



## 2021-22 Outcomes for First-Time Ninth-Grade Cohort Students Who Did Not Graduate in Four Years

*Many staff members in the Office of Evaluation, Research, and Accountability contributed to collecting, analyzing, and summarizing the information that appears in this brief. Major writing contributions were made by Hannah Barton and Ebru Erdem, Ph.D.*

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### Overview

Each year, the Office of Research and Evaluation publishes a brief on high school graduation rates in the City of Philadelphia, including rates for District, Alternative, and Charter sectors.<sup>1</sup> The annual briefs focus on four-year graduation rates, or “on time” graduation. This brief complements the 2021-22 graduation brief by presenting the 2021-22 outcomes for students at District and Alternative schools who did not graduate from high school in four years.

Graduation rate is the percentage of an entering freshman class (or first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders) who graduate 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time four years earlier.”<sup>2</sup>

On September 30 of a cohort’s Four-Year Graduation Target Year, students in the first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort according to the enrollment records are assigned one of four outcomes based on their exit codes and enrollment exit date: graduate, non-drop departure, continuing, or dropout.<sup>3</sup> When calculating that cohort’s graduation rate, students in continuing and dropout categories remain in the cohort (the denominator) but are not counted as four-year graduates (the numerator). The graduation rate brief gives details about the students with “graduate” as their outcome, and this brief provides basic statistics on the percentages of students who did not graduate or transfer—in particular, those considered to have outcomes of “continuing” or “dropout.”

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<sup>1</sup> See for example <https://www.philasd.org/research/2023/03/22/2021-22-four-year-high-school-graduation-rates-in-philadelphia/> for the 2021-22 graduation target year and <https://www.philasd.org/research/2022/05/25/summary-of-2020-21-high-school-graduation-rates-in-philadelphia/> for the 2020-21 graduation target year.

<sup>2</sup> Students who transfer into SDP after 9<sup>th</sup> grade are assigned to the first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort they would have been in if they had been present in SDP for their first time in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

<sup>3</sup> Non-drop departures (transfers) are excluded from the first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort and any graduation rate calculations.

### **Box 1. Possible Graduation Outcomes after Four Years**

There are four possible outcomes that may be assigned to each student in a 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort at the end of the summer (September 30) following their fourth year of high school.

- 1) **Graduate:** The student received a diploma by the end of the summer after their fourth year of high school.
- 2) **Continuing:** The student is enrolled in a District or Alternative school to continue for a fifth year.
- 3) **Dropout:** The student is not enrolled in any school and has discontinued their high school education.
- 4) **Non-drop departure (transfers):** The student has transferred outside the District and Alternative sectors.

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

## **Key Findings**

### **Continuing Students: Fifth- and Sixth-Year Graduation**

Not all students graduate within four years. In some cases, a later graduation date is expected, such as for students with individualized education plans (IEPs) that have five- or six-year high school education plans and graduation targets. To account for all students who continue high school and graduate later than within four years, the District calculates District- and school-level five- and six-year graduation rates.

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 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, which include all students who graduated in four and five years in addition to those who graduated in six years.

**District and District+Alternative five-year graduation rates gradually increased for the first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohorts of 2010-11 to 2016-17 and slightly declined for the 2017-18 cohort.**

The District five-year graduation rate for the 2017-18 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort is 82.9%, a decrease of 0.9 percentage points from the 2016-17 cohort five-year graduation rate (Table 1). However, the District five-year graduation rate increased from 78.3% for the 2010-11 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort to 83.8% for the 2016-17 cohort. The five-year graduation rate for District+Alternative students follows a similar pattern. While the five-year graduation rate for the 2017-18 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort is 74.9%, a decrease of 0.9 percentage points from the 2016-17 cohort, the District+Alternative five-year graduation rate increased from 69.8% for the 2010-11 cohort to 75.8% for the 2016-17 cohort.

Table 1. Fifth-year graduates by first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort year

First-time 9 <sup>th</sup> -Grade Cohort Year	Five-Year Graduation Year	District Five-Year Graduation Rate	District+Alternative <sup>4</sup> Five-Year Graduation Rate
2010-11	2014-15	78.3%	69.8%
2011-12	2015-16	78.3%	69.8%
2012-13	2016-17	79.4%	70.6%
2013-14	2017-18	81.6%	72.3%
2014-15	2018-19	81.6%	73.0%
2015-16	2019-20	82.8%	75.0%
2016-17	2020-21	83.8%	75.8%
2017-18	2021-22	82.9%	74.9%

**Source:** Qlik Graduation and College Enrollment App; Graduation Overview page retrieved on March 3, 2023

**How to read this table:** This table shows the percentage of students who graduated by September 30 following the end of their fifth school year after their 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort year, which is the school year shown in the Five-Year Graduation Year column for each first-time 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort year, for all District schools and all District+Alternative schools. This percentage also includes students who graduated within four years.

