School District of Philadelphia Graduation Rates: Definitions and Trends

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Context and Overview

This report explains how the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) calculates and reports graduation rates. Unless otherwise specified, "graduation rate" refers to the four-year (*on time*, or *on target*) definition in this report. SDP reports graduation rates for five- and six-year graduation windows as well.

SDP reports two graduation rates: the District Progress Report Rate (which excludes students in alternative programs) and the District Scorecard Rate (which includes them).

SDP applies the District Progress Report business rules to calculate graduation rates for Charter schools that participate in the School Progress Reports. For more information, visit www.philasd.org/spr.

Graduation rate is one of the primary metrics used to determine whether students are prepared for college and career; however, there is no single, clear-cut definition of the metric across school districts. Moreover, the definition of the metric may change over time, even within the same district. This introduction to the two School District of Philadelphia (SDP) graduation rates explains how the metrics are calculated and how contributing factors have changed over time. It also outlines six-year trends in SDP's graduation metrics (2013-14 through 2018-19).

Research Questions

The report is organized according to two sets of research questions:

1. **How does SDP define the graduation rate?**

What are the differences between "District Progress Report" and "District Scorecard" rates, as well as between "on-target," "five-year," and "six-year" graduation rates? How do other comparable districts define their graduation rate?

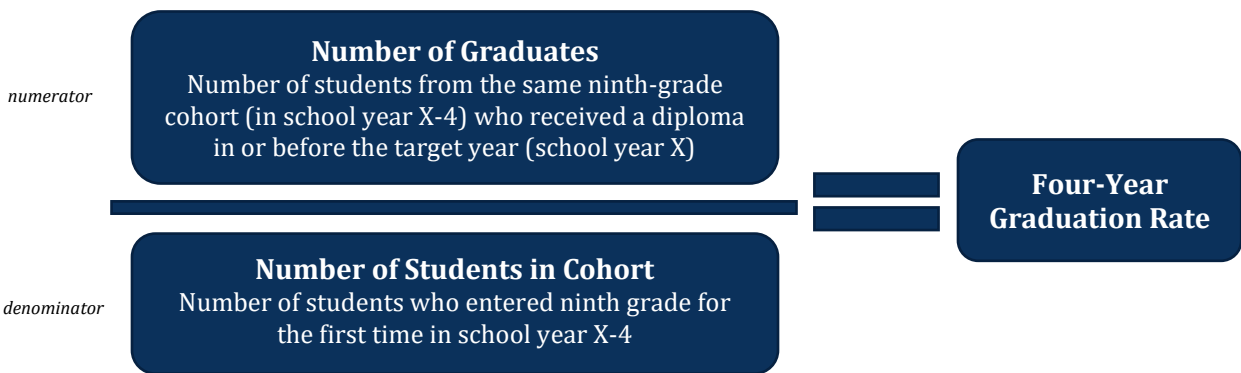2. **How has the SDP graduation rate changed from 2013-14 to 2018-19?**

Is the change due to variation in the number of graduates or variation in the size of each first-time ninth-grade cohort? Do graduation rates differ by the admission type of the high schools?

Question 1: How does SDP define the graduation rate?

Components of SDP's Graduation Rate Metric

In simplest terms, *graduation rate* is the percentage of an entering freshmen class who graduated by the end of their senior-year summer (in four years). In other words, the graduation rate in any four-year graduation target year is "the number of students who entered ninth grade for the first time four years earlier *and* received a high school diploma within those four years" divided by "the number of **all** students who entered ninth grade for the first time four years before this four-year graduation target year" (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Simplest Formula for Calculating Four-Year Graduation Rate

Number of Graduates
Number of students from the same ninth-grade cohort (in school year X-4) who received a diploma in or before the target year (school year X)

numerator

Number of Students in Cohort
Number of students who entered ninth grade for the first time in school year X-4

denominator

Four-Year Graduation Rate

School year X refers to the **four-year graduation target year**.
School year X-4 refers to the **first-time ninth-grade cohort year.**

While establishing the number of students who received a high school diploma (that is, the numerator) is relatively straightforward, accounting for who constitutes the first-time ninth-grade cohort (that is, the denominator) involves various factors.
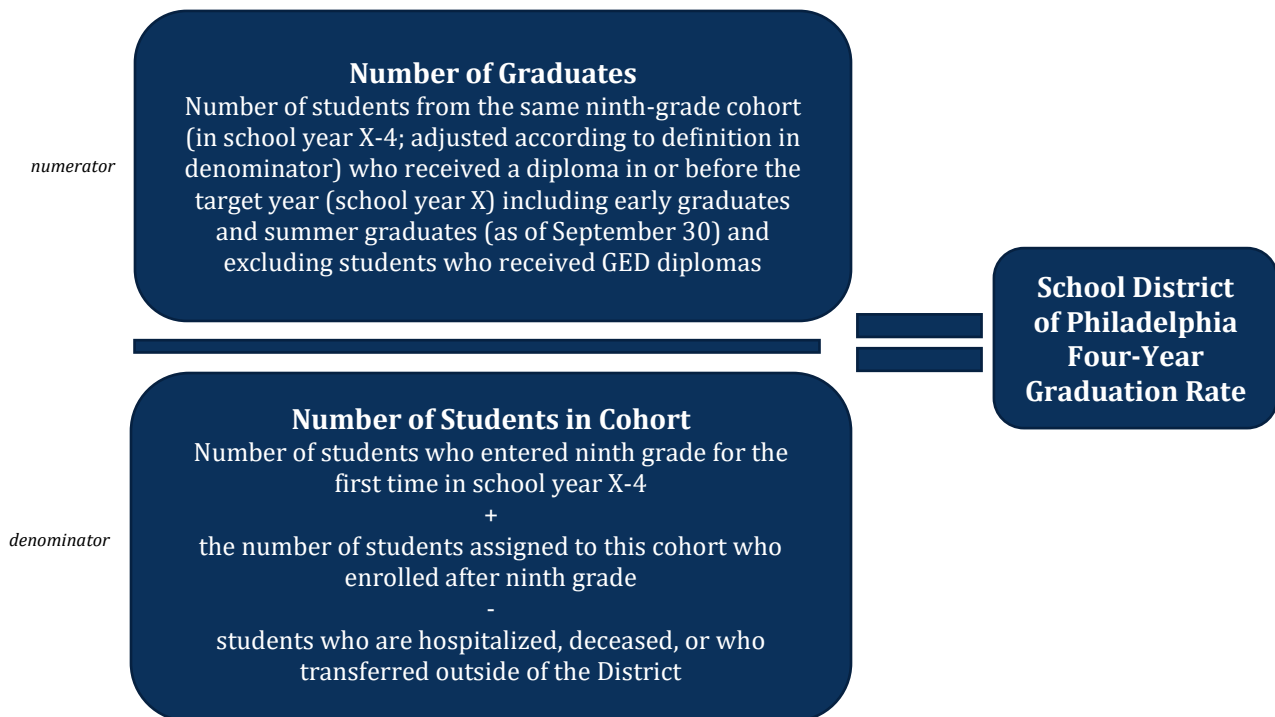
Number of Graduates (the numerator): For the purposes of SDP District- and school-level graduation rate calculations, only students who receive a high school diploma early or on time (as defined below) are considered high school graduates. Students who graduate earlier (e.g., in three years) are included in the rate for their cohort's target graduation year, not the year they received their diploma. Those who received GEDs are not included. Students who have not graduated (not included in the numerator) might be continuing their studies for a fifth year or may have dropped out of high school altogether.

