

Rockin' With Region 4

VIRGINIA'S ON-TIME GRADUATION RATE FOR THE CLASS OF 2008

Lynn Wiley, Ph.D.

VDOE T/TAC at George Mason University



The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has recently reported that 81.3 percent of students in the class of 2008 graduated with a diploma four years after entering public high school. Graduation rates for the commonwealth, local educational agencies, and schools are now

based on a new longitudinal student data system and use of the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate. The rate is calculated using a formula recommended by the 2005 National Governors Association (NGA) Task Force on State High School Graduation Data, endorsed by the nation's governors, and adopted by Virginia's General Assembly and the Department of Education.

Beginning with the data for the class of 2008, the VDOE will report on-time graduation rates for the state, division, and schools, to include disaggregated data by student groups. The new system of reporting is able to account for student mobility, changes in student enrollment, policy, and instructional practices. It is also able to allow some students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency more than the standard four years to earn a diploma "on-time."

The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{On-time Graduates in Year X}}{[(\# \text{ of } 1^{\text{st}} \text{ time entering } 9^{\text{th}} \text{ graders in Year X-4}) + (\text{Transfers In}) - (\text{Transfers Out \& Deceased})]}$$

Calculating the rate involves much more than simply plugging numbers into the formula. For more details, definitions, and descriptions, access the web site for the Virginia Department of Education, Division of Policy and Communication at: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/src/ontime_grad_rate.shtml.

A recent article in The Washington Post (October 9, 2008) on graduation rates, reports that Virginia is the first local jurisdiction to track the progress of individual students over the traditional four-year high school period. They also reported that several Northern Virginia school systems beat the statewide rate of 81.3 percent. Those systems with graduation rates higher than the state rate, for students who were freshmen in 2004, are Falls Church City (98%), Loudoun County (93%), Fairfax County (91%), Manassas Park City (85%), Prince William County (83%), and Arlington County (82%).

In the VDOE's release statement on the class of 2008, they reported that of the 96,979 students in the cohort, 81.3 percent earned a Board of Education-approved diploma. Of these on-time graduates, 53.2 percent earned an Advanced Studies Diploma, 42.1 percent earned a Standard Diploma, and 16 students earned a General Achievement Diploma (for overage students).

Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Patricia Wright, cautions against misinterpreting the data. She explains that, "The dropout rate is not the inverse of the graduation rate." Thousands of students who entered the ninth grade in 2004 remain in school and are working to complete their diploma requirements. Other students received a GED or a locally awarded certificate of completion.

As we continue to focus on school improvement and student outcomes data, an accurate picture of the graduation rate is critical to measuring the academic achievement of all students who enter our school systems. As Dr. Wright states, "Effective programs to improve outcomes for students are driven by accurate data. With the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate, we are replacing estimates with hard information that will shape local and statewide strategies to increase the likelihood that young people graduate with a diploma."

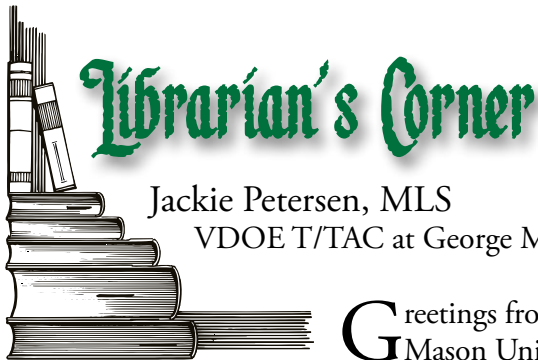
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Virginia Department of Education Info. Calculating Virginia's On-Time Graduation Rate. Accessed from: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/src/ontime_grad_rate/otgr_calculating.pdf

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Jackie Petersen, MLS
VDOE T/TAC at George Mason University

Greetings from the George Mason University Kellar Library! This issue of our

newsletter is devoted to Transition. An extensive selection of materials is available to you on this topic from the T/TAC collection. Listed below are just a few of the most recently published items that might be helpful. You will find even more by checking our library catalog at <http://129.174.57.212/InmagicGenie/opac.aspx>.

