



# State of Arizona Department of Education Graduation, Dropout & Persistence Rate Technical Manual

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## Introduction

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) computes the four-, five-, six-, and seven-year graduation rate for every public high school in the state. The purpose of the graduation rate is to measure the success of Arizona high school students in earning a high school diploma. The graduation rate measures how long it takes students to graduate from the time they enter grade 9 and aggregates the percentages each year for up to seven years. Graduation rates are used in both Arizona's A-F Letter Grade Accountability System and required federal reporting. The results are reported at the subgroup, school, local education agency (LEA), and state levels.

The method the Arizona Department of Education uses to calculate graduation rates conforms to the 2008 non-regulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education and to the National Governors Association Compact on State High School Graduation Data. The source of information for the calculation is the state's longitudinal data system, the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). The ADE began using SAIS with the cohort class of 2005. Prior to 2005, cohort information was submitted in the aggregate form by LEAs to the ADE. This document describes the graduation rate calculations.



## Cohort Assignment & Membership

Membership in a cohort class is established at the time of the student's first enrollment in a high school grade in Arizona. Cohorts are assigned by the typical four year expectation for graduation. The student's membership with the cohort class remains the same, regardless of transfers between schools, credits earned, time spent out of Arizona, time spent out of school, or the time necessary for the student to complete requirements for graduation. Student cohort membership does not change once the student enters any high school in Arizona.

For example, a student is considered a member of the 2012 cohort if:

The student enrolled in an Arizona public school in Grade 9 or Ungraded Secondary (US) for the first time in the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

The student enrolled in an Arizona public school in Grade 10 in the 2009-2010 fiscal year and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade.

The student enrolled in an Arizona public school in Grade 12 in the 2011-2012 fiscal year and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade.

A student's cohort is NOT established if the student is enrolled in both a high school and non-high school grade in the same fiscal year; however, once the cohort is set for a four-year graduation expectation, the cohort membership follows the student through the Arizona public school system until graduation is recorded.

Students are maintained in the cohort for their last high school of record unless they have transferred to another school granting a high school diploma, have left the public school system to be home schooled, or are deceased. Schools and LEAs are responsible for students in the non-graduate category even if the students were not enrolled in that school for their graduation year. The school and LEA that records the graduation exit code for a student is considered the last school of record regardless of whether it is the fourth or fifth year of high school for the student. If a student is concurrently enrolled in two schools at the time of graduation and the non-graduating school does not "exit" the student from the cohort, the school which did not issue the diploma may also code the student as "G" if they have physical evidence or written confirmation (i.e. copy of diploma) of the student's graduation from another school. This evidence must be maintained with the student cumulative file for audit purposes.

When calculating the graduation rates for subgroups, membership in a subgroup depends on the student's information at the last enrollment of record. For example, if a student is an English Language Learner in grade 9 who exits the program as proficient then graduates from high school, that student will not be included in the graduation rate of the English Language Learner subgroup. If a student is an English Language Learner and drops out



before graduating, then that student will be included in the graduation rate of the English Language Learner subgroup.

## Exit and Year-End Codes

The student status used in the graduation rate calculations is based on the exit codes and year-end codes submitted to SAIS by schools and LEAs. It is the responsibility of schools and LEAs to ensure accuracy of data.

Students within a cohort are assigned to one of three categories based on their last exit or year-end code in SAIS following the end of their cohort year.

1. Students who have graduated (graduates)
2. Students who remain in the cohort but have not graduated (non-graduates)
3. Students who have exited the cohort (exited students)

The exit and year-end codes for each of these categories are detailed in the next section. The codes used are consistent across all graduation rate types.

Each student at the school may only have one exit code per year. The following sections provide detailed descriptions of these codes.

### Graduates

Year-end: G

Withdrawal: W7

Summer Withdrawal: S7

Graduates are students who have met one of the following requirements to receive a high school diploma:

Completed a course of study for high school, **and**  
Passed all three high school AIMS assessments required for graduation (i.e., mathematics, reading, and writing) with or without augmentation.

OR

Completed an Individual Education Plan (IEP), **and**  
Fulfilled the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

OR

Fulfilled all requirements for a Grand Canyon Diploma, **and**



Awarded the Grand Canyon Diploma. Students who are eligible to receive the Grand Canyon Diploma but maintain high school enrollment cannot be coded as Graduated.