In order to be considered **on time** or **on target**, a student must receive a diploma by the end of the summer following their fourth year of high school. A cut-point of *September 30* after the fourth high school year ensures that students in summer programs who complete their graduation requirements are included in the pool of graduates, and it also helps distinguish students continuing their education for a fifth year from students who have dropped out.

Number of Students in Cohort (the denominator): Each student who enrolls in ninth grade for the first time is assigned to that year's ninth-grade cohort. These students are expected to graduate four years later, by the end of their four-year graduation target year; however, the cohort does not remain fixed throughout the four years of high school.[1]

Enrollment changes often lead to the addition of incoming students who were not in the original cohort. Any student who enrolls in a District high school after ninth grade is assigned a cohort year with the assumption of regular grade promotion (that is, no repeated grade levels). Enrollment changes also trigger the exclusion of students who leave the District to continue their studies elsewhere (non-drop departures). Students who transfer outside the District, who are in long-term hospitalization, or who are deceased are removed from the cohort, while students who drop out of high school are retained.

Figure 2. SDP Business Rules for Calculating Four-Year Graduation Rate

numerator

Number of Graduates
Number of students from the same ninth-grade cohort (in school year X-4; adjusted according to definition in denominator) who received a diploma in or before the target year (school year X) including early graduates and summer graduates (as of September 30) and excluding students who received GED diplomas

School District of Philadelphia Four-Year Graduation Rate

denominator

Number of Students in Cohort
Number of students who entered ninth grade for the first time in school year X-4
+
the number of students assigned to this cohort who enrolled after ninth grade
-
students who are hospitalized, deceased, or who transferred outside of the District

School year X refers to the **four-year graduation target year**.
School year X-4 refers to the **first-time ninth-grade cohort year.**

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[1] SDP has developed detailed business rules on the attribution of first-time ninth-grade cohort students and graduates to schools and sectors in order to account for student mobility between District and Charter schools, as well as between traditional schools and alternative programs.

Calculation Process for the SDP Graduation Rate

The first step in calculating the SDP graduation rate is preparing an enrollment file that includes all District and Charter students in a given first-time ninth-grade cohort, their last school and sector of *valid enrollment*,[2] and the reason they exited (if applicable). Next, this first-time ninth-grade cohort enrollment file is updated with information from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to identify students who have transferred to other Pennsylvania districts, correcting their status from dropout to transfer (or *non-drop departure*). The file is also checked against data received from Charter schools to make further additions or corrections, as necessary.

Graduation Outcomes

There are four possible outcomes that may be assigned to each student in a ninth-grade cohort at the end of the summer following their fourth year of high school.

Graduate: The student received a diploma by the end of the summer after their fourth year of high school.

Continuing: The student is enrolled in a District school to continue their education for a fifth year.

Dropout: The student is not enrolled in any school and has discontinued their high school education.

Non-drop departure (transfers): The student has transferred outside the District.

While *graduate*, *continuing*, and *dropout* students are **included** in the student count for their first-time ninth-grade cohort, *non-drop departure* students are **excluded**.

On September 30 of a cohort's Four-Year Graduation Target Year, students in the enrollment file are assigned one of four outcomes based on their exit codes and enrollment exit date: *graduate*, *non-drop departure*, *continuing,* or *dropout*. When calculating that cohort's graduation rate, students in *continuing* and *dropout* categories remain in the cohort (or denominator) but are not counted as four-year graduates (in the numerator).

Once the student-level enrollment-graduation file is finalized for a first-time ninth-grade cohort, student-level data are aggregated to the school and sector levels to calculate the school, District, and Charter graduation metrics. Until 2018-19, students were attributed to and included in the metric for the school where they were last enrolled (also known as the *last school of contact*). Since 2018-19, students have been attributed to the *last school of valid enrollment.* That is, if a student attended School A for most of the school year, then transferred to School B, remained on School B's enrollment records for fewer than 10 days *and* never attended this school, the student's graduation or non-graduation outcomes are attributed to School A rather than School B.

At the District level, beginning with students whose Four-Year Graduation Target Year was 2018-19, students are included in the District-level graduation metrics if their last school of valid enrollment was a District school. Similar to the revised school-level aggregation business rule described above, a student with fewer than 10 days of District enrollment is not included in the District graduation

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[2] See the explanation for school and sector level aggregation and attribution rules later in this section for an explanation of the difference between last school/sector of valid enrollment and last school/sector of contact.

metrics, even if the last school of contact was a District school. This change is not applied retroactively to students with a target graduation year earlier than 2018-19.