<sup>4</sup> District+Alternative refers to the combined student cohorts of District schools and Alternative schools.

**District and District+Alternative six-year graduation rates consistently increased by small increments for the first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohorts after the 2011-12 cohort.**

The District six-year graduation rate for the 2016-17 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort is 84.1%, an increase of 4.6 percentage points since the 2011-12 cohort year (Table 2). The District+Alternative six-year graduation rate for the 2016-17 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort is 77.1%, an increase of 6.1 percentage points since the 2011-12 cohort year.

Table 2. Sixth-year graduates by first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort year

First-time 9 <sup>th</sup> -Grade Cohort Year	Six-Year Graduation Year	District Six-Year Graduation Rate	District+Alternative Six-Year Graduation Rate
2010-11	2015-16	79.6%	71.2%
2011-12	2016-17	79.5%	71.0%
2012-13	2017-18	80.4%	72.4%
2013-14	2018-19	83.0%	73.9%
2014-15	2019-20	83.3%	75.3%
2015-16	2020-21	83.9%	75.9%
2016-17	2021-22	84.1%	77.1%

**Source:** Qlik Graduation and College Enrollment App; Graduation Overview page retrieved on March 3, 2023

**How to read this table:** This table shows the percentage of students who graduated by September 30 following the end of their sixth school year after their 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort year, which is the school year shown in the Six-Year Graduation Year column for each first-time 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort year, for all District schools and all District+Alternative schools. This percentage also includes students who graduated in four and five years.

**Students Who Dropped Out during High School**

Students who were part of the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort but were not either graduates or continuing at the end of four years, and are no longer enrolled in a high school, are considered dropouts. This does not include non-drop departures, students who transferred out of the District, including alternative schools, or students who died while enrolled. If a student is enrolled in, but does not attend a single day of school, and is not enrolled in another District school (inclusive of alternative schools), or recorded as a transfer by September 30 of that school year, they are considered a dropout. If a special education student reaches maximum age and will be withdrawn from school without a diploma or Notice of Recommended Educational Placement, they are reported as a dropout.

**District dropout rates consistently decreased for the first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohorts of 2011-12 to 2017-18 and increased by 2.9 percentage points for the 2018-19 cohort.**

The dropout rate for District students in the 2018-19 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort is 15.7%, which is 2.9 percentage points higher than the 2017-18 cohort (Table 3). The dropout rate for District students has decreased by 4.3 percentage points since the 2010-11 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort. The dropout rate for District+Alternative students in the 2018-19 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort is 18%, which is 3.9 percentage points higher than the 2017-18 cohort. The dropout rate for District+Alternative students has decreased by 7.5 percentage points since the 2010-11 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort.

Table 3. Dropouts by first-time 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort year

First-time 9 <sup>th</sup> -Grade Cohort Year	Four-Year Graduation Year	District Four-Year Dropout Rate	District+Alternative Four-Year Dropout Rate
2010-11	2013-14	20.0%	25.5%
2011-12	2014-15	20.2%	26.4%
2012-13	2015-16	19.3%	24.5%
2013-14	2016-17	16.4%	21.6%
2014-15	2017-18	16.1%	22.1%
2015-16	2018-19	16.5%	21.3%
2016-17	2019-20	13.5%	16.3%
2017-18	2020-21	12.8%	14.1%
2018-19	2021-22	15.7%	18.0%

**Source:** Qlik Graduation and College Enrollment App; Graduation Overview page retrieved on March 3, 2023

**How to read this table:** This table shows the percentage of students who dropped out of high school by September 30 of the fourth year after their 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort year, for all District schools and all District+Alternative schools.

## Conclusions

Five-year graduation rates for District and District+Alternative schools both increased by about 6 percentage points from the 2010-11 to 2016-17 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort, but decreased by about 1 percentage point from the 2016-17 to 2017-18 cohort. Six-year graduation rates for District and District+Alternative schools have both increased every year since the 2011-12 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort. Dropout rates decreased in most years from the 2010-11 to 2017-18 9<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort, and then increased for the 2018-19 cohort, with a dropout rate 2.9 percentage points higher than the 2017-18 cohort in District schools, and 3.9 percentage points higher in District+Alternative schools.