Students are considered as graduating on time for the four-year graduation rate if they graduate any time prior to September 1 of the following school year. Students are considered as graduating on time for the five-year rate if they graduate by June 30 of the fiscal year following their cohort year. Participating in graduation ceremonies and other activities for seniors is a matter of LEA policy.



## Non-Graduates

The following are the codes for students who are considered non-graduates.

### Attendees

Year-end: A

Attendees are students who met one of the following requirements:

- Did NOT fulfill a course of study, whether or not they received passing scores on all of the AIMS tests.
- Did NOT complete an Individual Education Plan (IEP), whether or not they fulfilled the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.
- Turned 22 years of age.
- Attended school as a twelfth grade foreign exchange student (used only in grades 11 or 12)

Attendees have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll. If a student has turned 22 years of age and is withdrawn with either a W6 or S6 code (i.e., Aged Out Withdrawn or Aged Out Summer Withdrawn), then they are considered to have exited the cohort.

### Completers

Year-end: C

Withdrawal: W13

Summer withdrawal: S13

Completers are students who met one of the following requirements:

- Fulfilled a course of study but DID NOT receive passing scores on all of the AIMS tests required for graduation, either with or without augmentation.
  - Completed an Individual Education Plan (IEP) but DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.
- OR
- Completed a course of study at a Joint Technical Education District (JTED) before or after graduation.

Completers have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll except in cases such enrollment in a JTED post-graduation.





**Promoted**

Year-end: P

This code is used for students who were promoted to the next grade (used in all grade levels except for grade 12).

**Retained**

Year-end: R

This code is used for students who were retained in the same grade.

**Still Enrolled (Assessment)**

Year-end: SA

Students still enrolled (Assessment) are students who will continue enrollment in the same grade and meet the following requirements:

Fulfilled a course of study but DID NOT receive a passing score on one or more of the AIMS tests required for graduation.

Completed a course of study but DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

OR

Completed an academic year of study but DID NOT meet the minimum requirements required by A.R.S. 15-701 (also known as “Move on When Reading”)

**Still Enrolled (Course of Study)**

Year-end: SC

Students still enrolled (course of study) are students who will be enrolled for an additional year of high school to pursue a diploma and who meet one of the following requirements:

DID NOT fulfill a course of study but DID receive passing scores on all of the AIMS tests required for graduation.

DID NOT complete a course of study but DID fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

**Still Enrolled (Met No Requirements)**

Year-end: SE



Students still enrolled (met no requirements) are students who will be enrolled in school for an additional year of high school to continue to pursue a diploma and who meet one of the following requirements:

DID NOT fulfill a course of study and DID NOT receive a passing score on the AIMS tests required for graduation.

DID NOT complete a course of study and DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

### Illness

Withdrawal: W2

Summer withdrawal: S2

This code is used for students who withdraw due to chronic illness. (Withdrawal may not be required. Please refer to the LEA chronic illness policy.)

### Expelled

Withdrawal: W3

Summer withdrawal: S3

This code is used to withdraw students for expulsion or long term suspension prior to the end of the school year or summer term. The student will not be returning to school.

### Status Unknown

Withdrawal: W4

Summer withdrawal: S4

Status unknown students are those students who have more than ten consecutive days of unexcused absences, and whose status is unknown to the school or LEA. Attempts should be made to find out what has happened to these students so that other more appropriate codes can be applied. Use the S4 code for students who were enrolled at the end of the prior school year but fail to show at any time during the next school year and whose status or location is unknown to the school or LEA. The effective date of withdrawal is the last day of actual attendance.

### Dropouts

Withdrawal: W5

Summer withdrawal: S5

Dropouts are students who leave school with the intention of NOT completing the necessary requirements for a high school diploma.



This code should be used for students who have intentionally dropped out of school, except for the following reasons:

- Chronic illness
- To receive a GED certificate
- Transfer to a juvenile correctional facility

### Detention

Withdrawal: W10

Summer withdrawal: S10

The detention code is used to withdraw students who have been transferred to a state detention or correctional facility where they are receiving educational services.

### GED

Withdrawal: W11

Summer withdrawal: S11

General Educational Development (GED) students are students who withdraw from school expressly for the purpose of obtaining a GED. Students of high school age must withdraw to take the GED test.

