this enormous investment, too many job candidates are still unprepared for the demands of today's workforce. At the same time, companies, like CVS Caremark, Gap Inc., Baxter International Inc., Southwire Company, Pacific Gas & Electric and others, have realized a broad range of benefits from investing in employment pathways, including a skilled pipeline of ready talent, greater workforce diversity, and strengthened community partnerships.

For young adults who have not graduated from high school or who are at risk of dropping out, work and work-based learning can be a highly effective lever to re-engage them in education and the community. In 2008 with an initial $100 million commitment, AT&T launched its Aspire initiative to promote high school success that leads to college and career readiness. The first four years of Aspire helped crystalize for AT&T the critical role of a collective impact model where multiple organizations—corporate, government and nonprofit—reinforce each other and work towards the same goal to create exponential change. Since that time, and with an additional $250 million pledged in 2012, AT&T has reached more than 1,000 national and local nonprofits and community-based organizations that have, in turn, impacted more than one million students at risk of dropping out.

In 2013, AT&T is working to address the high school dropout crisis in ways that are more effective and sustainable than ever before, by announcing an investment of $1 million in a new series of GradNation Community Summits across the country. These Summits will kick off in the fall of 2013 and link businesses, educators, nonprofits, policymakers, parents and even the students themselves, to create a sense of urgency around the 2020 goal. The company cites a strong business case for doing so: America's need for a robust talent pipeline to fuel the future of its business. With approximately 240,000 employees, AT&T needs a prepared and diverse future workforce to help ensure competitiveness in the digital, global economy.

AT&T has also enlisted the help of its AT&T Foundry facilities to work with the education community, social entrepreneurs and other companies to develop mobile technologies to give students, parents, and educators new ways to connect and to improve education outcomes. The company is exploring the use of web-based applications, and mobilized gamification and entertainment technology—the communications environments in which many of today's students are most comfortable—to instill a new level of excitement into learning. Finally, AT&T also created the Aspire Mentoring Academy giving its employees opportunities to work closely with students most at-risk of dropping out in the communities where they live and work.

This is only one example of ways that companies can embrace innovation in education that is fueled by technology, local investment, people, and proven programs all joining to drive exponential change and high school success.

between secondary and postsecondary education systems and the business community to help students graduate from high school and college with the skills required for 21st century jobs.

Efforts are also underway to align high school course curriculum with criteria associated with admissions to postsecondary education through models such as early college high schools. One example, New York City's innovative Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH), is a Grade 9-14 high school that will graduate students with a high school and associate's degree in six years. The school grew out of collaboration among the New York City Department of Education, City University of New York, New York City College of Technology (City Tech), and IBM.

Plank 10: Dropout Recovery

Plank 10 of the Civic Marshall Plan focuses on dropout recovery so that youth who are disconnected from school or work can be reengaged for academic and career success. The past several years have seen a growing recognition that, in addition to ensuring more students graduate high school on time, we must also focus on recovering and re-engaging those students who do not graduate in four years or leave school without a diploma.

In 2011, the United States was home to 6.7 million disconnected or "opportunity youth"—young people ages 16 to 24 who were not in school or work or college graduates.[95] In addition to the personal toll on the individuals and their families, "disconnected" youth cost U.S. taxpayers $93 billion in 2011—and more than $1.6 trillion over their lifetimes—as a result of lost tax payments and higher social service costs.[96] A recent study found that all levels of government feel these burdens; states experience a higher burden while a young person is disconnected, and the federal government carries the higher cost over the young person's lifetime.[96] The Aspen Forum on Community Solutions, Opportunity Nation, YouthBuild, Forum for Youth Investment, Jobs for the Future, Year Up, National Youth Council, and Hope Street Group, together with many other organizations, are working to reconnect one million young people who dropped out of high school or who are disconnected from college or the workforce.

Despite the size of the challenge, we are seeing progress at the national, state, and local levels. The White House Council for Community Solutions focused its attention on opportunity youth through a two-year effort to highlight successful community initiatives and produced a report of recommendations for the Obama Administration. One recommendation was to align policies across programs and agencies to "reduce fragmentation, improve efficiency, and achieve better results."[97] To support this effort, the Administration proposed the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth, which would give pilot sites flexibility with certain federal regulations to promote effective cross-agency collaboration. The Aspen Institute, through its new Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, is also supporting these efforts by providing new funding to support community collaborations that focus on opportunity youth.

In addition to these national efforts, many states, communities, and nonprofit organizations are making significant strides in developing and scaling high-quality alternative pathways programs for young people who have not earned a high school diploma. YouthBuild—which provides a comprehensive mix of education, job training, counseling, community service, and leadership development to its participants—engages approximately 10,000 low-income young people ages 16-24, many of whom left school without receiving a diploma. Through YouthBuild's Postsecondary Education (PSE) Initiative, more YouthBuild participants are continuing on to postsecondary education. In the first cohort of PSE participants, 71 percent earned a high school diploma or GED, and 51 percent of graduates enrolled in postsecondary education, with 59 percent of them persisting through their first year.[98] In Texas, the state raised the maximum age that a person can receive a public education to 26, making school districts eligible for public education funding for older students trying to complete their high school education. This increase in the eligibility age has made a significant impact on local communities. The College, Career & Technology Academy in Texas has used this new flexibility and a focus on dropout recovery to help more than 1,000 former dropouts graduate with high school diplomas.[99]

Snapshot: National Service: Advancing Student Success & School Improvement to Boost Graduation Rates

Passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, the 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act sets forth a vision to scale national service to address our nation's most pressing problems while emphasizing the importance of targeting resources and measuring impact. As a result of this legislation, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has built on its long-standing commitment to education and student success. By forging new partnerships and focusing investments on the students and schools that need it most, national service is accelerating progress toward Grad Nation's goals.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

Approximately half of CNCS's grant funding supports education programs that deploy AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Senior Corps members to provide tutoring, mentoring, capacity-building, and other service interventions that help turn around schools and increase opportunities for children in disadvantaged communities. Building on this investment, CNCS is partnering with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on creative initiatives that simultaneously enhance ED's efforts to turn around the nation's lowest-performing schools and CNCS's targeting of resources on critical challenges. Last year, the agencies joined with the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships to launch Together for Tomorrow, which uses AmeriCorps VISTAs to expand community partnerships for school improvement. This year, CNCS and ED are also launching initiatives to competitively fund local evidenced-informed programs that deploy AmeriCorps members in the nation's lowest performing schools. Funding will be given to models that use AmeriCorps members to build positive school culture, accelerate students' literacy and math skills, and increase learning time among other key supports needed to promote on-time graduation, student success, and school improvement.

TARGETING RESOURCES TO THE SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS MOST IN NEED

An assessment of CNCS's education investment shows that national service has a large presence in the nation's schools, with a concentrated focus in underperforming schools. CNCS participants serve in:

- More than one out of every ten (11.3 percent) public schools (11,716 out of 103,813)
- More than one in four (26 percent) "persistently lowest achieving" schools[101] (PLAs)
- Four out of five (82 percent) communities (defined by zip codes) that are home to their state's PLAs[102]

Of the underperforming schools with a national service presence, both K-8 schools (55 percent) and high schools (45 percent) benefit from the additional "people power"—national service participants providing services that help students stay on track or get back on track to graduate.[103]

PROVIDING CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS TO THE STUDENTS MOST IN NEED

Education-focused national service programs are increasingly measuring their performance using indicators such as attendance, behavior, and course performance, the key early warning indicators of being off track to graduate as well as a key plank of the Civic Marshall Plan. For the FY 2010 AmeriCorps grant competition, the first competition after the passage of the Serve America Act, a subset of national service grantees piloted the performance measures. For example, the OneStar National Service Commission of Texas (a state recognized by Grad Nation as one of twelve leaders in significantly improving graduation rates since 2009) used these measures in 2010 to report on progress of education-focused AmeriCorps state programs. Ten programs reported that a total of 5,733 disadvantaged youth or 67 percent of those served by AmeriCorps Members improved their academic performance; three programs reported that a total of 1,835 students or 98 percent of those served, improved their attendance; and two programs reported that 2,258 students, or 94 percent of those served, received fewer disciplinary referrals. Minnesota's National Service Commission, ServeMinnesota, also used the pilot performance measures in 2010 and reported that one of their AmeriCorps programs, City of Lakes YouthWorks, served 222 students in the Minneapolis Public Schools and that 208 of these students improved their academic achievement. In this case, 94 percent of the students served by AmeriCorps members improved their academic achievement. These examples from Texas and Minneapolis begin to illustrate how national service can help to address the most pressing challenges impeding on-time graduation for students most at risk.[104]

MOVING FORWARD TO CREATE LASTING IMPACT

CNCS is placing even more emphasis on targeting its education investment toward the schools and students in most need of support and demonstrating how national service can help turn around schools and advance student success. As of FY 2013, funding priority for new AmeriCorps programs providing educational services will be given to those that use a specific set of performance measures, and most CNCS grant competitions will give priority to education-focused programs that plan to serve students in schools receiving School Improvement Grants and/or in Priority Schools.[105] Through public-private partnerships, targeted investments, and tapping the passion and talent of national service members and volunteers, CNCS is helping America's most at-risk students increase their chance for success in school and life.

Part 3: Paths Forward

ALL OF US—STUDENTS, FAMILIES, EDUCATORS, BUSINESS LEADERS, NONPROFITS, AND OFFICIALS IN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS—MUST CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND POLICES TO ACCELERATE OUR PROGRESS AND ACHIEVE THE GRAD NATION GOALS. We must strengthen the pipeline of education—from early education through career. In the first Building a Grad Nation report, we outlined a comprehensive set of policies and strategies to boost high school graduation rates. In subsequent reports, we provided supplemental recommendations and strategies at the federal, state, and local levels. This year, we provide recommendations related to the core elements of this year's report: graduation rate reporting and requirements, the "graduation gap," and the Civic Marshall Plan.

As data in this report show, we must apply more broadly across the country the core, evidence-based strategies associated with raising graduation rates—and we should focus especially on the communities from which most of the nation's dropouts continue to come. Within states that are making progress, we also need to extend these strategies more deeply to students in groups whose graduation rates remain unacceptably low (e.g., African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students as well as limited English proficiency students and students with disabilities). Recent experience, moreover, teaches that to extend these strategies more deeply we must go beyond the low-performing high schools to include their feeder middle and in some cases, elementary schools and pre-Kindergarten. We will also have to extend and accelerate national and local efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism, disparities in school discipline, and the use of ineffective discipline policies. And we must use school re-design along with evidence-based instructional strategies so that all students can succeed in the Common Core State Standards.