Changes in the Definition of Graduation Rate Over Time

The definition of the on-time graduation rate—the proportion of the number of graduates to the number of students expected to graduate in four years—has not changed over time. The rules that determine who is considered a graduate have not changed, either. However, other changes have impacted the composition of first-time ninth-grade cohorts within the last six years (between 2010-11 and 2015-16).

SDP adopted a new student information management system in February 2017. This upgrade introduced changes to the enrollment exit codes and, as a result, to the identification of *non-drop departure* students (who are excluded from the cohort) and *dropout* students (who are retained in the cohort). Graduation rates remained consistent through this change because outcomes (*graduate*, *dropout*, *non-drop departure*, or *continuing*) were assigned to enrollment exit codes based on the enrollment exit date; the change was not applied retrospectively. That is, if the exit date was before February 2017, the old exit codes are used to determine graduation outcome, not the new codes.

In addition, SDP revised the enrollment exit codes to align with Pennsylvania Department of Education guidance[3] at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. Unlike the changes mentioned above, PDE guidance combined several exit codes that would lead to a *dropout* designation and codes that would lead to a non-drop departure. For example, prior to the 2017-18 school year, students with code W16A for "Runaway student" would be assigned a dropout status and code W4 "Moved out of district; no further information" would be assigned a non-drop departure status. The new guidance combined these codes into a single code WD01, or "Left school no transfer/drop out." Introducing a single code to replace multiple exit codes necessarily led to some non-drop departure exit codes getting assigned to dropout status; for example, students who would have been assigned W4 exit code before 2017-18 are now assigned WD01 exit code, leading to a dropout status as their graduation outcome instead of a non-drop departure status. We would expect this change to increase the cohort size as well as the number of students with dropout status. However, ORE's analysis shows that there was not a significant change in the size of the first-time ninth-grade cohorts from 2016-17 to 2017-18.

Beyond changes related to enrollment exit codes and the attribution of students to schools or sectors, SDP has also changed how it incorporates students at closed schools into the graduation metrics. Students at closed schools were included in the numerator and denominator of only one of the two District-wide graduation metrics (the Scorecard rate) in 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18; from 2018-19 on, they will be included in both metrics (as they were in 2013-14 and 2014-15).

Why does SDP report two different graduation rates?

SDP reports two separate graduation rates: The District Progress Report (DPR) rate and the District Scorecard rate. Both of these rates use the formula shown in Figure 2; the difference is whether

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[3] Graduation, Dropout and Cohort Data Set, 2017-18: https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Teachers-Administrators/PIMS/PIMSHowToGuides/GDC%20Data%20Set.docx.

students of Alternative Education Programs[4] and closed schools are included or excluded in the calculations. The **DPR graduation rate** excludes alternative program students and, between 2015-16 and 2017-18, excluded students of any closed schools. The **District Scorecard graduation rate** includes first-time ninth-grade cohort students and graduates of alternative programs and closed schools.[5]

Students at closed or merged schools typically transfer to other schools and are attributed to those schools in graduation calculations. However, if a student never reenrolls after a school closure, they are attributed to the closed school as a dropout. If a student at a closed school graduates early - before the school closes- they are attributed to the closed school as a graduate for their Four-Year Target Graduation Year.

In many urban school districts, students who are unsuccessful in the traditional high school setting move to alternative programs that may better meet their needs. Consequently, graduation rates at alternative programs have historically been lower than those in traditional schools. As a result, excluding students enrolled in alternative programs can yield higher district graduation rates. For transparency purposes, SDP publishes graduation rates including alternative programs and traditional schools (District Scorecard graduation rate), in addition to graduation rates that include only students whose last school of valid enrollment were traditional schools (DPR graduation rate).

What Other Ways Does SDP Track Graduation Rates?

SDP reports two four-year graduation rates at the District level and reports more school-level metrics than the four-year graduation rate for each school. The District recognizes that not all students graduate or are expected to graduate within four years. For example, students with individualized education plans (IEPs) may have five- or six-year high school education plans. To account for students who continue high school and graduate later, the District calculates school-level five- and six-year graduation rates.[6]

The five-year graduation rate includes all students who graduated in four years in addition to those who graduated in five years. Note that if a student who has never been enrolled in a District high school enrolls in the District in their fifth year, this in-transfer student will be included in the denominator of the five-year graduation rate and, if they graduate, in the numerator. Similarly, if a student in their fifth year of high school transfers out of the District (a non-drop departure), they will be excluded from the five-year graduation rate calculations. The same rules also apply for school-level six-year graduation rates.

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[4] Alternative Education Programs are District-operated or contracted programs that offer students who exited traditional schools alternative ways to earn high school credits toward graduation. More information is available at https://www.philasd.org/alternative/about/.
[5] Both rates include students at Philadelphia Virtual Academy (PVA) and Widener Memorial, a District-run special education school. PVA is not designated as an alternative education program. Non-SDP special education schools are not included in either rate.
[6] SDP school-level graduation rates are publicly available at SDP Open Data, accessible at the following link: https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/open-data/school-performance/#school_graduation_rates.

The District tracks and reports graduation rates for Charter schools that participate in the School Progress Report (SPR). The same business rules and attribution principles apply to the calculation of Charter school four-year graduation rates for the SPR.

Graduation Rate Definitions in Comparable Districts

The Every Student Succeeds Act's federal guidance on high school graduation rates is based on the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR).[7] SDP's on-time District Scorecard graduation rate is aligned with this metric's definition (as both include alternative programs where available). While districts use this metric for state and federal accountability, they may use alternative metrics for public reporting. For example, Chicago Public Schools report four- and five-year graduation rates aligned with ACGR, but they exclude alternative education students, include Charter students and prioritize the fifth-year graduation rate.

Baltimore City Public Schools and DC Public Schools also report rates aligned with the ACGR; however, Baltimore rate includes alternative education students while DC Public Schools rate excludes them. Neither district include Charter school students in their graduation rate calculations; however DC Public Schools reports a separate rate including the Charters.