### Vocational School

Withdrawal: W12

Summer withdrawal: S12

This code is used for students who leave school to continue studies at a technical or vocational school. This includes ALL schools or educational programs that DO NOT meet Arizona requirements for obtaining a high school diploma.

### Exited Students

The following are codes for students who are considered as exiting the cohort. The school is no longer responsible for graduating students who exit the cohort for one of the following reasons:

#### Transferred

Withdrawal: W1

Summer withdrawal: S1 (out of district) or S99 (within district)

This code is used for students who withdraw from one school to continue their studies in another school, public or private, which grants an accredited high school diploma. This code also applies to students who have been accepted into an early



admission college program as long as they are attending college full-time and are working toward an Arizona high school diploma.

An Official Notice of Pupil Withdrawal Form must be completed for students who withdraw. To confirm that a student transferred out, a school or LEA must have “official written documentation” that a student has transferred to another school or to an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)(1)). Examples of official written documentation include: a request for student records from a receiving public or private high school or an educational program that culminates in a regular high school diploma, or a written record of a response from an official in the receiving school or program acknowledging the student’s enrollment. A conversation with a parent or neighbor, for instance, would not be considered official written documentation of a transfer (verbal notification IS NOT sufficient).

A school or LEA must have written confirmation that a student has emigrated to another country (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)), but need not obtain official written documentation.

### Aged Out

Withdrawal: W6

Summer withdrawal: S6

This code is used to withdraw students who are no longer of school age (22 years).

### Deceased

Withdrawal: W8

Summer withdrawal: S8

This code is used to withdraw students who have died while enrolled in the school. A school or LEA must have written confirmation that a student is deceased to apply this code (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)). A letter from a parent or an obituary is sufficient documentation. Official written documentation of a student’s death, such as a death certificate, is not necessary.

### Home Schooled

Withdrawal: W9

Summer withdrawal: S9

This code is used for students who withdraw to be taught at home. A.R.S. § 15-802(B)(3) allows a student to be taught at home after certain requirements are met. The parent must file an affidavit with the county school superintendent that the child is attending a regularly organized private or home school. Official written documentation is required to apply this code. Documentation may include a letter



of withdrawal or other written confirmation from the parent or guardian, or the affidavit filed with the county school superintendent.

### **Not Affecting Classification**

There are two exit codes for students who transfer within programs (i.e., grades) within their school. Since these codes are to be used in concert with enrollment codes to indicate enrollment into the new program within the school, the following codes are NOT used to determine the classification status of the student:

#### **Transferred Grade**

Withdrawal: WT

This code is used to transfer students to another grade within the school. If a student is promoted or demoted to another grade within the same school, use the WT withdrawal code to withdraw the student from the grade he or she was enrolled in. Please note that this code does not change the student's cohort.

#### **Transferred Register**

Withdrawal: WR

This code is used to transfer students to another register within the same grade and school.



## Accountability

For all accountability purposes, graduation data are lagged and each rate requires a separate end date. However, it is possible to calculate a four and five year rate using the same group of students depending on the as of date. The dates used to calculate each rate are described below:

Rate	Deadline	Example
4-year	8/31/ <b>Cohort</b> Year	8/31/2013
5-year	6/30/ <b>Cohort</b> Year + 1	6/30/2014
6-year	6/30/ <b>Cohort</b> Year + 2	6/30/2015
7-year	6/30/ <b>Cohort</b> Year + 3	6/30/2016

Because four-year graduates may graduate after the fiscal year their cohort year ends, all graduation data are lagged by one year every year. For each fiscal year's accountability determination, the four-year rate would measure the prior fiscal year's cohort graduation; however, the prior fiscal year's cohort can represent both the four and five year rate based on the date of graduation. For instance, Cohort 2012 four year graduates graduated as of August 31, 2012; any students who remain in school after August 31, 2012 and graduate before June 30, 2013 would be considered a five-year graduate. Accountability for each fiscal year and the subsequent cohort rates are described below unless indicated otherwise:

Fiscal (accountability) year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
4-year cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
5-year cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
6-year cohort	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
7-year cohort	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018

## Graduation Rate Calculation

When the graduation rate is calculated, year-end or exit codes are used to place students in the cohort into one of the three categories (graduate, non-graduate, and exited the cohort). Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation.