Continue to Strengthen and Align Graduation Rate Reporting and Accountability.

To continue our progress, the nation needs to make good on the promise of No Child Left Behind, the 2008 Department of Education graduation rate regulations, and the education initiatives of the first Obama administration. Otherwise, we will not reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020.[106]

- **Accountability**
  - Use the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for reporting and accountability purposes at the school, district, state, and federal levels and ensure accountability for student subgroups as envisioned under the Department of Education's 2008 graduation rate regulations. Require four-, five-, and six-year rates to be calculated and reported separately, for both reporting and accountability purposes, with an emphasis on graduating students from high school within four years, college- and career-ready.
  - The states and the U.S. Department of Education reach consensus on key issues that remain in achieving common application of Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates, enabling stakeholders to accurately compare graduation rates across states, gauge where progress is occurring, and focus efforts where they matter most. These issues include common definitions of who is a ninth-grader, how transfers to other schools or degree-granting institutions will be documented and counted, how undocumented transfers out of state and the country will be coded/counted, and how different pathways to

a diploma can be provided while maintaining high standards for all students,

- At the high school level, accountability systems should include achievement measures, high school graduation rates, and other measures of college and career readiness such as AP/IB performance, SAT/ACT performance, or the percentage of students enrolling in postsecondary education. In multiple-measure systems, graduation rates should receive equal weight with measures of achievement in order to avoid the potential negative consequences of an accountability system heavily weighted towards standardized tests (e.g., the incentive to push out low-performing students in order to raise test scores.) Uniform goals and targets for each indicator should be established for all students and subgroups, leading toward the ultimate goal of college- and career-readiness.

- **Reporting –** In addition to the cohort rate, AFGR should continue to be reported for longitudinal analysis. Schools, districts, states, and the U.S. Department of Education should work to ensure that graduation rate data is available to the public quickly and transparently—greatly accelerating the current lag time of up to two years, and that an accurate means of following and counting students as they flow between public, and private, home and virtual schooling is established.
- **Reporting and analyzing within the community to target resources –** Too often, instead of having one effective data and accountability system, communities have multiple fragmented systems, each lacking the breadth and capacity to facilitate overarching accountability, particularly for opportunity youth. The same is true for early childhood programs, out-of-school-time programs, and health programs for children of all ages, as examples. Parallel data systems often make redundant technological expenditures, collect overlapping sets of information, and are built in ways that inhibit the flow and transfer of data between them. Communities should reinvent and integrate data systems to provide the greatest amount of useful information for the lowest expenditures.
- **Expand efforts to close the "graduation gap" among students of different races, ethnicities, income levels, disabilities, and language proficiencies –** Data show that the nation must close the graduation gap to reach the Grad Nation goal. Practitioners and policymakers must redouble efforts to target policy, evidence-based

interventions, and additional resources to enable student subgroups to graduate at rates equal to more advantaged students. Beyond the focus on graduation rates and low-performing schools, we need additional efforts to target students in need of greater supports within these schools.

- Early warning systems should be required in schools with significant graduation gaps. Districts should also analyze, by age and credits shy of graduation, dropout data from a recent year to develop the right mix of recovery and second-chance opportunities.
- Early warning systems should also be required to track the success of recovery and second-chance opportunities.
- Schools, districts, and states should then conduct policy audits to ensure that school attendance, behavior, and course-passing policies support graduation for all.
- As the majority of students of color and economically disadvantaged students attend schools with high dropout rates, a continued focus on these schools should be a priority. The federal focus on high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent has been effective; some states, however, will need to include schools with graduation rates below 70 percent, and focus on their high school feeder patterns, to make sure they are working to transform

or replace the high schools through which most of their dropouts pass. Additionally, the federal focus on such high schools needs to be broadened beyond those high schools that receive Title I, as many high-poverty high schools neither receive nor are eligible for Title I, largely because of state policies that allocate Title I funds to elementary schools.[107]

- Federal funding should encourage states, districts, and schools to implement evidence-based strategies to close graduation gaps and reward them when the gaps are closed.

Stay the Course of the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation.

The Civic Marshall Plan is the engine of the Grad Nation campaign. Since the founding of the Grad Nation Campaign, organizations and individuals have mobilized around this plan, driving action and results in schools and communities. Policymakers and practitioners should expand what works and stay the course of the Civic Marshall Plan.

- **Plank 1: Grade-Level Reading –** Enhance the role of states in improving literacy instruction; support and invest in enhancing the quality of teacher education and professional development; invest in high-quality early education; and invest in ongoing research and evaluation.
- **Plank 2: Chronic Absenteeism –** Changes in policy and practice can help increase attendance and decrease chronic absence, including: requiring the inclusion of the percentage of students who are chronically absent as part of the Civil Rights Data Collection, under the Department of Education's Flexibility policy; and including chronic absenteeism as an indicator to be addressed by priority and focus schools.[108] Specifically, chronic absenteeism should be part of the diagnostic analysis and improvement strategy implemented within priority and focus schools as well as included as an indicator in federal grant programs targeting low-performing schools, such as School Improvement Grants, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and Race to the Top. A policy framework for chronic absence would include tracking individual student attendance and absence in longitudinal student data systems; ensuring accurate and consistent entry of student attendance and absence data in longitudinal student data systems by investing in the development of statewide standards for what constitutes a full day of attendance; training of school staff and auditing of student attendance data; adopting a standard definition of chronic absence (missing ten percent or more of school days due to any type of absence, either excused or unexcused); regularly calculating and reporting chronic absence data statewide and by district, school, grade and subgroup; and reporting on chronic absence and describing how it will be reduced in school improvement plans. It is important also to note that starting a strong habit of attendance even before kindergarten can help parents and children form good habits from the earliest years.
- **Plank 3: Early warning indicator and intervention systems –** Continue to support development and use of early warning indicator and intervention systems in elementary, middle and high schools. These systems should include the indicators shown most accurately to predict a student's risk of

dropping out of high school, including measures of course performance, chronic absenteeism rates, and the frequency of minor and major behavioral infractions. Through learning and teaching summits, we can accelerate efforts to spread early warning information and intervention systems to states, school districts and schools, particularly low-performing schools.

- **Plank 4: The Middle Grades –** In high-poverty schools, in particular, the middle grades can either put students on a path to college and careers or steer them to dropping out. For students in these schools, early intervention is easier—and more cost-effective—than waiting until high school.[109] District, state, and federal policies should strengthen the structures, norms, and processes for continuous improvement within these grades while increasing academic rigor. Evidence-based practices, including those championed by Middle School Matters, should be scaled.[110] These practices include strengthening middle grades reading, writing, and mathematics research-based practices; increasing student social supports; and building cultures of success within the middle grades.
- **Plank 5: Adult and Peer Supports –** We should strengthen supports for wraparound services. Students need to be surrounded with the developmental resources they need to be ready to learn, succeed in school, and graduate. These resources are especially important for children growing up in high-poverty neighborhoods. Direct, evidence-based supports should be integrated into education reform in ways that encompass schools, families and the community. Schools and communities should partner with nonprofits, volunteers and full-time national service members to implement a cohesive youth system to address the strengths and needs of each student. They should also devote resources, whether through ESEA flexibility or statute, to fund evidence-based student supports as a core function of schools that educate large numbers of students who live in poverty. America's Promise Alliance's Five Promises provide a framework for these supports: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to help others. Research affirms the sustained and cumulative benefit of having these supports in school, at home and in the community: increased academic achievement, civic engagement, and social competence, regardless of race or family income.[111]
- **Plank 6: Transition Supports –** Research has shown that transition years, when students move from the elementary to middle grades, and then from the middle grades to high school, can be particularly perilous.[112] Without sufficient support, students can disengage from school and start on the path toward dropping out. We should scale best practices, which show that caring, knowledgeable and committed adults who set high standards and assist students in meeting them, coupled with supportive school conditions, are critical to helping students make successful transitions.[113]
- **Plank 7: Effective Schools –** We need to support the reform and redesign of low-performing middle and high schools. Toward that end, states and districts should use the emerging ACGR data—along with other available graduation rate, promotion, and early warning data—to locate the districts and schools that produce most of the non-graduates in the state. These schools should be re-designed or replaced using evidence-based practices. Early warning systems should be used, along with

enhanced student supports through the integration of community partners and organizations, to make sure the students within these schools attend, feel engaged with school, learn how to succeed in school, and pass their courses. States and districts should identify the elementary and middle schools that feed into these low-performing high schools and implement the strategies of the Civic Marshall Plan to support students in need.

- **Plank 8: Compulsory School Age –** Compulsory school-age laws must be part of comprehensive reform efforts. In the past few years, most states have raised their compulsory school age to 18 (or to when students graduate) and created incentives for students to stay in school. Some state laws, however, are still out of date and fail to reflect the fact that most jobs today require a high school diploma plus some postsecondary education. Many of the compulsory school age laws—which "refer to the minimum and maximum age required by each state in which a student must be enrolled in and attending public school or some equivalent education program defined by the law"—were written before or around the beginning of the 20th century, when many young people needed to leave school to begin working.[114] In addition to setting the expectation that all students should graduate from high school, research shows that raising the compulsory school age reduces the number of students who drop out.

- **Plank 9: Pathways to College and Career –** Preparing students for college and career is a critical responsibility of our nation's K-12 education system. Policymakers should reform the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act to more effectively align secondary and postsecondary institutions and employers to train students to meet the demand of regional and state labor markets; encourage efforts to integrate technical and academic courses; and support state efforts to link student college completion, transcript, and employment data to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. Such efforts should also align high school graduation requirements with criteria associated with admissions to postsecondary education and success in credit-bearing courses.

  Reforms should support a college-going culture through the expansion of rigorous secondary school curricula (e.g., Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate) and effective models, such as dual enrollment and Early College High Schools that offer credits for high school and college and that are of sufficiently high quality, aligned to college and career standards, and accepted by (in-state) postsecondary institutions, and intentional, college-focused school counseling programs. Student Graduation Plans should be implemented, including the provision of college, career, and financial assistance counseling. And schools should enhance capacity and encourage accountability within institutions of higher education to assist academically at-risk students, reduce remediation rates, and increase college completion.