If you are on campus, stop by to browse the collection. The library is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Even though I love to see you in person, I know that everyone cannot fit a library visit into their busy schedule. The library can mail items to your home or school address if you prefer. If you need help finding something, please contact me at jpetersk@gmu.edu or 703.993.3672.

100 Frequently Asked Questions About The Special Education Process / Pierangelo, Roger; Giuliani, George.: CORWIN PRESS, 2007. (Print)

ALIGNING TRANSITION AND STANDARDS-BASED EDUCATION: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES / KOCHHAR-BRYANT, CAROL A.; BASSETT, DIANE S.: COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN, 2002. (Print)

Assess For Success: A Practitioner's Handbook On Transition Assessment / Sitlington, Patricia; Neubert, Debra; Begun, Wynne.: CORWIN PRESS, 2007. (Print)

CASSILLY: HOW I GOT TO COLLEGE / CENTER ON DISABILITY,,: CENTER ON DISABILITY STUDIES, 2003. (Video)

CCBD Mini-Library Series: CRITICAL ISSUES FACING YOUTHS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD / MORNINGSTAR, MARY E.; BENITEX, DEBRA.: COUNCIL FOR CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS, 2004. (Print)

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COLLEGE? NOW WHAT? TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE FOR DEAF STUDENTS / CENTER FOR THE DEAF & HARD, CENTER FOR THE DEAF.: CENTER FOR THE DEAF & HARD OF HEARING, 2003. (Video)

Creating A Transition Program For Teens / Burgstahler, Sheryl; Lopez, Sara; Jirikowic, Tracy.: University of Washington, 2007. (Print)

GOING TO COLLEGE: EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES / GETZEL, ELIZABETH E.; WEHMAN, PAUL.: BROOKES PUBLISHING, 2005. (Print)

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Social Skills At Work / Attainment Company.: Attainment Company, Inc., 2005. (Software)

TRANSITION HANDBOOK, THE: STRATEGIES HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS USE THAT WORK! / HUGHES, CAROLYN; CARTER, ERIK W.: PAUL H. BROOKES PUBLISHING, 2000. (Print)



Clarifying the Meaning of Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

If you have worked with students with disabilities, particularly those students in middle and high school, you have heard “transition” services being discussed. Are you clear on exactly what is meant by the term “transition” and what services are offered to students related to transition?

In general, transition refers to the process of change. We have many transitions throughout our day, as we move from one task to another. In the morning, many of us transition from the responsibilities of parenting to the responsibilities we have in our role in the workplace. We have many transitions throughout our life, as well. We may transition to a new job, welcome a new member to our family, move to a new area, or experience any number of life events that equate to a change in how we function. For students with disabilities, transition services support them through specific life-changing events by helping them develop the skills and plans necessary to be successful during and after the event.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is an important source of information on transition services. The specific link to this area of the site is: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/sped/transition/VITC>. The VDOE recognizes transition services as a coordinated set of activities for youth with disabilities that promotes movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. Such services are based on individual student needs, preferences, and interests. It includes instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment skills, other post-school living objectives, and acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Beginning at age 14, each student with a disability in Virginia must have a statement in their IEP of transition service needs that relate to the student’s course of study. Beginning at age 16, each student’s IEP must

have a statement of transition services that includes, if appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages, as determined by the IEP team. The transition service statement should describe how the student will develop the skills and plans to make use of important resources prior to graduation from high school. Services and supports might include assessments that evaluate vocational interests, functional behavior, learning styles, personal interests and preferences, and needs such as assistive technology. Services and supports might also include specialized instruction or training, community-based work experience, and on-the-job training.

When planning for a student’s transition services, the following questions must be considered:

- What are the student’s needs, interests, and preferences?
- What are the student’s hopes, goals, and dreams for the future, particularly in terms of their independence after leaving high school? What activities and services are needed to prepare the student to reach those goals?
- Who should be involved in the IEP transition planning?
- When should adult services and agencies be included in IEP transition planning?
- Are specialized supports needed to achieve desired results?

Learn more about transition services in Virginia by logging onto the VDOE web site, <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/sped/transition/VITC>, talking with the special educator with whom you work, and/or using your school division parent resource center, if you have one. There are also a number of local and state agencies and organizations that are involved in transition services for students with disabilities. You can link to them through the VDOE web site.