

Jan. 12, 2021

For more information, contact: CDE Communications Division, 720-668-6434

[Spanish version can be downloaded here](#)

News Release

State's four-year graduation rate increases to 81.9%

Statewide dropout rate falls to record low levels

DENVER – A total of 81.9% of the Class of 2020 graduated last spring - the highest graduation rate in a decade despite the global pandemic that disrupted education in the last two months of the 2019-20 school year, according to data released today by the Colorado Department of Education.

The Class of 2020 had 981 more graduates than the Class of 2019 – a 0.8 percentage point increase. Colorado's high school graduation rate has improved by 9.5 percentage points since 2010, when the state changed how the rate was reported.

Extended year rates for students taking five, six and seven years to graduate also have steadily improved.

“We know how tough the spring was for our seniors, with many not able to attend their proms or graduation ceremonies due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Colorado Education Commissioner Katy Anthes. “But we are so proud of the students, their parents and the teachers who helped them finish the year strong. History will look back at this generation of children and marvel at their perseverance and dedication. A rising graduation rate and a falling dropout rate are wonderful accomplishments, especially during these tough times.”

State dropout rate improves to an all-time low

The state's 2019-20 overall dropout rate is 1.8%, an improvement of 0.2 percentage points from the previous year. In total, the state saw 8,561 students in grades seven through 12 drop out last year -- 716 fewer students from the previous year. A total of 83.1% of districts reported dropout rates at or below the state's 1.8% rate. And 40.4% of districts reported their dropout rates in 2019-20 were lower than their 2018-19 rates.

Graduation rates by ethnicity and race

More students of color are graduating within four years and the gaps in graduation rates between White students and students of color are closing. The four-year graduation rate for students of color for 2019-20 was 77.1%, an increase of 1.6 percentage points from the previous year. The table below breaks down the four-year graduation and dropout rates by race/ethnicity for the Class of 2020.

Race/Ethnicity	Graduation Rate	Graduates	% point change from 2019	Dropout Rate
American Indian	66.6%	316	1.7	4.0%
Asian	91.2%	2,145	1.3	0.7%
Black	76.6%	2,439	2.2	2.8%
Hispanic	75.4%	17,195	1.4	2.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	72.8%	126	-3.2	3.9%
Two or More Races	82.3%	2,076	1.7	1.6%
White	86.0%	30,923	0.1	1.1%

Graduation and dropout rates by gender

The statewide, four-year graduation rate for females was 85.4% (27,952 graduates), a 0.6 percentage point increase from the previous year. The male graduation rate was 78.5% (27,268 graduates), a 0.9 percentage point increase from 2019. The overall dropout rate for males was 2.1% and the female rate was 1.5%.

Graduation rate by Instructional Program Service Type

The state also reports graduation and dropout rates by different programs and services that students may **receive**. A summary of the 2020 graduation and dropout rates for these programs is reported in the table below.

Instructional Program Service Type	Graduation Rate	Graduates	% change from 2019	Dropout Rate
Students with Disabilities	61.8%	4,417	2.6	2.1%
Limited English Proficient*	70.2%	6,447	1.6	3.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	72.3%	22,723	1.4	2.6%
Migrant	71.7%	253	2.9	3.1%
Title 1	65.4%	6,949	4.8	3.4%
Homeless	56.7%	1,812	1.2	4.9%
Gifted and Talented	94.2%	7,584	0.2	0.4%

* A student who comprehends, speaks, reads, or writes some English, but whose predominant comprehension or speech is in a language other than English also includes students who are non-English proficient.

Completion rate

The completion rate combines all graduates with those who receive a certificate, a designation of high school completion, or a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED). The Class of 2020 had a four-year completion rate of 83.4% or 56,251 students. This is a 0.5 percentage point increase from the previous year.

Multiple pathways

Work-based learning, apprenticeships, internships and concurrent enrollment classes are examples of ways that Colorado high school students can earn college credit or obtain a postsecondary credential while still in high school. These programs bridge the gap between education and career, increase the relevancy of high school and open a wide variety of options after high school, including meaningful careers and college. Nearly all of Colorado's school districts offered more than one pathway option in the 2019-20 school year with 171 of the state's 178 school districts offering three or more pathways.

As part of their graduation requirements, school districts can adopt these pathways and others as options for students to demonstrate what they know or can do. Some districts used the state's new [graduation guidelines](#) for students to demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness for students in the Class of 2020.

Giving students more time

Colorado promotes keeping students in high school who need more time to meet graduation requirements or who are participating in their high school's postsecondary program to earn college credit. In Colorado, students may remain enrolled beyond their fourth year of high school to graduate in five, six or seven years after entering ninth grade.

- A total of 9.4% (6,341 students) of students in the Class of 2020 remain enrolled and could graduate or complete in five, six or seven years from entering ninth grade.
- For the Class of 2019, the five-year state graduation rate was 85.1%, 4.0 percentage points higher than the Class of 2019's four-year rate of 81.1%, suggesting that many students benefit from the additional time they are given to meet their goals for after high school. The five-year completion rate was 87.3%.
- For the Class of 2018, the six-year state graduation rate was 86.2% (compared to a four-year rate of 80.7%). The six-year completion rate was 88.8%.

The global pandemic, which caused disruption in the latter part of the 2019-20 school year, did not have much impact on graduation and dropout rates for that year. It is anticipated the pandemic will impact the rates for the 2020-21 school year, but the extent will not be known until the data are collected after the school year.

Tools to understand the numbers

CDE has created interactive tools and maps to better illustrate how the graduation and dropout rates look across the state.

[Graduation statistics are available on this webpage.](#)

[Dropout statistics are available on this webpage.](#)

Statewide four-year graduation rates

Class of 2020
81.9%, 55,220 graduates

Class of 2019
81.1%, 54,239 graduates

Class of 2018
80.7%, 53,240 graduates

Class of 2017
79.0%, 50,700 graduates

Statewide five-year graduation rates

Class of 2019
85.1%, 56,805 graduates

Class of 2018
84.9%, 55,800 graduates

Class of 2017
84.2%, 53,834 graduates

Statewide six-year graduation rates

Class of 2018
86.2%, 56,699 graduates

Class of 2017
85.7%, 54,721 graduates

Statewide seven-year graduation rates

Class of 2017
86.4%, 55,163 graduates