  A Civic Marshall Plan should be developed for the second Grad Nation goal—for the United States to have the highest college attainment rates in the world by 2025. Efforts are underway to begin discussions in earnest about the outlines for such a plan and the need for annual accountability in highlighting progress and challenge in meeting this national goal. Without such a plan and accountability, the nation risks repeating the failures of the past in setting bold national goals and not attaining them.

- **Plank 10: Dropout Recovery –** Efforts to recover and reengage young people who drop out of high school have increased in some communities. These efforts, however, can be improved and expanded by using data to gain a clearer picture of who the opportunity youth are and what services and academic supports they need to get back on track. Other efforts should reduce administrative barriers to cross-sector collaboration to improve coordination between education, workforce, and social support programs to help opportunity youth reengage with school. Leaders in this area should expand availability of high-quality alternative pathways programs that re-engage dropouts and off-track youth in education and job training; allow education funding to follow opportunity youth who enroll in a re-engagement program; and research, develop, and replicate effective models to serve off-track and out-of-school youth.

  Additional efforts to transform alternative education settings can provide more opportunities for students to return to school, including expanding charter school requirements to include alternative education settings that enroll disconnected youth; and strengthening accountability measures for alternative programs that provide programs with the flexibility needed to help students succeed, while requiring students meet state standards and reforming or closing poor performing alternative programs.

Conclusion

In recent years, the United States has awakened to its high school dropout challenge. After years of stagnant graduation rates or slow improvements, the country has achieved a pace of progress that, if sustained, can reach its national goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by 2020. This marks an important turning point—but a turning point is not victory.

The story is also full of contradictions and further challenges that can stand in the way of ensuring that all students graduate with prospects for college, career, and a better life. While some states with the lowest graduation rates have made the most progress, many still have far to go and still others are stagnant and threaten our reaching the national goal. While some of the greatest gains have been among African American and Hispanic students, graduation gaps among students of various races, ethnicities, and needs remain large, potentially stalling our progress and the country's commitment to an opportunity society if not effectively addressed.

Our encouraging progress in recent years gives us renewed confidence that the Grad Nation Campaign will succeed. While there is no silver bullet to raising rates, the evidence consistently shows that the greatest improvements in graduation rates occur in schools, districts, and states where active, sustained, multi-dimensional, and multi-sector efforts are undertaken with the dual goals of increased standards of excellence and increased graduation rates. These strategies are synthesized into the Civic Marshall Plan to reach our national goal. The progress and challenge outlined in this year's report should renew our nation's faith in our ability to meet big challenges together and strengthen our resolve to see the day when every American child can expect to graduate high school equipped with the knowledge and skills to realize his or her own American dream.

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Dropout Factory High Schools, by Region and State, 2002 and 2011

	2002 Total Number of Schools	2011 Total Number of Schools	Change	Change in the Number of High School Students Attending a High School with a Promoting Power At or Below 60%
Northeast				
New York	145	133	-12	-103,040
New Hampshire	5	2	-3	-467
New Jersey	24	15	-9	-18,688
Maine	4	0	-4	-2,796
Massachusetts	24	24	0	-10,820
Vermont	3	0	-3	-2,311
Connecticut	13	5	-8	-13,993
Rhode Island	7	7	0	331
Pennsylvania	48	43	-5	-24,260
Subtotal	**273**	**229**	**-44**	**-176,044**
Midwest				
Indiana	30	16	-14	-22,788
Ohio	75	152	77	22,317
Illinois	63	57	-6	-15,177
Wisconsin	16	13	-3	-3,925
Missouri	25	23	-2	-4,572
Michigan	79	64	-15	-32,311
Iowa	4	3	-1	-3,317
South Dakota	3	2	-1	-963
Kansas	9	7	-2	-4,282
Minnesota	6	5	-1	-3,753
North Dakota	0	0	0	0
Nebraska	4	5	1	2,286
Subtotal	**314**	**347**	**33**	**-66,485**

	2002 Total Number of Schools	2011 Total Number of Schools	Change	Change in the Number of High School Students Attending a High School with a Promoting Power At or Below 60%
South				
Texas	240	108	-132	-172,792
Georgia	156	108	-48	-58,234
Alabama	71	22	-49	-34,390
Tennessee	58	23	-35	-33,940
South Carolina	101	62	-39	-34,599
Florida	162	69	-93	-185,652
Kentucky	39	14	-25	-18,936
Mississippi	52	26	-26	-25,339
Louisiana	64	40	-24	-27,417
West Virginia	6	4	-2	-1,605
Virginia	26	19	-7	-8,075
Oklahoma	15	14	-1	-4,039
Delaware	8	7	-1	-3,159
North Carolina	106	63	-43	-52,100
Arkansas	5	7	2	1,025
District of Columbia	2	13	11	6,283
Maryland	17	22	5	5,308
Subtotal	**1128**	**621**	**-507**	**-647,661**
West				
Washington	32	17	-15	-23,621
Arizona	37	21	-16	-26,726
Colorado	32	14	-18	-27,725
Alaska	9	3	-6	-5,719
Oregon	7	2	-5	-4,897
Montana	1	1	0	-232
New Mexico	27	21	-6	-9,602
Wyoming	1	0	-1	-1,011
Utah	1	5	4	4,487
Idaho	2	8	6	10,310
Hawaii	6	11	5	-2
California	129	106	-23	-140,572
Nevada	8	18	10	21,173
Subtotal	**292**	**227**	**-65**	**-204,137**

Total	**2007**	**1424**	**-583**	**-1,094,327**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys.

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2011

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	Change in AFGR, 2003-2010 (% Point)	Average Annual Change in AFGR, 2003-2010 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003-2011 (%)	Average Annual Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003-2011 (%)
All States													
AFGR	73.9	75.0	74.7	73.2	73.9	74.7	75.5	78.2	–	4.3	0.6	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Alabama													
AFGR	64.7	65.0	65.9	66.2	67.1	69.0	69.9	71.8	–	7.1	1.0	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	65.1	–	72.0	–	–	6.9	6.9
Alaska													
AFGR	68.0	67.2	64.1	66.5	69.1	69.1	72.6	75.5	–	7.5	1.1	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	68.0	–	–	–	–
Arizona													
AFGR	75.9	66.8	84.7	70.5	69.6	70.7	72.5	74.7	–	-1.2	-0.2	–	–
ACGR	74.0	80.0	74.6	69.9	73.4	74.9	76.1	75.4	77.9	–	–	3.9	0.5
Arkansas													
AFGR	76.7	76.8	75.7	80.4	74.4	76.4	74.0	75.0	–	-1.7	-0.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	68.0	80.5	80.7	–	–	12.7	6.4
California													
AFGR	74.1	73.9	74.6	69.2	70.7	71.2	71.0	78.2	–	4.2	0.6	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	74.7	76.3	–	–	1.6	1.6
Colorado													
AFGR	76.4	78.7	76.7	75.5	76.6	75.4	77.6	79.8	–	3.4	0.5	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	70.2	74.4	70.7	72.4	73.9	–	–	3.7	0.9
Connecticut													
AFGR	80.9	80.7	80.9	81.8	82.2	82.3	75.4	75.1	–	-5.8	-0.8	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	79.3	81.8	83.0	–	–	3.7	1.9
Delaware													
AFGR	73.0	72.9	73.1	76.3	71.9	72.1	73.7	75.5	–	2.5	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	75.8	78.5	–	–	2.7	2.7
District of Columbia													
AFGR	59.6	68.2	68.8	–	54.9	56.0	62.4	59.9	–	0.3	0.0	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	58.6	–	–	–	–
Florida													
AFGR	66.7	66.4	64.6	63.6	65.0	66.9	68.9	70.8	–	4.1	0.6	–	–
ACGR	56.5	59.2	59.3	58.8	59.8	62.7	65.5	69.0	70.6	–	–	14.1	1.8
Georgia													
AFGR	60.8	61.2	61.7	62.4	64.1	65.4	67.8	69.9	–	9.1	1.3	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	58.6	64.0	67.5	–	–	8.9	4.5
Hawaii													
AFGR	71.3	72.6	75.1	75.5	75.4	76.0	75.3	75.4	–	4.1	0.6	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	80.0	–	–	–	–
Idaho													
AFGR	81.5	81.5	81.0	80.5	80.4	80.1	80.6	84.0	–	2.5	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Illinois													
AFGR	75.9	80.3	79.4	79.7	79.5	80.4	77.7	81.9	–	6.0	0.9	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	83.8	–	–	–	–

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2011 continued

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	Change in AFGR, 2003-2010 (% Point)	Average Annual Change in AFGR, 2003-2010 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003-2011 (%)	Average Annual Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003-2011 (%)
Indiana													
AFGR	75.5	73.5	73.2	73.3	73.9	74.1	75.2	77.2	–	1.7	0.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	81.5	84.1	85.7	–	–	4.2	2.1
Iowa													
AFGR	85.3	85.8	86.6	86.9	86.5	86.4	85.7	87.9	–	2.6	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	88.8	88.3	–	–	-0.5	-0.5
Kansas													
AFGR	76.9	77.9	79.2	77.6	78.9	79.1	80.2	84.5	–	7.6	1.1	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	80.7	83.0	–	–	2.3	2.3
Kentucky													
AFGR	71.7	73.0	75.9	77.2	76.4	74.4	77.6	79.9	–	8.2	1.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Louisiana													
AFGR	64.1	69.4	63.9	59.5	61.3	63.5	67.3	68.8	–	4.7	0.7	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	64.8	66.3	66.0	67.3	67.2	70.9	–	–	6.1	1.2
Maine													
AFGR	76.3	77.6	78.6	76.3	78.5	79.1	79.9	82.8	–	6.5	0.9	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	80.4	82.8	83.8	–	–	3.4	1.7
Maryland													
AFGR	79.2	79.5	79.3	79.9	80.0	80.4	80.1	82.2	–	3.0	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	82.0	82.8	–	–	0.9	0.9
Massachusetts													
AFGR	75.7	79.3	78.7	79.5	80.8	81.5	83.3	82.6	–	6.9	1.0	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	79.9	80.9	81.2	81.5	82.1	83.4	–	–	3.5	0.7
Michigan													
AFGR	74.0	72.5	73.0	72.2	77.0	76.3	75.3	75.9	–	1.9	0.3	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	75.5	75.5	75.2	76.0	74.3	–	–	-1.1	-0.3
Minnesota													
AFGR	84.8	84.7	85.9	86.2	86.5	86.4	87.4	88.2	–	3.4	0.5	–	–
ACGR	72.5	73.5	74.8	75.2	74.8	74.3	74.3	75.5	76.9	–	–	4.4	0.5
Mississippi													
AFGR	62.7	62.7	63.3	63.5	63.6	63.9	62.0	63.8	–	1.1	0.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	70.8	73.8	72.0	71.6	71.4	73.7	–	–	2.9	0.6
Missouri													
AFGR	78.3	80.4	80.6	81.0	81.9	82.4	83.1	83.7	–	5.4	0.8	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	81.3	–	–	–	–
Montana													
AFGR	81.0	80.4	81.5	81.9	81.5	82.0	82.0	81.9	–	0.9	0.1	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	82.2	–	–	–	–
Nebraska													
AFGR	85.2	87.6	87.8	87.0	86.3	83.8	82.9	83.8	–	-1.4	-0.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	86.0	–	–	–	–
Nevada													
AFGR	72.3	57.4	55.8	55.8	54.2	56.3	56.3	57.8	–	-14.5	-2.1	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	62.0	–	–	–	–

