

EDUCATION & LOCAL GOV'T IC  
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Montana  
Office of Public Ins  
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

opl.mt.gov

Exhibit 2

Office of Public Instruction  
P.O. Box 202501  
Helena, MT, 59620-2501  
(406) 444-3095  
(888) 231-9393  
(406) 444-0169 (TTY)  
opl.mt.gov

**2011 Four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate**

The graduating class of 2010-2011 is the first cohort for which the MT Office of Public Instruction is able to calculate a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate<sup>1</sup>. This rate is the percentage of students in a cohort, adjusted for transfers in and out of school, district, or state, that graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of the student's first enrollment in ninth grade. For the graduating class of 2011, the cohort began ninth grade in the fall of 2007.

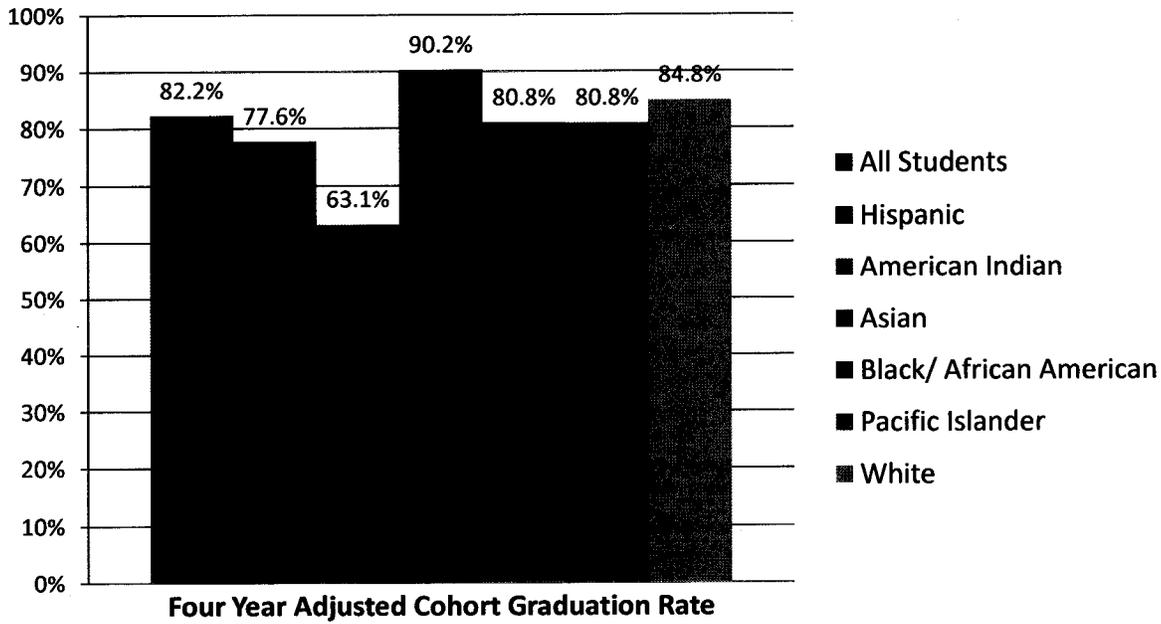
Note that the numerator includes only students earning regular high school high school diplomas in four years or fewer. Students earning General Education Development (GED) certificates are not included; nor are students who graduate in more than four years, even if the student has an individualized education plan (IEP) that specifies more than four years for completion of graduation requirements. For the calculation of the four year cohort graduation rate, both sets of students here are included in the adjusted cohort (denominator), but are not included in the count of students earning regular high school diplomas (numerator).

	Graduates	Dropouts by grade					Continuing	Cohort rate
		9th	10th	11th	12th	Total		
<b>All students</b>	<b>9445</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>1692</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>82.2%</b>
<b>--By Race/ Ethnicity</b>								
Hispanic	253	13	14	20	9	56	17	77.6%
American Indian	810	127	111	89	60	387	86	63.1%
Asian	83	1	2	0	4	7	2	90.2%
Black/ African American	80	4	8	2	3	17	2	80.8%
Pacific Islander	21	2	1	0	1	4	1	80.8%
White	8198	165	343	336	377	1221	250	84.8%

