



"Where Kids Come First:  
Each and Everyone"

# DESE Change In Graduation Calculation Formula : December Report Card Will Reflect Change

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The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) informed all Missouri districts that the state will begin utilizing a new formula to calculate graduation rates. This new formula will be reflected in district graduation rates when the next District Report Card is published. In October of 2008, a regulation by the U.S. Department of Education set forth a requirement that all states and local educational agencies begin calculating a more rigorous four-year rate beginning with 2010-11 data.

Historically, states have calculated graduation rates using varying methods, creating inconsistent data from state to state. The primary difference in the new calculation of the graduation rate is defining the cohort or group of students. The four-year high school graduation rate defines the cohort when the student first becomes a freshman, and the rate is calculated using the number of students who graduate within four years. The previous graduation rate included students who took four or more years to graduate. Therefore, federal and state education departments anticipate that the more rigorous method will result in lower reported graduation rates. However, this does not mean more students are dropping out of school. It is simply a different way to calculate the existing graduation rate to create a uniform standard nationwide.

Grandview C-4 has defined the student's cohort upon graduation, which allows a student to graduate in more than four years. Although this new calculation reflects a new direction in the way districts look at graduation rates, it does offer a uniform method to consistently look at the data across all districts and in making a reliable comparison among all states. The graduation of our students remains our top priority. Our goal is for every student to earn a diploma, and that will not change.

## What is the change?

- The old graduation rate defines the student's cohort upon graduation, which allows a student to graduate in more than four years.
- **Old formula:** the numerator is the number of students that graduate during a given year, the denominator is the number of students that graduate and the number of students that dropped out during that cohort
- The new graduation rate defines the student's cohort when the student first becomes a freshman and the rate is calculated using the number of students that graduate within four years, adjusting for transfer ins and outs.
- **New formula:** the numerator is the number of students that graduate in four years, the denominator is the number of students that entered during that freshman year.

## What does this mean to Grandview C-4?

- The new calculation formula will impact the District's reported graduation rate. Utilizing the previous calculation formula our district's graduation rate was reported as 86.2%. Utilizing the new formula our graduation rate will be 66.9%.
- Neighboring districts are also anticipating a significant drop in their graduate rate with this new calculation.
  - ✓ Ruskin graduation rate was 99.5% – they are anticipating a rate of 69.2%
  - ✓ Center graduation rate was 87.5% – they are anticipating a rate of 78.2%
  - ✓ Grandview graduation rate was 86.2% – we are anticipating a rate of 66.9%
- The impact of the new calculation will have an impact on all districts throughout the state, thus impacting the state wide graduation rate. Both federal and state education leaders anticipate that the more rigorous method will result in lower reported graduation rates, yet the rates will reflect a uniform method for reliable comparison among states.

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## Questions and Answers:

**Q: How will the new four year rate be reported?**

A: States and Districts will be required to report the "new" graduation rate beginning with the 2010-2011 District Report Card, which will be published December 1, 2011.

**Q: How is a cohort defined?**

A: Cohort is defined using MOSIS June Enrollment and Attendance file, the first time a student is identified as a freshman.

**Q: What if a student transfers into the district after three years, but is still a sophomore?**

A: A student that is held back will not count as a cohort member, unless they earn enough credits to graduate within the 4 years from initially being identified as a freshman.

**Q: Can a senior make up credits during summer school and still count toward the graduation rate?**

A: Yes, they will be reported as a graduate with their cohort.

**Q: Can a student graduate early?**

A: Yes, they will be reported as a graduate with their cohort.

**Q: What about a drop outs and GED students?**

A: Students that drop out or receive a GED are not considered a high school graduate and will not be counted. Missouri Options students will only count toward the graduation rate if they actually graduate within the four years.

**Q: Are students that do not graduate within the four years automatically considered a drop out?**

A: No, but they are counted in the graduation calculation during their four year cohort.

**Q: What if a student is retained in elementary or middle school – will that impact their cohort?**

A: No, cohorts are determined when the student enters the freshman year.

**Q: What if a student is on an IEP and takes longer than four years to graduate?**

A: The IEP team should decide early in the student's high school career how and when the student will graduate. If the student graduates after his/her cohort, they will not be considered a four-year graduate which will reduce the four-year graduation rate.

**Q: How is this information being shared with parents, staff and community members?**

A: The district plan for sharing this information includes the following:

- ✓ Initial information update to the district Board of Education Members
- ✓ District Public Relations posting notice and information on key district communication tools (website, e-news, social media outlets and School Report)
- ✓ District Public Relations providing notification to media and providing answers to remaining questions
- ✓ District staff have been participating (and will continue to) participate in webinars to increase their knowledge and understanding of the new formula

## Important Dates:

- November 21: DESE public release of the new four-year high school rate calculations.
- December 1: District Report Cards available online at [www.dese.mo.gov](http://www.dese.mo.gov)