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2011 continued

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	Change in AFGR, 2003-2010 (% Point)	Average Annual Change in AFGR, 2003-2010 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003-2011 (%)	Average Annual Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003-2011 (%)
New Hampshire													
AFGR	78.2	78.7	80.1	81.1	81.7	83.4	84.3	86.3	–	8.1	1.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	85.9	86.1	–	–	0.2	0.2
New Jersey													
AFGR	87.0	86.3	85.1	84.8	84.4	84.6	85.3	87.2	–	0.2	0.0	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	83.2	–	–	–	–
New Mexico													
AFGR	63.1	67.0	65.4	67.3	59.1	66.8	64.8	67.3	–	4.2	0.6	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	60.3	66.1	67.3	63.0	–	–	2.7	0.9
New York													
AFGR	60.9	–	65.3	67.4	68.8	70.8	73.5	76.0	–	15.1	2.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	65.8	67.2	71.0	73.6	74.0	76.0	76.8	–	–	11.0	1.8
North Carolina													
AFGR	70.1	71.4	72.6	71.8	68.6	72.8	75.1	76.9	–	6.9	1.0	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	68.3	69.5	70.3	71.8	74.2	77.9	–	–	9.6	1.9
North Dakota													
AFGR	86.4	86.1	86.3	82.1	83.1	83.8	87.4	88.4	–	2.0	0.3	–	–
ACGR	–	–	86.7	86.2	87.7	86.9	85.4	86.2	86.3	–	–	-0.5	-0.1
Ohio													
AFGR	79.0	81.3	80.2	79.2	78.7	79.0	79.6	81.4	–	2.4	0.3	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	78.0	80.0	–	–	2.0	2.0
Oklahoma													
AFGR	76.0	77.0	76.9	77.8	77.8	78.0	77.3	78.5	–	2.5	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Oregon													
AFGR	73.7	74.2	74.2	73.0	73.8	76.7	76.5	76.3	–	2.6	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	66.2	66.4	67.7	–	–	1.5	0.7
Pennsylvania													
AFGR	81.7	82.2	82.5	–	83.0	82.7	80.5	84.1	–	2.4	0.3	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	77.8	82.6	–	–	4.8	4.8
Rhode Island													
AFGR	77.7	75.9	78.4	77.8	78.4	76.4	75.3	76.4	–	-1.3	-0.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	73.9	75.5	75.8	77.3	–	–	3.4	1.1
South Carolina													
AFGR	59.7	60.6	60.1	–	58.9	62.2	66.0	68.2	–	8.5	1.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	72.0	73.6	–	–	1.6	1.6
South Dakota													
AFGR	83.0	83.7	82.3	84.5	82.5	84.4	81.7	81.8	–	-1.2	-0.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	83.4	–	–	–	–
Tennessee													
AFGR	63.4	66.1	68.5	70.6	72.6	74.9	77.4	80.4	–	17.0	2.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	85.5	–	–	–	–
Texas													
AFGR	75.5	76.7	74.0	72.5	71.9	73.1	75.4	78.9	–	3.4	0.5	–	–
ACGR	84.2	84.6	84.0	80.4	78.0	79.1	80.6	84.3	85.9	–	–	1.7	0.2

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by State, 2003-2011 continued

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	Change in AFGR, 2003–2010 (% Point)	Average Annual Change in AFGR, 2003–2010 (% Point)	Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003-2011 (%)	Average Annual Change in Four-Year Cohort Rate, 2003–2011 (%)
Utah													
AFGR	80.2	83.0	84.4	78.6	76.6	74.3	79.4	78.6	–	-1.6	-0.2	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	69.0	72.0	75.0	76.0	–	–	7.0	2.3
Vermont													
AFGR	83.6	85.4	86.5	82.3	88.6	89.3	89.6	91.4	–	7.8	1.1	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	85.1	86.4	85.7	85.6	87.5	87.5	–	–	2.3	0.5
Virginia													
AFGR	80.6	79.3	79.6	74.5	75.5	77.0	78.4	81.2	–	0.6	0.1	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	82.0	–	–	–	–
Washington													
AFGR	74.2	74.6	75.0	72.9	74.8	71.9	73.7	77.2	–	3.0	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	75.4	76.6	–	–	1.2	1.2
West Virginia													
AFGR	75.7	76.9	77.3	76.9	78.2	77.3	77.0	78.3	–	2.6	0.4	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	75.5	76.5	–	–	1.0	1.0
Wisconsin													
AFGR	85.8	–	86.7	87.5	88.5	89.6	90.7	91.1	–	5.3	0.8	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	85.7	87.0	–	–	1.3	1.3
Wyoming													
AFGR	73.9	76.0	76.7	76.1	75.8	76.0	75.2	80.3	–	6.4	0.9	–	–
ACGR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	80.4	79.7	–	–	-0.7	-0.7

Sources: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Department of Education (2012). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates.

2010-2011 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR), by State and Subgroup

		Major Racial and Ethnic Groups						Special Populations			Asian/Pacific Islander Detail[ii]	
	All Students	American Indian/ Alaska Native or Native American	Asian/ Pacific Islander[i]	Black (not Hispanic) or African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Multicultural or Multiethnic or Multiracial	White (not Hispanic) or Caucasian	Children with disabilities (IDEA)	Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students	Economically Disadvantaged Students	Asian	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander
Alabama	72%	80%	77%	63%	66%	–	78%	30%	36%	62%	–	–
Alaska	68%	51%	74%	63%	62%	65%	75%	40%	41%	56%	79%	59%
Arizona	78%	62%	87%	74%	72%	–	85%	67%	25%	73%	–	–
Arkansas	81%	85%	75%	73%	77%	82%	84%	75%	76%	75%	80%	51%
California	76%	68%	89%	63%	70%	65%	85%	59%	60%	70%	90%	74%
Colorado	74%	52%	81%	65%	60%	–	81%	53%	53%	62%	81%	–
Connecticut	83%	72%	92%	71%	64%	–	89%	61%	59%	62%	–	–
Delaware	78%	78%	90%	73%	71%	93%	82%	56%	65%	71%	‡	‡
District of Columbia	59%	‡	‡	58%	55%	–	85%	39%	53%	58%	‡	‡
Florida	71%	70%	86%	59%	69%	–	76%	44%	53%	60%	86%	–
Georgia	67%	68%	79%	60%	58%	69%	76%	30%	32%	59%	–	–
Hawaii	80%	60%	81%	77%	79%	–	78%	59%	60%	75%	–	–
Idaho	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Illinois	84%	78%	92%	74%	77%	81%	89%	66%	68%	75%	92%	96%
Indiana	86%	76%	88%	75%	81%	80%	88%	65%	73%	79%	89%	80%
Iowa	88%	79%	88%	73%	75%	82%	90%	70%	70%	78%	89%	82%
Kansas	83%	72%	88%	72%	73%	81%	86%	73%	70%	73%	88%	79%
Kentucky	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Louisiana	71%	71%	84%	64%	70%	80%	77%	29%	43%	64%	‡	≥80%
Maine	84%	82%	90%	77%	87%	86%	84%	66%	78%	73%	‡	‡
Maryland	83%	74%	93%	76%	72%	91%	89%	57%	54%	74%	93%	88%
Massachusetts	83%	76%	88%	71%	62%	81%	89%	66%	56%	70%	88%	81%
Michigan	74%	62%	85%	57%	63%	69%	80%	52%	62%	63%	87%	52%
Minnesota	77%	42%	72%	49%	51%	–	84%	56%	52%	58%	–	–
Mississippi	75%	76%	89%	68%	75%	–	82%	23%	67%	69%	89%	–
Missouri	81%	77%	87%	66%	75%	92%	85%	68%	62%	74%	87%	81%
Montana	82%	63%	88%	81%	78%	–	85%	69%	57%	71%	90%	80%

2010-2011 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR), by State and Subgroup continued

		Major Racial and Ethnic Groups						Special Populations			Asian/Pacific Islander Detail [ii]	
	All Students	American Indian/ Alaska Native or Native American	Asian/ Pacific Islander[i]	Black (not Hispanic) or African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Multicultural or Multiethnic or Multiracial	White (not Hispanic) or Caucasian	Children with disabilities (IDEA)	Limited English proficient (LEP) Students	Economically Disadvantaged Students	Asian	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander
Nebraska	86%	64%	83%	70%	74%	–	90%	70%	52%	78%	83%	–
Nevada	62%	52%	74%	43%	53%	80%	71%	23%	29%	53%	73%	80%
New Hampshire	86%	78%	87%	73%	73%	86%	87%	69%	73%	72%	‡	‡
New Jersey	83%	87%	93%	69%	73%	84%	90%	73%	68%	71%	93%	88%
New Mexico	63%	56%	78%	60%	59%	–	73%	47%	56%	56%	–	–
New York	77%	64%	86%	64%	63%	79%	86%	48%	46%	69%	–	–
North Carolina	78%	70%	87%	72%	69%	77%	83%	57%	48%	71%	–	–
North Dakota	86%	62%	88%	74%	76%	–	90%	67%	61%	76%	88%	–
Ohio	80%	71%	88%	59%	66%	71%	85%	67%	53%	65%	–	–
Oklahoma	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Oregon	68%	52%	78%	54%	58%	73%	70%	42%	52%	61%	79%	69%
Pennsylvania	83%	77%	88%	65%	65%	75%	88%	71%	63%	71%	–	–
Rhode Island	77%	66%	75%	67%	67%	77%	82%	58%	68%	66%	75%	76%
South Carolina	74%	67%	84%	70%	69%	–	77%	39%	62%	67%	–	–
South Dakota	83%	49%	45%	73%	73%	87%	88%	84%	82%	86%	84%	63%
Tennessee	86%	89%	91%	78%	79%	–	89%	67%	71%	80%	91%	91%
Texas	86%	87%	95%	81%	82%	92%	92%	77%	58%	84%	95%	88%
Utah	76%	57%	72%	61%	57%	–	80%	59%	45%	65%	72%	69%
Vermont	87%	–	–	–	–	–	–	69%	82%	77%	–	–
Virginia	82%	–	–	73%	71%	–	86%	47%	55%	70%	–	–
Washington	76%	57%	81%	65%	63%	73%	79%	56%	51%	66%	‡	‡
West Virginia	76%	‡	91%	72%	71%	‡	77%	57%	79%	68%	–	–
Wisconsin	87%	75%	89%	64%	72%	–	91%	67%	66%	74%	–	–
Wyoming	80%	51%	87%	58%	74%	77%	82%	57%	62%	66%	91%	73%

‡ Reporting standards not met: Data have been suppressed due to a small number of students in the category, complementary suppression has been applied to protect another small count, or the data have been redacted due to anomalies.