After an audit found that the California Department of Education cohort definition did not align with federal guidance because it included students who received adult education diplomas or GEDs, California districts (including Los Angeles Unified School District, LAUSD) adjusted their graduation rate calculations to align with ACGR.[8] LAUSD reports only the 4 year rate, which includes both Charter and alternative education students.

Table 1 compares publicly available 2018-19 graduation rates across various districts (as reported on their respective websites), the latest available Pennsylvania state graduation rate reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the latest available nationwide graduation rate reported by the Department of Education. The districts chosen are large, urban, diverse districts comparable to SDP.

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[7] Detailed guidance available at https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essagradrateguidance.pdf.
[8] See https://www.voiceofsandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/OIG_CA_grad_rate_audit.pdf. The Los Angeles Unified School District figures in Table 1 use corrected methods aligned with ACGR.

Table 1. 2018-19 Four-Year Graduation Rates for the US, Pennsylvania, and Districts Comparable to SDP

Location or District	2018-19 Graduation Rate (2015-16 Cohort)			
	4-Year (excl. Alt.Ed.)	4-Year (incl. Alt.Ed.)	5-Year (excl. Alt.Ed.)	5-Year (incl. Alt.Ed.)
Baltimore School District (excludes Charters)		**70.3%**		75.0%
Chicago Public Schools (includes Charters)	78.0%		**78.9%**	
District of Columbia Public Schools (excludes Charters)	**65.1%**		72.2%	
Los Angeles Unified School District (includes Charters)		**79.0%**		
New York City School District (excludes Charters)		**77.3%**		80.3%
School District of Philadelphia (excludes Charters)	**77.9%**	**69.2%**	81.6%	73.0%
Pennsylvania (includes Charters)		85.9% (2017-18)		88.5% (2017-18)
Nationwide (includes Charters)		84.6% (2016-17)		

Bold font indicates that the district prioritizes this rate in public reporting.

Sources:

Baltimore: https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/PUBLIC-Class-of-2018-2019-Graduation-Dropout-Results.xlsx

Chicago: https://cps.edu/Performance/Documents/Datafiles/Metrics_CohortGraduationDropoutAdjusted_Citywide_2011to2019.xls

DC: https://osse.dc.gov/publication/2018-19-adjusted-cohort-graduation-rate

LAUSD: https://my.lausd.net/opendata/dashboard (Choose College and Career Readiness tab)

NYCSD: https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/graduation-results

Philadelphia: https://cdn.philasd.org/offices/performance/Open_Data/School_Performance/Graduation_Rates/SDP_Graduation_Rates_District_S.csv

Pennsylvania: https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/CohortGradRate/Pages/default.aspx

National: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2016-17.asp

Question 2: How has the SDP graduation rate changed from 2013-14 to 2018-19?

SDP Four-Year Graduation Rates, 2013-14 through 2018-19[9]

An analysis of SDP on-time graduation rates over the last six years (Figure 3) shows an overall increase in both graduation rates, excluding and including alternative education programs. Between 2014-15 and 2017-18, both District Progress Report graduation rates (that exclude alternative programs) and District Scorecard graduation rates (that include them) increased every year. Calculations for the four-year target graduation year of 2018-19 show a 0.7 percentage point decrease in the DPR graduation rate (77.9%, down from 78.6% in 2017-18); however, the District Scorecard rate, which includes alternative programs, increased 0.6 percentage points (69.2%, up from 68.6% in 2017-18).