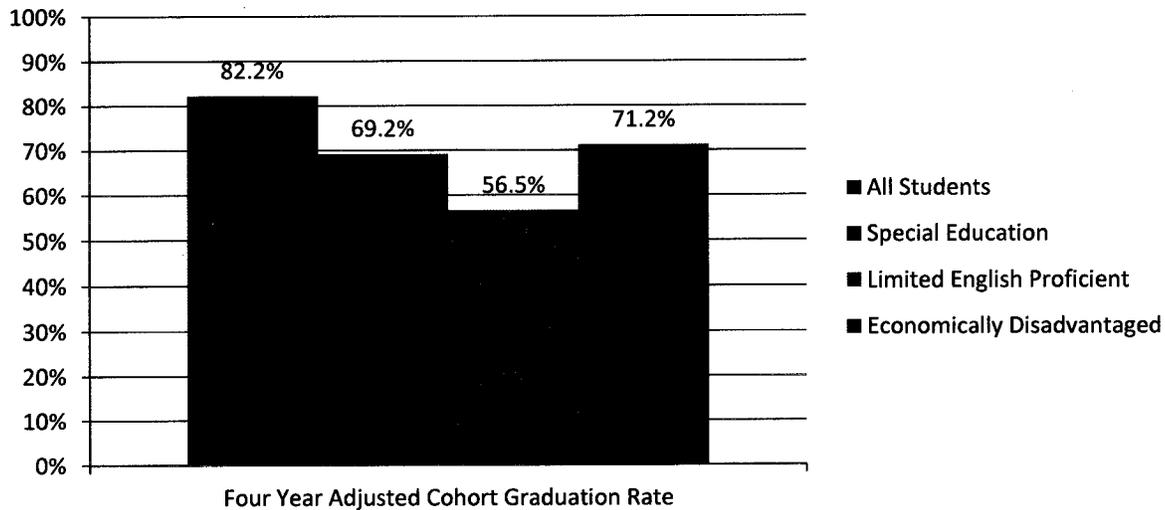
Special Education Students	1034	50	107	105	94	356	105	69.2%
Limited English Proficient Students	294	72	45	34	18	169	57	56.5%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	3372	230	328	288	283	1129	237	71.2%

*The Montana Office of Public Instruction provides vision, advocacy, support, and leadership for schools and communities to ensure that all students meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.*

### Montana Cohort Graduation Rate, 2011, By Race/Ethnicity



### Montana Cohort Graduation Rate, 2011, by Student Group



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The Race/Ethnicity for a student is based on the final enrollment in AIM, the statewide student information system. For the purposes of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) process, OPI uses a six value race code that does not include a multi-racial option. The AIM RaceEthnicity value is used where available. If a student has only the new, two-part question RaceEthnicityFed value, that value is converted via a crosswalk-back to one of the old RaceEthnicity values.

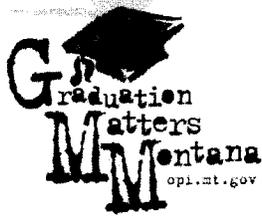
A student is included in the Special Education, Limited English Proficient (LEP), or Economically Disadvantaged categories if any enrollment in high school grades (09, 10, 11, 12, and Ungraded high school class) for that student shows a membership in the category. Student membership in the Economically Disadvantaged student group is determined by eligibility for free or reduced price meals at the school attended.

“Graduates” includes all students graduating on-time or early (Diploma Period values 01, 02 and 03). “Dropouts” include only students with an enrollment end status of 300, 310, 320, 330 or 340 in the final enrollment. “Continuing students” include all students who neither graduated, nor dropped out, nor have a final status to indicate that they are no longer in the cohort (final enrollment end status of 160, 170, 180, 190, 500 or 510). Most continuing students have an enrollment end status of 100 (continuing enrollment at the same school).

The data above are for students who exited from (had a final enrollment in) a Montana public school. Data from private accredited and state-funded schools was used to calculate cohort entry dates.

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<sup>1</sup> A cohort graduation rate follows the students who are first-time ninth grade students in a particular year and determines the percentage of these students who graduate in a given time frame (e.g. four years). For instance, a four-year cohort graduation rate for the first-time ninth grade students in the 2007-08 school year would represent the percentage of these students who graduated by the end of the 2010-11 school year.



## Frequently Asked Questions Four-Year Adjusted Cohort High School Graduation Rate March 20, 2012

### PURPOSE

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#### Q. Why is a new graduation rate being reported?

A. The U.S. Department of Education is requiring all states to begin publicly reporting comparable high school graduation rates using a four-year adjusted cohort rate calculation method. In October 2008, a regulation by the U. S. Department of Education [section 1111(h) of ESEA] was amended, which included a requirement for all states and local educational agencies (LEAs) to begin calculating and reporting the more uniform rate beginning with 2010-2011 data.

Historically, states have calculated graduation rates using varying methods, creating inconsistent data from one state to the next. The transition to a uniform high school graduation rate requires all states to report the percentage of freshmen students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma.