– Data were not reported to the Department in time for inclusion in the file, or the category is not used by the SEA.

† Not applicable: Data are not expected to be reported by the SEA for SY2010-11.

i The Asian/Pacific Islander column represents either the value reported by the state to the Department of Education for the major racial and ethnic group "Asian/Pacific Islander" or an aggregation of values reported by the state for the major racial and ethnic groups "Asian," "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander or Pacific Islander," and "Filipino." (California is the only state currently using the major racial and ethnic group "Filipino.")

ii Disaggregated reporting for Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates is done according to the provisions outlined within each state's Accountablity Workbook. Accordingly, not every state uses major racial and ethnic groups which enable further disaggregation of Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations.

Source: Reproduced from the United States Department of Education (2012). Provisional Data File: SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates; Data Notes for Provisional SY2010-11 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates. Retrieved December 17, 2012 from **http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/states-report-new-high-school-graduation-rates-using-more-accurate-common-measur**.

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Data Links, by State

	Department	Link to Main Website	Link to ACGR Data
Alabama	Alabama State Department of Education	http://www.alsde.edu/home/Default.aspx	http://www.alsde.edu/Accountability/preAccountability.asp
Alaska	Alaska Department of Education & Early Development	http://www.eed.state.ak.us/	(1)http://www.eed.state.ak.us/reportcard/2010-2011/reportcard2010-11.pdf (2)http://www.eed.state.ak.us/reportcardtothepublic/
Arizona	Arizona Department of Education	http://www.azed.gov/	http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/graduation-rates/
Arkansas	Arkansas Department of Education	http://www.arkansased.org/	http://normessasweb.uark.edu/schoolperformance/beta/strc/index
California	California Department of Education	http://www.cde.ca.gov/	(1) http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/cohortrates/GradRates.aspx?cds=00000000000000&TheYear=2010-11&Agg=T&Topic=Graduates&RC=State&SubGroup=Ethnic/Racial (2) http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (3)http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filescohort.asp
Colorado	Colorado Department of Education	http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_home.htm	(1) http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stats.htm (2)http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rv2011GradLinks.htm (3)www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rv2010GradLinks.htm
Connecticut	Connecticut State Department of Education	http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/site/default.asp	(1) http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/DTHome.aspx (2) http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/2011_graduation_rates.pdf
Delaware	Delaware Department of Education	http://www.doe.k12.de.us/	http://profiles.doe.k12.de.us/SchoolProfiles/State/Account.aspx
District of Columbia	Office of the State Superintendent of Education	http://osse.dc.gov/	http://osse.dc.gov/release/district-high-school-adjusted-cohort-graduation-rates-released
Florida	Florida Department of Education	http://www.fldoe.org/default.asp	http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/pubstudent.asp
Georgia	Georgia Department of Education	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/Home.aspx	(1) http://archives.gadoe.org/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&StateId=ALL&T=1&FY=2011 (2)http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=33
Hawaii	Hawaii State Department of Education	http://doe.k12.hi.us/	http://arch.k12.hi.us/school/nclb/nclb.html#
Idaho	Idaho State Department of Education	http://www.sde.idaho.gov/	Idaho presently has a waiver from the USDOE that excuses them from reporting ACGR
Illinois	Illinois State Board of Education	http://www.isbe.net/	http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getSearchCriteria.aspx
Indiana	Indiana State Department of Education	http://www.doe.in.gov/	http://www.doe.in.gov/improvement/accountability/graduation-cohort-rate
Iowa	Iowa Department of Education	http://educateiowa.gov/	http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=530&Itemid=1563
Kansas	Kansas State Department of Education	http://www.ksde.org/	(1)http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4606 (2)http://svapp15586.ksde.org/rcard/searchpage.aspx
Kentucky	Kentucky Department of Education	http://education.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx	Kentucky presently has a waiver from the USDOE that excuses them from reporting ACGR
Louisiana	Louisiana Department of Education	http://www.doe.state.la.us/	http://doe.louisiana.gov/topics/cohort_rates.html

	Department	Link to Main Website	Link to ACGR Data
Maine	Maine Department of Education	http://www.maine.gov/doe/	(1) http://www.maine.gov/education/gradrates/ (2) http://www.maine.gov/education/gradrates/gradrates.html
Maryland	Maryland State Department of Education	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE	(1) http://www.mdreportcard.org/downloadindex.aspx?K=01AAAA (2) http://www.mdreportcard.org/CohortGradRate.aspx?PV=160:12:99:AAAA:1:N:0:13:1:2:1:1:1:1:3
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education	http://www.doe.mass.edu/	http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/
Michigan	Michigan Department of Education	http://michigan.gov/mde	http://mi.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-21423_30451_51357---,00.html
Minnesota	Minnesota Department of Education	https://education.state.mn.us/MDE/index.html	https://education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp
Mississippi	Mississippi Department of Education	http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/mde-home	http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/dropout-prevention-and-compulsory-school-attendance/dropout-graduation-rate-information
Missouri	Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education	http://mcds.dese.mo.gov/Pages/default.aspx	http://mcds.dese.mo.gov/guidedinquiry/Pages/District-and-School-Information.aspx
Montana	Montana Office of Public Instruction	http://opi.mt.gov/	http://opi.mt.gov/Reports&Data/Measurement/Index.html
Nebraska	Nebraska Department of Education	http://www.education.ne.gov/	http://drs.education.ne.gov/quickfacts/Pages/StudentCharacteristics.aspx
Nevada	Nevada Department of Education	http://www.doe.nv.gov/	(1) http://www.nevadareportcard.com/ (2) http://www.educationinnevada.com/2012/08/2010-2011-four-year-adjusted-cohort-graduation-rate-for-nevada/
New Hampshire	New Hampshire Department of Education	http://www.education.nh.gov/	http://www.education.nh.gov/data/dropouts.htm
New Jersey	State of New Jersey Department of Education	http://www.state.nj.us/education/	http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/grate/
New Mexico	New Mexico Public Education Department	http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/index.html	http://www.ped.state.nm.us/Graduation/index.html
New York	New York State Education Department	http://www.nysed.gov/	http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20120611/home.html
North Carolina	North Carolina State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/organization/	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/cohortgradrate
North Dakota	North Dakota Department of Public Instruction	http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/	(1) http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/dpi/reports/Profile/index.shtm (2) http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/resource/graduation.shtm
Ohio	Ohio Department of Education	http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDefaultPage.aspx?page=1	(1) http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=115&ContentID=50598&Content=116019 (2) http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=115&ContentID=34744&Content=115417 (3) http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1&ContentID=131230

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Data Links, by State continued

	Department	Link to Main Website	Link to ACGR Data
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State Department of Education	http://www.ok.gov/sde/	In August of 2012, Oklahoma requested from the USDOE a waiver to excuse them from reporting ACGR. They are presently awaiting its approval.
Oregon	Oregon Department of Education	http://www.ode.state.or.us/home/	http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2644
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Department of Education	http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=7237&mode=2	http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_department_of_education/7237/info/757639
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	http://www.ride.ri.gov/default.aspx	http://www.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/GraduationRates.aspx
South Carolina	South Carolina Department of Education	http://ed.sc.gov/	http://ed.sc.gov/data/report-cards/
South Dakota	South Dakota Department of Education	http://doe.sd.gov/	http://doe.sd.gov/reportcard/index.aspx
Tennessee	Tennessee Department of Education	http://tn.gov/education/	http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:50:2634017515063165::NO
Texas	Texas Education Agency	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index.aspx	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/dropcomp/years.html
Utah	Utah State Office of Education	http://schools.utah.gov/main/	http://schools.utah.gov/data/Educational-Data/Graduation-Dropout-Rates.aspx
Vermont	State of Vermont Department of Education	http://education.vermont.gov/	(1) http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/data/dropout_completion.html (2) http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_accountability/ayp/lea_A_D.html
Virginia	Virginia Department of Education	http://www.doe.virginia.gov/	(1) http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/school_report_card/index.shtml (2) http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/cohort_reports/index.shtml
Washington	State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	http://www.k12.wa.us/	(1) http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx (2) http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&year=2011-12
West Virginia	West Virginia Department of Education	http://wvde.state.wv.us/	http://wveis.k12.wv.us/nclb/pub/enroll/repstatgr.cfm?xrep=1&sy=11
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction	http://dpi.wi.gov/	http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/HSCompletionPage.aspx?OrgLevel=st&GraphFile=HIGHSCHOOLCOMPLETION&SCounty=47&SAthleticConf=45&SCESA=05&CompareTo=CURRENTONLY&Year=2011
Wyoming	Wyoming Department of Education	http://edu.wyoming.gov/Default.aspx	http://edu.wyoming.gov/DataInformationAndReporting/GraduateData.aspx

Note: Current as of press time.