Figure 3. Trends in SDP Four-Year Graduation Rates, District Progress Report Rate vs. District Scorecard Rate
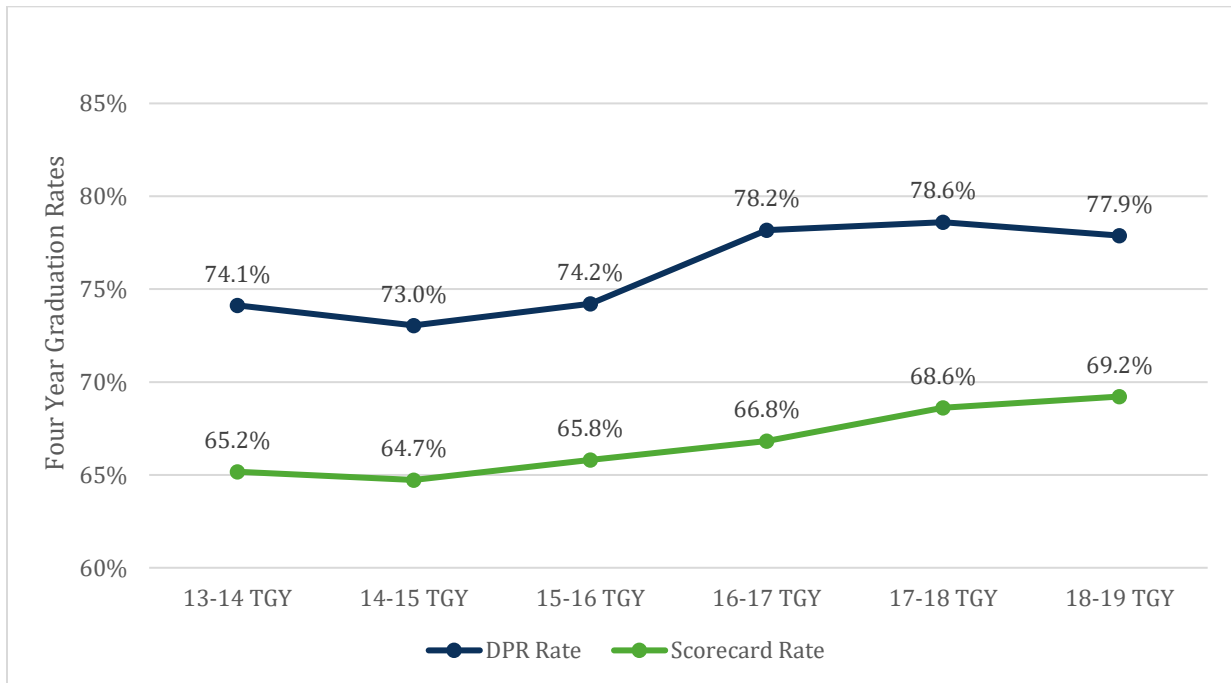
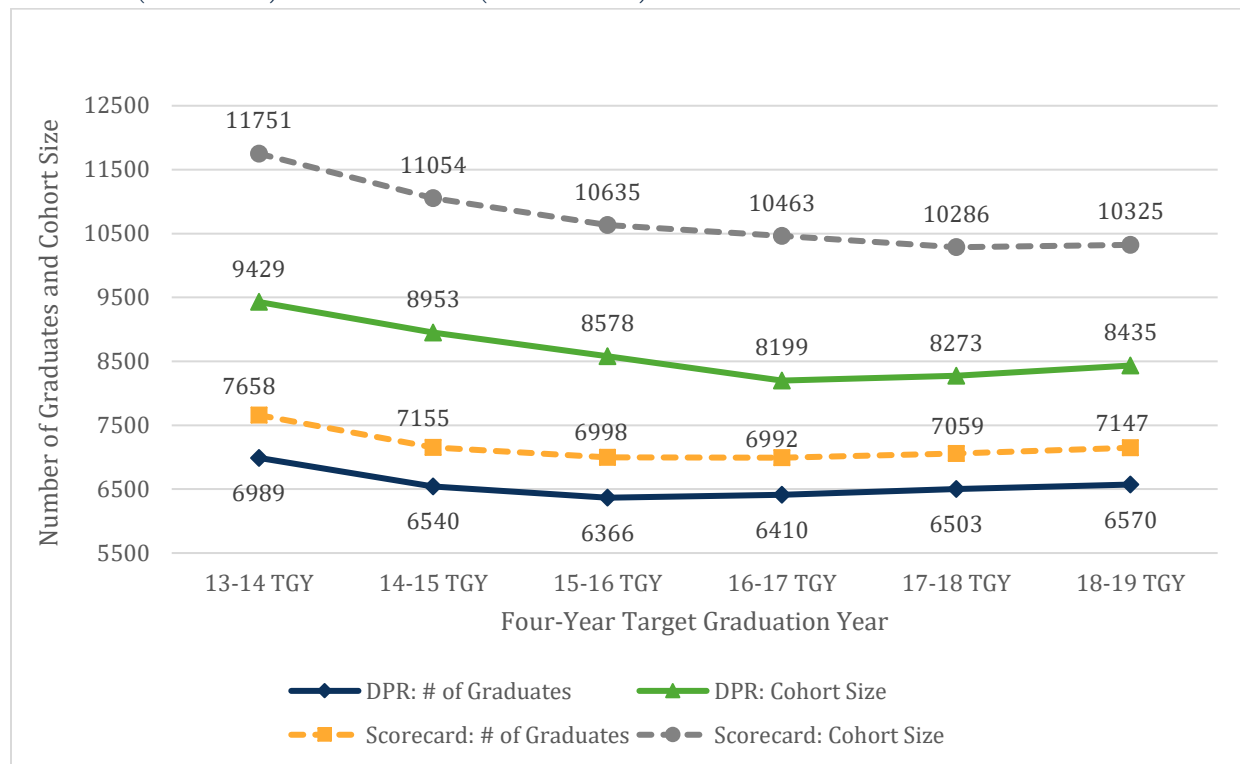**Note:** *TGY* means *Four-Year Target Graduation Year*.
Source: Aggregated from the longitudinal Graduation Working File.

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[9] See our research brief "Graduation Rates for First-Time 9th Grade Students in 2014-15 and Matriculation Rates for 2018 Graduates" for race/ethnicity and gender breakdowns of the graduate numbers and rates across the District in 2017-18: https://www.philasd.org/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/2019/05/HS-Graduation-and-College-Matriculation-2017-18-Research-Brief-March-2019.pdf.

Trends in Graduation Rate Components: Number of Graduates and Cohort Size

We analyzed the number of graduates and cohort sizes between 2013-14 and 2018-19 to determine whether the increases in graduation rates could be due to increasing numbers of graduates or shrinking cohort sizes. Across the six years studied, the number of graduates (excluding graduates of alternative education programs) was lowest in 2015-16 (6,366). The number of graduates increased after that year; however, the number has not again reached its highest level (6,989 graduates in 2013-14) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Components of District Progress Report and District Scorecard Graduation Rates, Number of Graduates (Numerator) and Cohort Size (Denominator)

Note: *TGY* means *Four-Year Target Graduation Year*. DPR figures include traditional high schools, Philadelphia Virtual Academy, and Widener Memorial (a District run special education school). Scorecard figures include schools included in DPR calculations as well as alternative programs.
Source: Aggregated from the longitudinal Graduation Working File.