The four-year rate is helpful toward improving high school graduation rates by understanding the characteristics of the population of students who do not earn regular high school diplomas or who take longer than four years to graduate.

### DEFINITION

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#### Q. How is the four-year graduation rate defined?

A. The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently "adjusted" by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the 9th grade and the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during that same period.

#### Q. How does the "new" graduation rate calculation differ with Montana's current rate?

A. Montana has been transitioning to a cohort graduation rate, but four years of student-level enrollment data was required to fully implement the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. In 2007, Montana established unique IDs for all students in the state and implemented a system for tracking them over time and as they move between programs, schools and districts in the state. As of 2011, Montana has four years of enrollment data in the student information system, AIM, allowing the use of the four-year adjusted cohort formula.



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**Q. What is a regular high school diploma?**

A. A regular high school diploma means the standard high school diploma awarded to students in Montana that is fully aligned with the state's academic standards and does not include a GED credential, certificate of attendance, or any alternative award.

**REPORTING**

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**Q. How soon will the new four-year high school graduation rate be reported?**

A. In Montana, the new high school graduation rates are available as of February 2012.

**Q. How is the new graduation rate reported in Montana?**

A. The new four-year high school graduation rate is reported online at the Montana Office of Public Instruction website at [opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov).

**Q. How will students who graduate in five, six or more years be counted in the graduation rate?**

A. In addition to calculating a four-year adjusted cohort rate, Montana will also calculate an extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for five years and potentially for six years once data becomes available. Students who do not graduate in four years will lower the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, but if they graduate in the next year they will raise the five-year adjusted cohort rate. The five-year adjusted cohort rates will not be available until 2012, and the six-year rate will be available in 2013.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

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**Q. How will the new four-year high school graduation rate impact school districts' state and federal accountability requirements?**

A. The new rate for federal accountability purposes will go into effect across the nation for the 2011-12 school year. Montana's target AYP graduation rate goal is 85 percent for 2011-2012.

**Q. Are schools held accountable for students who transfer into the school but are not on schedule to graduate in four years?**

A. Yes, after a student has been claimed by a school in the AIM system, the claiming school has the responsibility of graduating the student with his/her cohort. If the student does not graduate with his/her cohort they will count as a non-graduate in the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. However, if the student graduates within five years, he/she will count as a graduate in the five-year adjusted cohort rate.

## **COHORT INCLUSION/EXCLUSION**

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**Q. Will a student who graduates early be counted as a graduate with the student's original freshman cohort?**

A. Yes. In the current implementation, the early graduate is included in the numerator along with the rest of that student's ninth-grade cohort graduates.

**Q. Will Montana count graduates who complete their coursework in the summer of their senior year?**

A. Yes. Montana seniors who catch up their credits during summer school can be reported as graduates and can therefore be counted as graduating on time.

**Q. If a student is held back or repeats a high school grade, do they enter a new cohort?**

A. A student who is held back will not enter a new cohort. He/she will be counted in the school's denominator and will not be in the numerator, unless that student accumulates enough credits and graduates within four years.

**Q. What if a student transfers to a new school after three years of high school, but is still only a sophomore?**

A. He/she will be counted in the new school's denominator and will not be in the numerator, unless that student accumulates enough credits and graduates within four years.

**Q. What if a student transfers in from a private school, home school, or out-of-state school and it is not possible to accurately determine when the student first became a freshman?**

A. The district that first enrolls the student will record the grade-level for that student. The student then enters that cohort.

**Q. How will transfers-in and transfers-out be treated within a freshman cohort?**

A. Students who transfer to another high school are entered into their new school's cohort, but transfer-outs leave the cohort. So, it will depend on when those students graduate whether there is a negative or positive impact on a school's graduation rate.

**Q. Are students who do not graduate within the four-year window considered dropouts?**

A. No, they are not considered a dropout, but they are not counted in the four-year high school graduation rate.

**Q. Will students who drop out and complete their GED be counted in the four-year graduation rate?**

A. Students who drop out of school and receive a GED certificate are not considered high school graduates and will not be included in the numerator. In an effort to reflect the achievements of students in a cohort, in future reports, OPI plans to report those students who received a GED.

**Q. If a student leaves for home school, will he/she count as a transfer?**

A. A student transferring to home school is a transfer-out, and he/she would leave a school's cohort, and thus not impact its four-year graduation rate.

**Additional References:**

- U.S. Department of Education, High School Graduation Rate, Non-regulatory Guidance (2008):  
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf>
- No Child Left Behind - Summary of Final Title I Regulations (2008):  
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/reg/title1/summary.pdf>