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Public Availability, by State, District, and School, Classes of 2010 and 2011

	Earliest ACGR	2010 ACGR (State-Level)	2011 ACGR (State-Level)	2010 ACGR (District-Level)	2011 ACGR (District-Level)	2010 ACGR (School-Level)	2011 ACGR (School-Level)
Alabama	2009	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Alaska	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes †	No	Yes †
Arizona	2003	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arkansas	2009	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †
California	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes †	Yes	Yes
Colorado	2007	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	2009	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Delaware	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †
District of Columbia	2011	No	Yes	No	N/A	No	Yes
Florida	2003	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Georgia[i]	2009	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Hawaii	2010	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes †	Yes †
Idaho[ii]	N/A	No	No	No	No	No	No
Illinois	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes †	No	Yes †
Indiana	2009	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iowa	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kansas	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †
Kentucky[iii]	N/A	No	No	No	No	No	No
Louisiana	2006	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maine	2009	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maryland	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	2006	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Michigan	2007	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Minnesota	2003	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	2003	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Missouri	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Montana	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Nebraska	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
New Hampshire	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Public Availability, by State, District, and School, Classes of 2010 and 2011 continued

	Earliest ACGR	2010 ACGR (State-Level)	2011 ACGR (State-Level)	2010 ACGR (District-Level)	2011 ACGR (District-Level)	2010 ACGR (School-Level)	2011 ACGR (School-Level)
New Jersey	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
New Mexico	2008	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	2006	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Carolina	2006	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Dakota	2006	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes	No	Yes
Ohio	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes	Yes †	Yes
Oklahoma[iv]	N/A	No	No	No	No	No	No
Oregon	2008	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pennsylvania	2010	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Rhode Island	2007	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	2011	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †	Yes †
South Dakota	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes †	No	Yes †
Tennessee	2011	No	Yes	No	Yes †	No	Yes †
Texas	2003	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Utah	2008	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vermont	2006	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes †	Yes	Yes
Virginia	2011	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Washington[v]	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes †	Yes	Yes †	Yes
West Virginia	2009	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wisconsin	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wyoming	2010	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

† Data is available only in district/school report cards. It is not readily accessible in one file.

i Georgia's 2009 and 2010 rates are estimates. They did not make available 2009 or 2010 district- or school-level data.

ii Idaho received a waiver from the USDOE that excuses them from reporting ACGR. They expect to report ACGR beginning with the 2013/14 school year.

iii Kentucky received a waiver from the USDOE that excuses them from reporting ACGR. They expect to report ACGR beginning with the 2012/13 school year.

iv Oklahoma requested a waiver from the USDOE that would excuse them from reporting ACGR. They expect to report ACGR beginning with the 2012/13 school year.

v Washington reported its 2010 state-level ACGR for informational purposes only. They did not make available 2010 district- or school-level data.

Source: ACGR are available from each state's Department of Education's website. The USDOE also recently released a report which contains the 2011 ACGR for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, available at **http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/states-report-new-high-school-graduation-rates-using-more-accurate-common-measur**.

Change in Number of Dropout Factory High Schools, by Locale, 2002 to 2011

Number of Schools with Promoting Power At or Below 60%				
	Cities	Suburbs	Towns	Rural
Class of 2002	905	477	247	378
Class of 2011	745	265	139	275
Change 2002-11	-160	-212	-108	-103
Percent Change 2002 to 2011	-18%	-44%	-44%	-27%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys.

Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation 2013 Index Where Does New York Stand?

Indices for each of the 50 states and links to graduation rate data for all states can be found at **http://new.every1graduates.org/building-a-grad-nation-state-profiles-and-annual-updates/**

Context

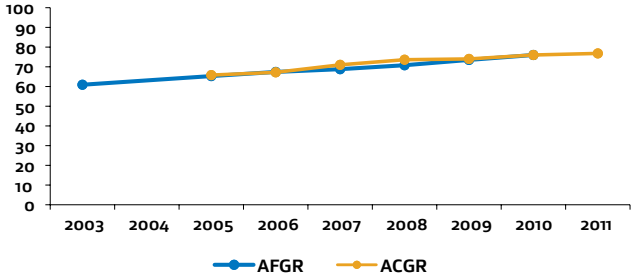
Poverty: New York ranks **20th** in childhood poverty at **22.5** percent.

College Education: New York ranks **3rd** in college completion at **41.5** percent.

Sources:
Poverty: 2012 Current Population Survey (joint effort of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau)

College Education: 2011 American Community Survey (Census Bureau)

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate vs. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate



	Progress	Challenges
1	Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR): Increased from **60.5** to **76.0** percent from 2002 to 2010 Average of **1.9** points per year	Needs to increase **1.4** points per year starting in 2010 to reach 90 percent by 2020
2	Class of 2010 had **37,508** more graduates than Class of 2002	Class of 2020 needs **33,878** more graduates than Class of 2010 to reach 90 percent
3	**12** fewer dropout factories in 2011 than 2002	In 2011, there were **133** dropout factories. To reach 0 by 2016, **27** schools need to improve per year
4	**103,040** fewer students attended dropout factories in 2011 than 2002	**131,600** students still attend dropout factories in 2011
5	Percent of 4th graders testing at or above proficient in Reading (NAEP) increased from **34** percent to **35** percent, from 2003 to 2011	**125,757** 4th graders still not proficient in Reading
6	Percent of 8th graders testing at or above proficient in Math (NAEP) decreased from **32** percent to **30** percent, from 2003 to 2011	**139,083** 8th graders still not proficient in Math
7	Students who took at least one AP exam during high school increased **12.4** percentage points, from **27.9** percent to **40.3** percent, from 2001 to 2011	Only **65.8** percent of test-takers scored at least one "3" or higher
8	This state has reported the new, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) that is now required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). The ACGR for 2011 is **77.0** percent	All but **3** states report the new rate. Idaho and Kentucky were issued waivers from the USDOE, allowing them until 2013/2014 to report the new rate. Oklahoma has applied for a waiver and is awaiting approval

Economic Benefits

With a 90 percent graduation rate, the additional graduates could deliver an estimated **$368 million** in increased annual earnings, **$90 million** in increased annual state and local tax revenues, and an increase in the Gross State Product of **$483 million**.

Source: Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Fox, J.H. (2013). Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic - 2013 Annual Update. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises, the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, America's Promise Alliance, and the Alliance for Excellent Education. Data from the Alliance for Excellent Education analysis of data from Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. Retrieved from **http://www.civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/Building-A-Grad-Nation-Report-2013_Full_v1.pdf**

Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation 2013 Index Where Does Texas Stand?

Indices for each of the 50 states and links to graduation rate data for all states can be found at **http://new.every1graduates.org/building-a-grad-nation-state-profiles-and-annual-updates/**

Context

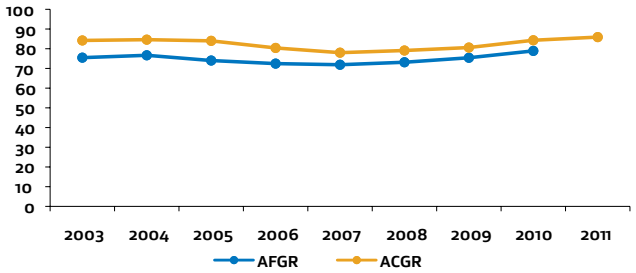
Poverty: Texas ranks **6th** in childhood poverty at **25.5** percent.

College Education: Texas ranks **36th** in college completion at **26.8** percent.

Sources:
Poverty: 2012 Current Population Survey (joint effort of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau)

College Education: 2011 American Community Survey (Census Bureau)

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate vs. Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate



	Progress	Challenges
1	Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR): Increased from **73.5** to **78.9** percent from 2002 to 2010 Average of **0.7** points per year	Needs to increase **1.1** points per year starting in 2010 to reach 90 percent by 2020
2	Class of 2010 had **19,214** more graduates than Class of 2002	Class of 2020 needs **39,496** more graduates than Class of 2010 to reach 90 percent
3	**132** fewer dropout factories in 2011 than 2002	In 2011, there were **108** dropout factories. To reach 0 by 2016, **22** schools need to improve per year
4	**172,792** fewer students attended dropout factories in 2011 than 2002	**171,194** students still attend dropout factories in 2011
5	Percent of 4th graders testing at or above proficient in Reading (NAEP) increased from **27** percent to **28** percent, from 2003 to 2011	**265,086** 4th graders still not proficient in Reading
6	Percent of 8th graders testing at or above proficient in Math (NAEP) increased from **25** percent to **40** percent, from 2003 to 2011	**207,914** 8th graders still not proficient in Math
7	Students who took at least one AP exam during high school increased **14.5** percentage points, from **18.3** percent to **32.8** percent, from 2001 to 2011	Only **50.9** percent of test-takers scored at least one "3" or higher
8	This state has reported the new, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) that is now required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). The ACGR for 2011 is **86.0** percent	All but 3 states report the new rate. Idaho and Kentucky were issued waivers from the USDOE, allowing them until 2013/2014 to report the new rate. Oklahoma has applied for a waiver and is awaiting approval

Economic Benefits

With a 90 percent graduation rate, the additional graduates could deliver an estimated **$511 million** in increased annual earnings, **$31 million** in increased annual state and local tax revenues, and an increase in the Gross State Product of **$603 million**.

Source: Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Fox, J.H. (2013). Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic - 2013 Annual Update. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises, the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, America's Promise Alliance, and the Alliance for Excellent Education. Data from the Alliance for Excellent Education analysis of data from Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. Retrieved from **http://www.civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/Building-A-Grad-Nation-Report-2013_Full_v1.pdf**

Subgroup Definitions

The following subgroups are referenced throughout the report and are defined as follows:

- American Indian/Alaskan Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.[115]
- African American: Includes black, non-Hispanic persons, defined as a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.[115]
- Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.[115]
- Asian/Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. This area includes, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, Guam, the Philippine Islands, Samoa, and other Pacific Islands.[115]
- Hispanic: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.[115]
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP): Also known as English Language Learners (ELL), defined as students who fall into one of four categories: (1) who were not born in the United States or whose native languages are languages other than English; (2) who are a Native American or Alaskan Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas and who come from an environment where languages other than English have a significant impact on their level of language proficiency; (3) who are migratory, whose native languages are languages other than English, and who come from an environment where languages other than English are dominant; or (4) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the ability to meet the state's proficient level of achievement on state assessments and the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, and/or the opportunity to fully participate in society.[116]
- Students with Disabilities: Defined as students with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, need special education and related services.[117]
- White: Includes white, non-Hispanic persons, defined as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.[115]

Graduation Rate FAQ

Why does graduating from high school matter? High school graduates are more likely to be employed, make higher taxable incomes, and generate jobs than those without a high school diploma. For example, had the nation already reached our 90% goal, the additional graduates from a single class would have earned an estimated $5.3 billion more in income, generated more than 37,000 jobs and increased the GDP by $6.6 billion per year. Graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or receive social services. They have better health outcomes and higher life expectancies. Furthermore, high school graduates are more likely to be civically engaged. Strong evidence also links increased educational attainment with higher voting and volunteering rates. Finally, this issue even affects national security, since only graduates can be accepted to serve in the armed forces.