For the DPR graduation rate, cohort size declined through the 2016-17 Target Graduation Year, from a six-year high of 9,429 in 2013-14 to 8,199 in 2016-17.[10] It increased in the last two years,
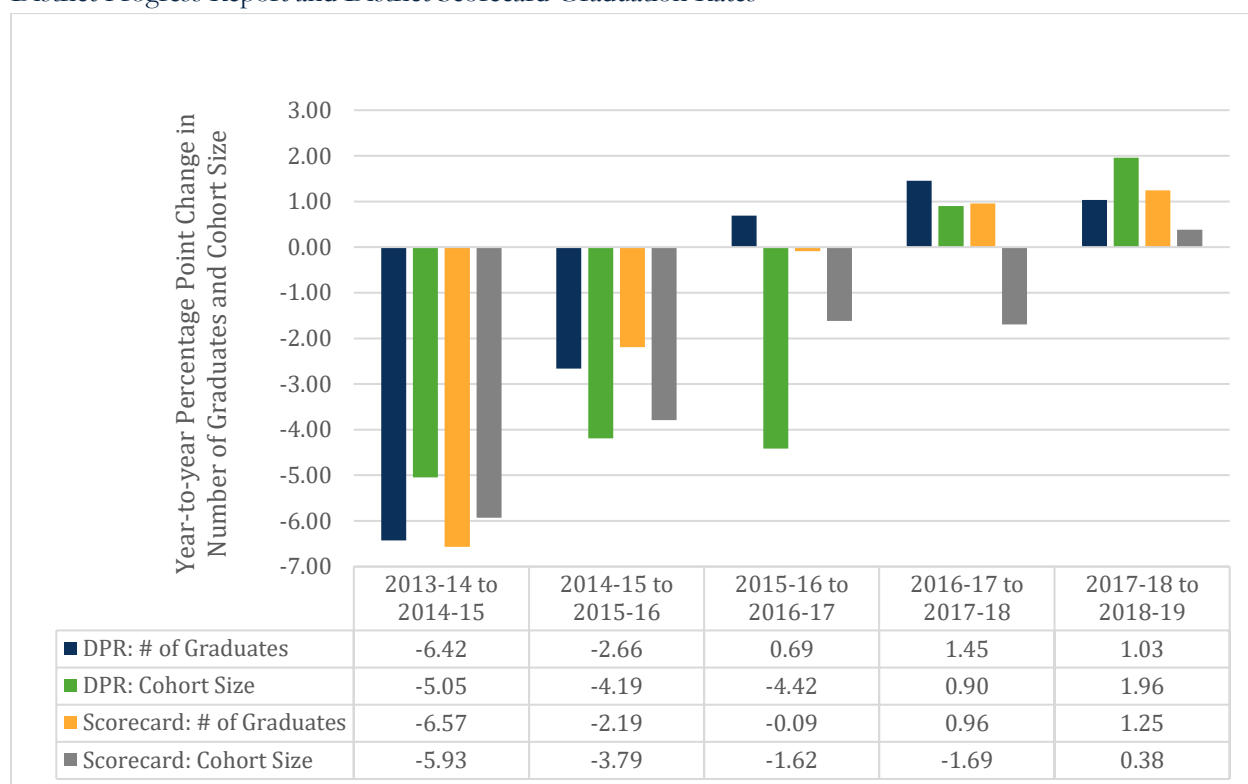
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[10] Based on October 1 enrollment snapshots of each school year, total District enrollment (excluding alternative programs) displays a declining trend in the last six years. School-level October 1 enrollment snapshot data are available at https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/open-data/school-information/#school_enrollment.

despite the changes made to the enrollment exit codes in alignment with the PDE guidance discussed above; the cohort size in 2018-19 was 8,435 (Figure 4 and Appendix A.1).

The number of graduates and the cohort sizes show similar trends for the District Scorecard graduation rate, which includes students in alternative programs. The number of graduates has increased since 2016-17, reaching 7,147 in 2018-19. District Scorecard cohort sizes declined through 2017-18 but increased in 2018-19, reaching 10,325 students. The share of alternative program students in each first-time ninth-grade cohort has remained relatively steady (18-21%) over the last six years.

Studying year-to-year changes in the numerator and denominator of the DPR graduation rate shows that the increases in the graduation rates over time cannot be attributed solely to shrinking cohort sizes or an increasing number of graduates (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Year-to-Year Percentage Point Change in the Number of Graduates and Cohort Size for the District Progress Report and District Scorecard Graduation Rates

	2013-14 to 2014-15	2014-15 to 2015-16	2015-16 to 2016-17	2016-17 to 2017-18	2017-18 to 2018-19
■ DPR: # of Graduates	-6.42	-2.66	0.69	1.45	1.03
■ DPR: Cohort Size	-5.05	-4.19	-4.42	0.90	1.96
■ Scorecard: # of Graduates	-6.57	-2.19	-0.09	0.96	1.25
■ Scorecard: Cohort Size	-5.93	-3.79	-1.62	-1.69	0.38

Source: Calculated from the longitudinal Graduation Working File.
How to read this figure: The bars show the year-to-year increase or decrease in the number of graduates and cohort sizes. For example, the decline in the number of graduates of traditional schools (accounted for in the DPR score) from 2013-14 to 2014-15 was higher than the decline between 2014-15 and 2015-16. Starting in 2015-16, the year-to-year change has been positive, indicating growing number of graduates compared to the previous year each year. Graduation rates increase when the increase in the number of graduates (first and third bars for each column) is higher than the corresponding change in the cohort size (second and fourth bars respectively).

Between 2015-16 and 2016-17, the DPR graduation rate increased 4 percentage points from 74.2% to 78.2% (Figure 3) because the cohort size decreased by 4.4 percentage points and number of graduates increased by .7 percentage points (Figure 5). Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, however, the DPR on-time graduation rate increased, despite the fact that the cohort size also increased (0.9 percentage points), because the number of graduates increased at a higher rate (1.5 percentage points).

Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, for both DPR and Scorecard graduation rates, the number of graduates and the cohort size both increased. The DPR rate decreased 0.7 percentage points overall, because the increase in the cohort size was higher than the increase in the number of graduates. On the other hand, because the cohort size increase was lower than the increase in the number of graduates, the Scorecard rate increased by 0.6 percentage points.

## Graduation Trends by High School Admission Type

High schools in the School District of Philadelphia admit students in different ways. Neighborhood schools admit students based on a catchment area, while Citywide schools admit students from the whole city, regardless of student residence address. Special Admission schools accept applicants based on criteria that may include grades, attendance, state test results, or disciplinary records.[11] SDP also offers a virtual program for online high school education (Philadelphia Virtual Academy, or PVA), which is *not* considered an alternative education program.

In 2018-19, 49% of the senior class who started high school four years earlier (2015-16) attended a neighborhood school (Figure 7). By comparison, 35% of this cohort attended a Special Admission school, 14% attended a Citywide school, and 2% attended Philadelphia Virtual Academy. Neighborhood school graduates constituted 41% of all students who graduated *on time* in 2018-19. Forty three percent of all on-time graduates were from Special Admissions schools, 14% from Citywide schools, and 1% were PVA students. See Table A.2 in Appendix A for a breakdown of the cohort size and number of graduates by admission type.

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[11] For more details on high school types, admissions processes, and qualifying ninth-grade student profiles, see "School Selection in Philadelphia, 2015-16 to 2018-19: Applications for 9th Grade": https://www.philasd.org/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/2019/09/School-Selection-in-Philadelphia-2015-16-to-2018-19-9th-Grade-Applications-Research-Report-September-2019.pdf.