To compute each graduation rate, the following formula is used:

$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Graduates (G or W7) in the Cohort}}{\text{Number of students in the Cohort}}$$



## Dropout Rate Calculation

Dropouts are defined as students who are enrolled in school at any time during the school year, but are not enrolled at the end of the school year and did not transfer, graduate, or die. When the dropout rate is calculated, year-end or exit codes are used to determine the percentage of students who are no longer enrolled in any Arizona public school prior to exiting as a graduate or completer. Students in grades 7 through 12 are included in the dropout rate calculation.

$$\text{Dropout Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of W3, W4, W5, W11, W12, W13, S3, S4, S5, S11, S12, S13 students}}{\text{Number of students enrolled}}$$

## Code Transaction Descriptions

Code in transaction	Short Description	Long Description
W3	Expelled or long term suspension	Expelled or suspended on a long term basis before scheduled end of school year
W4	Absence or status unknown	Withdrawn before scheduled end of school year for 10 consecutive days of unexcused absence, status or location is unknown to the school or school district.
W5	Dropout	School received verification that student has withdrawn from school before scheduled end of school year; student does not intend to complete requirements for a high school diploma.
W11	GED	Student withdrew before scheduled end of school year expressly for the purpose of obtaining a GED. Students of high school age must withdraw to take the GED test. Verbal notification at the time of withdrawal is sufficient to apply the W11 code.
W12	Vocational school	Student withdrew before scheduled end of school year to continue studies at a technical or vocational school; this includes ALL schools or education programs that DO NOT meet Arizona requirements for obtaining a high school diploma. Verbal notification from a responsible adult is sufficient to apply the W12 code.



W13	Completed (AIMS)	Student has completed course of study requirements for high school or Individual Education Plan but DID NOT receive a passing score on the AIMS test (applies to mid-year completers). Completers have concluded their high school education and are not expected to reenroll.
S3	Summer expulsion	Student will not be returning to school due to expulsion during the summer. (same criteria as W3)
S4	Summer absence or status unknown	Students who are enrolled at the end of the prior school year but fail to show at any time during the next school year and whose status or location is unknown to the school or school district.
S5	Summer dropout	Student dropped out during the summer. (same criteria as W5)
S11	Summer GED	Student withdrew to receive a GED certificate during the summer. (same criteria as W11)
S12	Summer transfer - vocational school	Student withdrew to attend a vocational school during the summer. (same criteria as W12)
S13	Summer completer	Student met course study requirements during the summer but DID NOT receive a passing score on the AIMS test. (same criteria as W13)

Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation.

### Persistence Rate Calculation

An academically persistent student is any student who is eligible to re-enroll at the end of the previous fiscal year and re-enrolls in any Arizona public school by October 1 of the current fiscal year. Students in grades 6 through 12 are included in the persistence rate calculation. Students who are eligible to re-enroll have a qualifying end of year code in the previous fiscal year. The following codes denote students who are eligible to re-enroll.

- Promoted
- Retained
- Attendee
- Still Enrolled (Assessment, Course of Study, Met no requirements)

Students who are withdrawn for any reason or are coded as graduated, aged out, or deceased are not included in the persistence calculation. Students withdrawn due to a change in track become eligible when the appropriate end of year code is used in the subsequent enrollment.





$$\text{Persistence Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of students who re-enroll by Oct. 1 of CY}}{\text{Number of students eligible to re-enroll based on PY}}$$

**Example 1:**

Last year, Student A was promoted at the end of his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year at Middle School X. This year, Student A enrolls in 9<sup>th</sup> grade prior to October 1 at High School Y. Student A is ELIGIBLE to persist and would count in both the numerator and denominator of the equation above.

**Example 2:**

Last year, Student B was still enrolled at the end of his senior year at High School Y. This year, Student B enrolls in 12<sup>th</sup> grade again prior to October 1 at High School Y. Student B is ELIGIBLE to persist and would count in both the numerator and denominator of the equation above.

**Example 3:**

Last year, Student C was coded as a dropout at the end of his freshman year at High School Y. This year, Student C enrolls in 10<sup>th</sup> grade prior to October 1 at High School Z. Student C is NOT ELIGIBLE to persist and was counted in the dropout rate calculation for High School Y. In order to avoid double penalizing High School Y, the student would be excluded from the numerator and denominator of the persistence equation above for High School Y.

Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation.