How were high school graduation rates determined in the past? Historically, high school graduation rates have been arrived at using multiple formulas that vary by state and researcher, and are based on several different definitions of the student baseline, of a diploma, and of a graduate. These rates include the leaver method, the completer method, and, most notably, the U.S. Department of Education's Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR). What made these calculations challenging was that the majority of states did not assign an individual identifier to each student, so individual students could not be followed, nor could groups (cohorts) that entered school at one time be tracked. In high-performing schools, districts and states, in which most students are promoted from grade to grade on time, and in which most students receive a regular, rather than alternate, diploma, the inability to follow individuals or a cohort does not matter a great deal. However, in low-performing schools, districts and states, in which students are frequently retained rather than promoted, or in which a variety of diplomas and certificates are awarded, the inability to follow students masks challenges and distorts graduation rates.

How are graduation rates determined now? Beginning in the late 1990s, researchers and then the federal government began developing alternative graduation rate calculations. In 2005, members of the National Governors Association (NGA), deeply concerned about strategies for improving schools, reached consensus that high school graduation rates should be calculated in a uniform way across the states, and in a pioneering compact, generated a formula for doing so. The formula was refined in a 29-page rulemaking document released by then-Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, in December 2008. States were expected to report graduation rates using the refined formula (the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, or ACGR) beginning with the 2010-11 school year.

What is the ACGR? The Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate is a method for tracking a group (or cohort) of students who enter high school together, as first-time ninth-graders (or tenth-graders, in schools that begin in tenth grade) and graduate "on-time" (i.e., within three or four years) with a regular diploma. The ACGR accounts (or adjusts) for students who transfer into the school, transfer out to another school in the state, or die. The ACGR is based on a state's ability to follow individual students, made feasible by assigning a single student identifier to each student, as also required in the 2008 document. Most states calculate the ACGR at the state-, school district-, and school-levels.

The formula for the ACGR is: The U.S. Department of Education provided the following formula to calculate the ACGR for the graduating class of 2012:

Number of cohort members who earned a regular high school diploma by the end of the 2011–12 school year
Number of first-time 9th graders in fall 2008 (starting cohort) plus students who transferred in, minus students who transferred out, emigrated, or died during school years 2008–09, 2009–10, 2010–11, and 2011–12

The same formula is followed for each graduating class.

Time span for the ACGR: The four-year ACGR is the "gold standard" for graduation rate reporting, as it is the number of years in which U.S. students are typically expected to complete high school. The four-year ACGR is the rate that the U.S. Department of Education reported in its news release in November 2012. In addition to the four-year ACGR, many states calculate five- and six-year ACGR to enable consideration of those students who take additional time to complete the standard course of study. Students who graduate early (i.e., in one, two, or three years) are included as graduates with their original four-year cohort. Three-year ACGR are often calculated for schools that begin at the tenth grade.

What does using the ACGR accomplish? Using the ACGR means that states are no longer estimating graduation rates from aggregate enrollment numbers (as is done with the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate [AFGR]). ACGR counts individual students who graduate within a given time period.

What goes into the ACGR? For ACGR to provide an accurate picture, states must carefully define the terms they use to calculate ACGR and enact regulations and legislation that comply with the original federal regulations surrounding ACGR. "Graduation", for instance, is intended to mean that students have received the regular state diploma, rather than a GED, a certificate of attendance, a certificate of completion, an alternative diploma or a waiver diploma. "Transfer out" is intended to mean that when a students leaves school, their next destination is known and verified in writing, not assumed or conjectured. "Transfers in" should be added to the cohort.

Do all states use the same formula to calculate ACGR? No, not yet. While each state follows the same general ACGR formula provided by the U.S. Department of Education (see the above section, "The formula for ACGR is"), states vary in the ways they define each component of the formula. For instance, states vary in how they count students who "transfer out" into incarceration, homeschooling, or across state boundaries. Students who "transfer out" into homeschooling during high school are considered valid transfers out, although in most states there is no

requirement that homeschooled students gain a diploma of any sort. Students who "transfer out" across state lines are considered valid, though documentation is not required in every state. Even more variation occurs with students with disabilities, who constitute approximately 14 percent of the student population. Some rigorous states expect students with disabilities to gain a regular diploma in four years, while other states say that they are granting a "regular diploma" to these students when, in fact, the "regular diploma" for special education students is whatever their individual education plan (IEP, required for students with disabilities) outlines. As a result, it may take several more years to fully implement the ACGR approach uniformly and with fidelity.

Why do the ambiguities and loopholes matter? They matter because they can impede our ability to truly measure real graduation rates and compare rates across states. The U.S. Department of Education developed a comprehensive formula, arrived at after a great deal of input and consensus from education experts across the states. To be able to make accurate comparisons across states, and to learn what is working and who still needs additional support, it is imperative that states use common definitions. When evaluating your state's regulation, ask "What happens if we change the definition of a ninth-grade cohort or a graduate?" The answer to this question affects your state's graduation rate and its ability to identify those schools, districts, and groups in need of additional support.

Are all states now reporting the four-year ACGR at the state level? Five states began using a formula similar to ACGR in 2003, or have calculated ACGR back to this period. By 2006, eleven states had reported ACGR, and by 2009, 24 had reported it. Thirty-five states reported in 2010. As of December 2012, 47 states and the District of Columbia have reported for the 2010- 2011 school year, and nine states have already reported for 2011-2012 (see Appendix E for a list of the earliest years in which ACGR was reported by state). Two states—Idaho and Kentucky—were granted waivers by the U.S. Department of Education allowing them to delay reporting because of technical difficulties with data systems. Oklahoma has applied and is awaiting approval for a similar waiver to delay reporting.

Do all states report ACGR at the school and district levels? Not all states are reporting ACGR for schools yet, nor do all of those that report it do so in an easy-to-use format.

1. See Appendix E for a state-by-state list of the level at which states report 2010 and 2011 ACGR in an easy-to-use format.
2. See Appendix B for reported ACGRs by year by state. See Appendix C for 2011 reported ACGR by state and subgroup.
3. See Appendix D for links to state sources of ACGR.

Is the graduation rate that is reported on state report cards the same as the ACGR? Not necessarily. State accountability systems issue state, district, and school report cards, as required by NCLB. In some states, report cards use methods other than the ACGR to estimate graduation rates. Many state calculation methods inflate the graduation rate by counting GEDs as regular diplomas, or by counting fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-year graduates together. States are supposed to report ACGR, but can also report other graduation-related statistics, which may in some cases lead to confusion as to what the graduation rate actually is. Some states count students who received a certificate of completion or attendance rather than a diploma as graduates. Check with your state department of education about what method and definitions are used in your state, district and school report cards. In addition, you may wish to check out the Alliance for Excellent Education's web site and the individual state report cards for previous years. Those report cards list results by state method, average freshman graduation rate (a different method that preceded ACGR) and results from independent sources. Together, these rates give the range in previous rates and illustrate why a common method based on common definitions and individual students was so badly needed.

Is the ACGR the ONLY graduation rate that is used in Building a *Grad Nation: Annual Report 2013*? No. Because states are still in transition from using previous rates to using the ACGR, and because trend lines can only be established for states with several years of ACGR data, two other graduation rate estimations are used in this report—AFGR (Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate) and Promoting Power (PP).

- The AFGR was developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) after convening panels of experts to make recommendations about the most effective strategy to calculate graduation rates in the absence of data systems based on individual student identifiers. The AFGR depends on enrollment by grade reported annually by each school and district to the NCES' Common Core of Data or CCD. The AFGR is calculated by dividing the number of diploma recipients by the average of the number of ninth-graders three years earlier, the number of tenth-graders two years earlier, and the number of eighth-graders four years earlier. The average is taken because research has shown that many ninth grades are disproportionately large because of the number of students retained. The AFGR does not account for transfers in or out.
- Promoting Power is an estimated graduation rate developed by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. It compares the number of twelfth-grade students in a school to the number of ninth-graders three years earlier by using the grade level enrollment numbers reported to the federal Common Core of Data. Promoting Power does not account for students who make it to twelfth grade but ultimately do not graduate, nor does it adjust for transfers in or out. In the absence of uniform, school-level graduation rates, Promoting Power enables up-to-

date graduation rate comparisons to be made across states and schools. Promoting Power has been used in each of the Building a Grad Nation Annual Reports.

What is a "dropout factory" school? A dropout factory is a high school with a Promoting Power of 60 percent or less. In other words, it is a school in which its reported twelfth grade enrollment is 60 percent or less than its ninth-grade enrollment three years earlier.

Why are AFGR and PP used in this report, in addition to ACGR? AFGR is used because it has been retroactively calculated for more than 30 years, enabling comparison of national and state trend lines and changes over time. Because AFGR is easily available only at the state level, (although it can be calculated for districts and schools using CCD data, as is done for select districts and schools by the Broad Prize for Urban Education) other more school-specific measures were needed. Promoting Power is one such proxy and enables zeroing in on the number, distribution and characteristics of schools with low Promoting Power ("dropout factories"). As ACGR becomes more prevalent, use of PP and AFGR will gradually be phased out.

Is there one list of low-performing high schools based on ACGR? No, there is not one centralized list of low-performing high schools across the nation based on ACGR. Each state calculates its own ACGR and most, but not all, states have done so school by school. Appendix E summarizes the availability of school-by-school and district-by-district ACGR data by state, for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, the most recent periods for which ACGR is available (except in nine states which have reported 2012 ACGR). In states that do not publish ACGR by school, it is recommended that state departments of education be contacted. Appendix D lists links for each state, current as of press time.

Are there other lists of low-performing schools based on different measurement systems? The Civic Marshall Plan state indices for each state, available at **http://new.every1graduates.org/building-a-grad-nation-state-profiles-and-annual-updates**, provide the latest available ACGR (2011), AFGR (2010) and Promoting Power (2011) estimates for each state. The Alliance for Excellent Education (**www.all4ed.org**) maintains a Promoting Power database of all high schools by state, county, zip code, and congressional district for the classes of 2008, 2009, and 2010: **http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_and_local_info/promotingpower**.