Figure 7. Percentage of Graduates and First-Time Ninth Grade Cohort Students by High School Admission Type, 2018-19
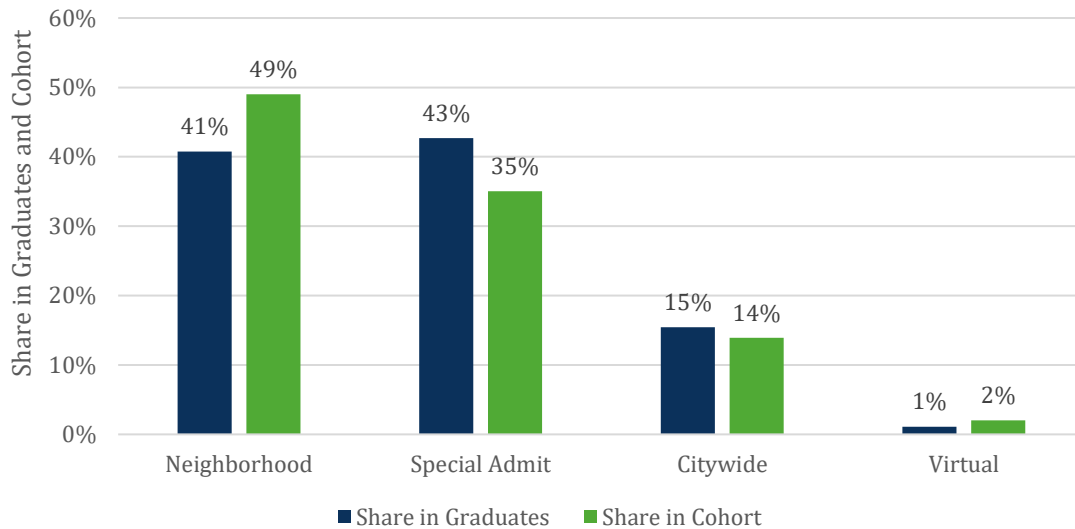

How to read this chart: Blue bars show what percentage of the 2015-16 cohort that graduated on time in 2018-19 were attributed to Neighborhood, Special, and Citywide admission schools and PVA. Green bars show what percentage of the 2015-2016 cohort were attributed to Neighborhood, Special, and Citywide admission schools and PVA. For the actual numbers of graduates and cohort sizes according to admission types, please refer to Table Appendix A, Table A.2, 2018-19 column.

An analysis of graduation rates by high school admission type shows that Special Admission schools had the highest graduation rates, followed closely by Citywide schools (Figure 8). The six-year trend has been stable for both of these school types. Neighborhood schools had much lower graduation rates, ranging between 61.1% and 67.1%.

Although Philadelphia Virtual Academy does not have many students overall, the number of first-time ninth-grade cohort students attributed to PVA at the end of each four-year target graduation year has notably increased over the last six years (Appendix A, Tables A.1 and A.2). PVA's graduation rate has also increased, from 20% in 2013-14 to 43% in 2018-19 (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Graduation Rates by High School Admission Type, 2013-14 to 2018-19
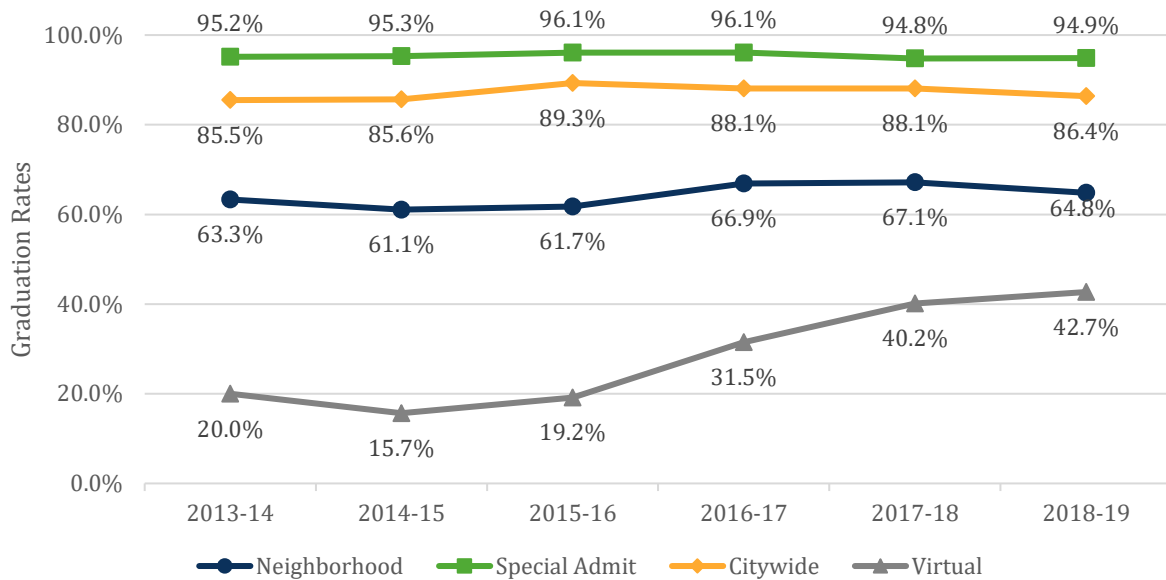
Conclusion

The School District of Philadelphia's definition of graduation rates aligns closely with the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate in the federal guidance. For transparency purposes, SDP reports two graduation rates, one including and one excluding alternative education students. The graduation rate is based by default on a four-year graduation target; however, school-level five and six-year graduation rates are also made public.

Between 2013-14 and 2018-19, both District Progress Report and District Scorecard graduation rates have increased, although there were year-to-year fluctuations. An analysis of the graduation rate components shows that both the number of graduates and the ninth-grade cohort sizes have increased in the last two years (2017-18 and 2018-19).

Finally, graduation rates differ by school admission type. Special Admission and Citywide schools, which are more selective than Neighborhood schools, have higher graduation rates.

