



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
EDUCATION

## Press Release

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For immediate release

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### Massachusetts' Four-Year Graduation Rate Improves for 11<sup>th</sup> Consecutive Year

MALDEN — The Baker-Polito Administration announced today that the state's four-year graduation rate improved for the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, with 88.3 percent of students who entered as ninth graders in the 2013-14 school year – or who transferred into that same cohort at any time during high school – graduating within four years. In addition to the overall improvement in the graduation rate, the graduation rate for all major ethnic and racial groups and for urban districts continues to grow. The state's annual dropout rate fell to 1.8 percent in 2016-17, the lowest overall rate in more than three decades.

“Delivering a quality education to Massachusetts students and equipping them with the necessary skills for success after high school are top priorities for our administration,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “We are pleased to see students from across the Commonwealth perform at such

a high level, leading to the highest four-year graduation rates we have ever seen.”

“These high graduation rates are a testament to the strength and support Massachusetts public schools, teachers and families in each of our 351 cities and towns provide to our students,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “We look forward to continuing our work to build upon this success and give families in all districts the strongest possible schools for their children.”

“Among the graduation rates that we watch closely are those for minority students and low-income students, so it is encouraging to see graduation rates for those students continue to rise year after year,” Education Secretary James Peyser said. “While Massachusetts students are among the strongest in the nation, we still need to work on closing achievement gaps.”

"I hope teachers and students are proud of the personal accomplishments that are behind each of the numbers we release today," Acting Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeff Wulfson said. "We will continue to support districts in this work and recognize that challenges remain, especially in addressing the needs of English learners."

According to the data released this year, 88.3 percent of the 73,249 students in the 2017 cohort graduated within four years, an increase of 0.8 percentage points from the 2016 cohort and an increase of 8.4 percentage points from the 2006 cohort, when ESE first began calculating the cohort graduation rate. A cohort is comprised of students who entered high school as ninth graders or who transferred into the same cohort at any time during high school.

The dropout reduction – from the high point of 3.8 percent in 2006-7 to 1.8 percent in 2016-17 – resulted in less than half as many students dropping out in 2016-17, when 5,172 students dropped out, than in 2006-7, when 11,436 students dropped out. Approximately 6,260 fewer students dropped out in 2016-17 than in 2006-7.

All major ethnic and racial subgroups improved their four-year graduation rates compared to the previous year. The largest gains among major racial and ethnic subgroups were made by Hispanic students: up 1.7 percentage points from 72.7 to 74.4 percent, Asian students: up 1.4 percentage points from 92.7 to 94.1 percent, and black students: up 1.1 percentage points from 78.9 to 80.0 percent.

Improvements for other major subgroups were: economically disadvantaged students overall: up 0.6 percentage points from 78.4 to 79.0 percent, male students: up 0.9 percentage points from 85.0 to 85.9 percent, female students: up 0.5 percentage points from 90.2 to 90.7 percent, and white students: up 0.7 percent from 91.9 to 92.6 percent.

English language learners were the only major subgroup to see a decrease in their graduation rate, dropping 0.7 percentage points from 64.1 to 63.4 percent.

**Over the past five years (between 2011-12 and 2016-17), five urban school districts have decreased their number of dropouts by over 50 percent:**

Quincy, which had 35 fewer students drop out in 2016-17 than in 2011-12, a 69 percent decrease;

Taunton, which had 54 fewer students drop out in 2016-17 than in 2011-12, a 67 percent decrease;

Lowell, which had 79 fewer students drop out in 2016-17 than in 2011-12, a 66 percent decrease;

**Haverhill, which had 62 fewer students drop out in 2016-17 than in 2011-12, a 60 percent decrease.**

New Bedford, which had 98 fewer students drop out in 2016-17 than in 2011-12, a 57 percent decrease.

In addition, several urban school districts had annual dropout rates below the statewide dropout rate of 1.8 percent. They are: Quincy at 0.6 percent, Lowell at 1.2 percent, Cambridge at 1.3 percent and, at 1.4 percent, both Leominster and Taunton.

In addition, Quincy (92.7 percent), Cambridge (89.7 percent), Leominster and Taunton (both 88.7 percent) had four-year graduation rates above the statewide rate.