Is the dropout rate the inverse of the graduation rate? No. Graduation rates are not the inverse of dropout rates. Generally, the dropout rate is the total number of students who drop out from all grades in a school or district in a given year, divided by the total enrollment in those grades. Depending on the state, dropout rates may cover grades seven to twelve or grades nine to twelve. Dropout rates can be among the most misleading of indicators because the data are diluted over the grades. Ten to 15 percent is typically considered a very high dropout rate.

Are graduation rates reported or calculated using school and district enrollment data comparable to those reported by the U.S. Census? Not on face value. Two different situations are being addressed. The Census Bureau conducts two surveys (the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey) that provide snapshots of educational attainment for the population, snapshots that are taken separately for different age groups. Typically, both surveys produce higher rates of educational attainment than do high school graduation rates. In part, the surveys are covering an older population that has had time to "get back on the graduation path" through alternate methods, including the GED (not included in the ACGR nor AFGR). They also are not restricted to students enrolled in public schools, but include a sampling of the eleven percent of the population who attended private school and the three percent who are home-schooled, both estimated to have very high graduation rates. One survey excludes those living in group situations; e.g., the incarcerated and the military; the incarcerated population tends to have low graduation rates.

How do I find out the graduation rate in my school or community? Consult the tables listed earlier in Appendix D for web resources, or contact your state department of education if its web site does not provide school-by-school information. The Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis also provides information on how to find out the graduation rate and size of the dropout crisis in your community. **http://www.americaspromise.org/our-work/Dropout-Prevention/~/media/Files/Our%20Work/Dropout%20Prevention/Grad%20Nation%20Guidebook%20052809.ashx**. The Civic Marshall Plan's State Indices also provide a quick snapshot of each state's status in meeting the graduation challenge. Download your state's index to see where it stands. **http://new.every1graduates.org/building-a-grad-nation-state-profiles-and-annual-updates/**

Civic Marshall Plan Leadership

Grad Nation Summit Conveners

Alliance for Excellent Education
America's Promise Alliance
Civic Enterprises
Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education

Civic Marshall Plan Leadership Council

Alliance for Excellent Education
America's Promise Alliance
American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
Attendance Works
AT&T
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
CASEL: The Collaborative on Social and Emotional Learning
City Year
Civic Enterprises
College Board
Communities In Schools
Corporation for Public Broadcasting
Corporate Voices for Working Families
Council of Chief State School Officers
Data Quality Campaign
Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education
Forum for Youth Investment
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
George W. Bush Institute (Middle School Matters)
Jobs for America's Graduates
Jobs for the Future
Lumina Foundation
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
National 4-H Council
National Academy Foundation
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Council of La Raza
National Education Association
National Governors Association
National Parent Teacher Association
National School Boards Association
National Urban League
Pearson Foundation
Rural School and Community Trust
State Farm
United Way Worldwide
Voices for National Service
YMCA of the USA
Youth Impact Network, America's Promise Alliance
YouthBuild USA

Civic Marshall Plan Leading Principles

Every school in every community has unique opportunities to accelerate achievement for their children. To do so, stakeholders at every level require a set of appropriate solutions for their unique needs. The Civic Marshall Plan is not meant to be a prescription, but rather an iterative, evolving, dynamic, solutions-oriented campaign to end America's dropout crisis. Therefore, the Civic Marshall Plan's action items are organized around four leading principles: focus, high expectations, accountability, and collaboration. The principles offer stakeholders key themes that can guide all of their work, while the action items provide targeted issues on which they can focus to reach the goal of 90 percent graduation rate by 2020.

PRINCIPLE: Strategic Focus

We must direct human, financial and technical capacities and resources to low-graduation rate communities, school systems, schools, and disadvantaged students.

Action Items:

- Serve communities housing the "dropout factory high schools" that have 60 percent and lower high school graduation rates and their feeder middle and elementary schools.
- Serve communities housing the high schools that have 61 to 75 percent graduation rates and their feeder middle and elementary schools to ensure they do not slip into a "dropout factory."
- Integrate multi-sector, business, and community-based efforts in collaboration with individual school and school system efforts.

PRINCIPLE: High Expectations

All students deserve a world-class education and all children can succeed, if provided appropriate supports.

Action Items:

- Reduce chronic absenteeism with policies and practices that support students in coming to school, staying in school, and learning at school.
- Support, promote, or launch grade-level reading campaigns, ensuring all students read proficiently and with comprehension by fourth grade and beyond.
- Support students in advancing on grade level through school transitions.
- Redesign middle grades education, engaging, effective, academically directed schools.
- Provide engaging and demanding coursework that prepares students for college and careers, as outlined in the Common Core State Standards.
- Transform or replace "dropout factories."
- Expand education options and choices for students, connecting high school and postsecondary opportunities, including quality career technical education, early college high schools, dual enrollment, back on track and recovery programs.
- Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; strengthen state and school system policies to accelerate student achievement.

PRINCIPLE: Accountability and Support

We must measure our work so that we know what's working—and what is not. We must build state, school system, and school capacity to improve graduation and college readiness rates.

Action Items:

- Use evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and data-driven decision making in all education-related sectors.
- Fully implement, use and improve linked educational data systems throughout the educational continuum.
- Develop and support highly effective and accountable teachers, counselors, youth-serving personnel, and administrators, working with those who represent teachers.
- Build Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems to identify and appropriately support "on track" and "off track" students.
- Measure the effectiveness of in-school and out-of-school interventions in order to promote and scale best practices.
- Maximize "time on task" in school and maximize extended learning time in school, out of school, afterschool, and during the summer.

PRINCIPLE: Thoughtful Collaboration

Ending the dropout crisis requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. To achieve collective impact, collaborations must be deliberately planned, guided by shared metrics, and thoughtfully integrated to maximize efficiency and outcomes.

Action items:

- Showcase examples of success at the state and community levels, serving as a challenge to others.
- Create multi-sector and community-based efforts that harness the power of youth-serving agencies, nonprofits and businesses as education partners.
- Ensure parents and families are continuously engaged in their child's education and provided appropriate resources to promote their child's success.
- Elicit the perspectives of students, educators, and parents.
- Educate community members about the need for education, high school and beyond, using all available tools to keep Grad Nation a local, state, and national priority.

Key Programs of the Grad Nation Campaign

The Grad Nation campaign needs everyone to help young people achieve their full potential. In addition to the Civic Marshall Plan, key initiatives of the Grad Nation campaign involve America's Promise's national partners and communities across the country, and are designed to provide more young people with the Five Promises: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to help others.

100 Best Communities for Young People—The annual *100 Best Communities for Young People* competition provides a powerful vehicle for raising awareness and supporting cities and towns. By recognizing outstanding, multi-sector efforts to improve the well being of young people, *100 Best* promotes increased collaboration, inspires other communities to take action, and provides a platform for sharing best practices.

Alma J. Powell Community Action Fund—As a living and lasting legacy to the leadership of Mrs. Powell, the fund is a campaign to raise $65 million over the next five years to increase awareness, create connections, and share knowledge in ways that inspire and catalyze action. Taking a "whole child" approach, we will recognize, curate and create ways to showcase the progress and practices that propel our young people forward.

Building a Grad Nation Summit—As the campaign's premier event, the summit brings together great minds to share ideas and best practices; to challenge old thinking; and to help organizations working in youth development, education, and neighborhood transformation move beyond individual silos and unleash the real power of cross-sector collaboration. Hundreds convene each year in Washington, D.C., to share progress and inspire action to reach the Grad Nation goal.

Center for Promise—In collaboration with Tufts University's School of Arts and Sciences, the center researches what is needed to help all young people in America succeed in school and life. The center's work will add to the academic exploration of these issues and help give communities and individuals the tools and knowledge to work together effectively to support young people.

Grad Nation Business-Education Collaborative—The collaborative is a series of regional roundtables that engage business leaders, educators, and community leaders in driving cross-sector community action plans to address the dropout crisis. These sessions offer effective ways to engage with schools from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, supply case studies of proven programs, and highlight criteria businesses can use in deciding which efforts fit well with their interests.

Grad Nation Communities—Communities are on the front line of helping young people succeed in school, work, and life. Grad Nation Communities commit to work across sectors to pursue the Grad Nation goals, share best practices, and provide annual updates on progress and challenges. Any community can apply to join the effort and benefit significantly through support and services to help end the dropout crisis, including training and networking opportunities; connections to resources, tools and expertise; and funding opportunities.

Grad Nation Knowledge Center—America's Promise Alliance is developing a knowledge center to connect evidence-based best practices with community wisdom by providing templates and technical assistance for strategic planning, goal setting, action, and data reporting and analysis. With these tools, community members will be able to identify and implement successful and cost-effective solutions and contribute to a network of peer communities, Grad Nation partners and researchers.

ReadyNation—This partnership amplifies the voice of business leaders in support of early childhood policies that strengthen our economy and workforce. Originally known as the Partnership for America's Economic Success, it transitioned to America's Promise Alliance from the Pew Charitable Trusts and changed its name to ReadyNation in early 2012. ReadyNation brings together business leaders committed to advancing evidence-based programs that children need to become "ready" to succeed.

Youth Impact Network—The umbrella for America's Promise Alliance's youth-related opportunities, this network enables young people to take action at both the local and national levels, such as identifying resource gaps in their communities and then proposing solutions to end the dropout crisis and improving outcomes for themselves and their peers.

To learn more about these programs, visit **www.americaspromise.org**.

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About Civic Enterprises
Civic Enterprises is a public policy firm that helps corporations, nonprofits, foundations, universities, and governments develop and spearhead innovative public policies to strengthen our communities and country. Created to enlist the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to help address our nation's toughest problems, Civic Enterprises fashions new initiatives and strategies that achieve measurable results in the fields of education, civic engagement, economic mobility, and many other domestic policy issues. For information about Civic Enterprises, please visit **www.civicenterprises.net**

About The Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University
The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University seeks to identify the barriers that stand in the way of all students graduating from high school prepared for adult success, to develop strategic solutions to overcome the barriers, and to build local capacity to implement and sustain them. For more information, please visit **www.every1graduates.org**

About America's Promise Alliance
America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. We bring together more than 400 national organizations representing nonprofit groups, businesses, communities, educators and policymakers. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, America's Promise believes the success of young people is grounded in Five Promises: caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others. For more information, visit **www.americaspromise.org**

About The Alliance for Excellent Education
The Alliance for Excellent Education is a Washington, D.C.-based national policy and advocacy organization that works to improve national and federal policy so that all students can achieve at high academic levels and graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship in the twenty-first century. For more information about the Alliance for Excellent Education, please visit **www.all4ed.org**

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