Appendix A: Detail Tables for Number of Graduates and Cohort Sizes

Table A.1. Breakdown of Graduation Rate components reported by SDP, 2013-14 to 2018-19

Four-Year Target Graduation Year (First-time ninth-grade cohort year)	2013-14 (2010-11)	2014-15 (2011-12)	2015-16 (2012-13)	2016-17 (2013-14)	2017-18 (2014-15)	2018-19 (2015-16)
DPR Graduation Rate	**74.12%**	**73.05%**	**74.21%**	**78.18%**	**78.61%**	**77.89%**
Number of Graduates (Numerator)	6989	6540	6366	6410	6503	6570
PVA	*10*	*13*	*23*	*51*	*53*	*73*
Widener Memorial	*6*	*8*	*4*	*2*	*3*	*3*
Cohort Total (Denominator)	9429	8953	8578	8199	8273	8435
PVA	*50*	*83*	*120*	*162*	*132*	*171*
Widener Memorial	*15*	*17*	*12*	*13*	*16*	*13*
District Scorecard Graduation Rate	**65.17%**	**64.73%**	**65.80%**	**66.83%**	**68.63%**	**69.22%**
Number of Graduates (Numerator)	7658	7155	6998	6992	7059	7147
Alternative	*669*	*615*	*632*	*579*	*555*	*577*
Closed	*21*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*1*	*0*
Cohort Total (Denominator)	11751	11054	10635	10463	10286	10325
Alternative	*2322*	*2101*	*2019*	*2213*	*1989*	*1890*
Closed	*154*	*79*	*38*	*51*	*24*	*0*

Source: Aggregated from the longitudinal Graduation Working File. This is the student enrollment file with graduation outcomes assigned according to the enrollment exit codes as described on page 4.

How to read this table: This table shows the numbers of students in the numerators and denominators of the two graduation metrics reported by the District. It further states the number of students attending specific school types in the numerators and denominators. For example: The total number of students in the 2015-16 first-time ninth-grade cohort, who have a Targeted Graduation Year of 2018-19, was 8,435. 171 were from Philadelphia Virtual Academy and 13 were from Widener Memorial. Of those 8,435 students, 6,570 graduated in 2018-19. Among the graduates were 73 Philadelphia Virtual Academy students and three students from Widener Memorial. Similarly, 10,325 students, including the 8,435 students accounted for in the DPR rate as well as 1,890 students from alternative programs, were expected to graduate in 2018-19. Of these students, 7,147 (69.3%) graduated: this number includes 6,570 traditional school, PVA, and Widener Memorial students as well as 577 alternative program students.

Table A.2. Number of Graduates and Cohort Size by Admission Type, 2013-14 to 2018-19

		2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Neighborhood ($N_{2018\text{-}19}$= 20)	Graduates	3656	3262	3103	2966	2902	2679
	Cohort	5777	5342	5028	4432	4322	4135
Special Admit ($N_{2018\text{-}19}$= 19)	Graduates	2398	2407	2514	2608	2610	2805
	Cohort	2520	2526	2617	2714	2754	2956
Citywide ($N_{2018\text{-}19}$= 13)	Graduates	925	858	726	785	938	1013
	Cohort	1082	1002	813	891	1065	1173
Virtual ($N_{2018\text{-}19}$= 1)	Graduates	10	13	23	51	53	73
	Cohort	50	83	120	162	132	171
Total	Graduates	6989	6540	6366	6410	6503	6570
	Cohort	9429	8953	8578	8199	8273	8435

Appendix B: Glossary

First-time ninth-grade cohort: The group of students who started ninth grade for the first time in a specific year. If a student transfers into the District after ninth grade, they are retroactively assigned to a cohort, assuming regular grade level progression (i.e., no repeated grades). These students are expected to graduate in four years.

On time or **on target** or **four-year on target graduation:** Completion of course requirements and graduation from high school four years after entering high school or earlier. Students who graduate by completing credits during the summer following their fourth year will be considered on time graduates.

First-time ninth-grade cohort year or **cohort year:** The school year when a first-time ninth-grade cohort enters high school. For any given year, *X*, on-time graduates will belong to a cohort with a cohort year of *X-4*. For example, students who graduated on time in 2018-19 had a first-time ninth-grade cohort year of 2015-16.

Four-Year Target Graduation Year: In general terms, this is the graduation year for students who complete high school in four years. For any first-time ninth-grade cohort, the Four-Year Target Graduation Year will be their cohort year + 4. Students who graduate early (before four years) will be attributed to the metrics for their Four-Year Target Graduation Year.

Graduate: Students who have completed the requirements for high school graduation and received a high school diploma. GED recipients are not considered graduates for the purposes of graduation rate calculations. Students may graduate in four years ("on time") or continue their high school education to graduate in five or six years.

District Progress Report Graduation Rate (DPR Rate): This is the School District of Philadelphia graduation metric aligned with the School Progress Report (SPR). It includes all students whose last school of valid enrollment was a District traditional K-12 school, Philadelphia Virtual Academy, or Widener Memorial (SDP's special education school). The DPR rate excludes students attributed to alternative education programs. Students of closed schools were included in 2013-14 and 2014-15, excluded from 2015-16 to 2017-18, and will be included going forward from 2018-19.

District Scorecard Graduation Rate (Scorecard Rate): This is the School District of Philadelphia graduation metric that includes all students in the DPR Rate as well as students in alternative education programs and closed schools. It is aligned with the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate in the federal guidance on graduation metrics.

School of last contact: The school at which a student was last enrolled, even if the duration of that enrollment was fewer than 10 days or the student did not ultimately attend the school at all. Before 2018-19, students were attributed to the school of last contact for graduation metric calculations, and they were attributed to SDP if that school was a District school.

School of last valid enrollment: The school at which a student was last enrolled *for at least 10 days*. If a student never attended the school of last contact and was enrolled at that school for fewer than 10 days, the student is not attributed to that school. After 2018-19, students will be attributed to the school of last valid enrollment for graduation metric calculations and will be attributed to the SDP if that school is a District school.