

PRESS RELEASE

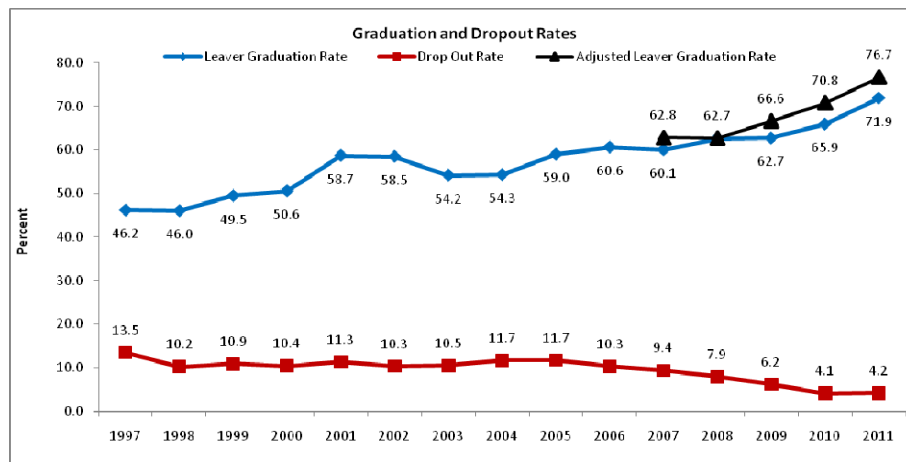
For Immediate Release: Friday, September 30, 2011

City Schools Graduation Rate Continues to Climb

*Largest year-to-year increase in a decade in leaver rate and 20 percent increase over four years;
87 percent of 2011 cohort graduated on time or remains in school after four years;
Historically low dropout rate and African American male gains drive overall progress*

(Baltimore, MD)—In its release of 2010-11 high school performance data for the state and its school districts today, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) issued two graduation measures: its longstanding “leaver” rate and a new “cohort” rate, the official means of measuring graduation in Maryland, starting this year. On both counts, Baltimore City Public Schools showed significant increases over 2009-10.

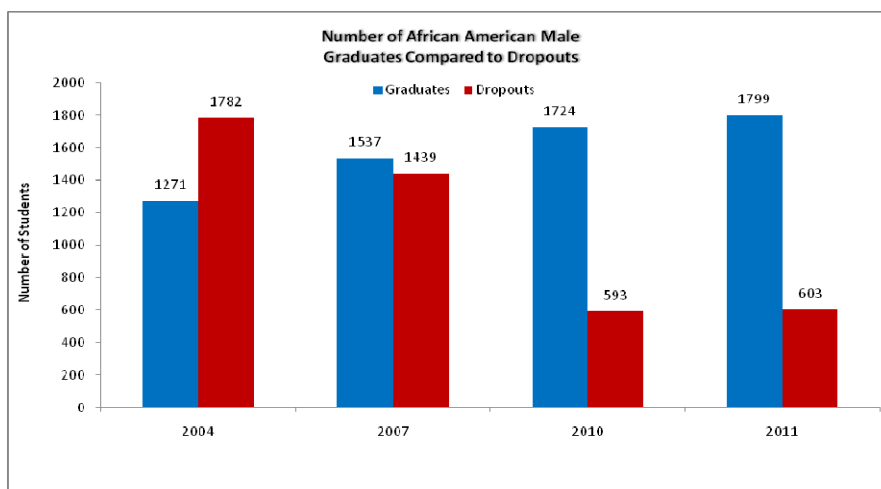
In 2010-11, City Schools awarded 4,595 diplomas, up from 4,421 in 2009-10 and 4,118 in 2006-07. This translates into solid, across-the-board graduation gains. City Schools’ leaver rate, the one the state has used since it first started tracking graduation in 1997, is 71.9 percent, up from 65.9 percent in 2009-10 and 60.1 percent in 2006-07—the biggest one-year increase in a decade for the district, and a 20-percent jump over four years.



While the new cohort calculation generates a lower graduation rate than the leaver rate, it gives—for the first time—a complete picture of an entire class of students who enter high school in a given year. And the 2010-11 cohort data show that of the City Schools students who entered 9th grade in fall 2007, 87 percent either graduated after four years or are still in school pursuing a diploma.

“The steadily increasing Baltimore City Public Schools graduation rate shows that consistent hard work at every level is paying off—both for the hundreds more students with diplomas as well as where they live,” said Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia. “By any measure of calculating graduation rates, the trend line in Baltimore is clearly positive, and growing numbers of young people have much brighter futures.”

City Schools’ 2010-11 graduation results represent a milestone for the district, driven by its ability to more than halve its overall dropout rate in the last four years—from 9.4 percent in 2006-07 to 4.2 percent in 2010-11—and the steady progress of its African American male students. Four years ago, the number of African American males who graduated high school nearly equaled the number of those who dropped out—1,537 graduated and 1,439 dropped out. In 2010-11, three times as many African American males graduated as dropped out of school: 1,799 compared to 603.



“The large jump in Baltimore’s graduation rate shows that systematic, focused efforts are paying off. To have three times as many African American males graduating as dropping out, when only a short while ago it was 50/50, indicates a huge step forward and a rate of growth seldom seen in high poverty urban school districts,” said Robert Balfanz, research scientist for the Johns Hopkins University’s Talent Development High Schools.

“This year’s high school results affirm—and continue—the momentum of the last four years,” said Neil E. Duke, chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. “City Schools’ graduation rate is the plainest measure of how we as a district are doing. The fact that more of our students are graduating every year says loud and clear that we are on the right path. I thank the entire City Schools community for its strong commitment to our students, and I congratulate our students for their very hard work.”

“Our high school students continue to show strong progress, with more students graduating and fewer dropping out each year. The fact that 87 percent of students in the 2010-11 cohort either graduated on time after four years or are still hard at work earning their diploma says that a large majority of our kids are on paths to success,” said City Schools CEO Andrés A. Alonso. “But while our students celebrate this news—and they should—we, the adults, must stay hard at work to make sure that those who are not graduating get there, and that we continue to stress that, for our kids, dropping out is not an option.”

As part of a national movement towards a uniform cohort graduation rate, Maryland this year transitions to a new way of measuring graduation. For 2010-11, MSDE is using the cohort rate as its official graduation measure, but it is also issuing its leaver rate, because it allows the state and its districts to show graduation trends over time.

“Baltimore schools, and high schools throughout Maryland, continue to make important progress in strengthening graduation rates,” said Interim State Superintendent of Schools Bernard Sadusky. “A high school diploma is an important first step for all students. We want each graduate to leave our schools with confidence in their future.”

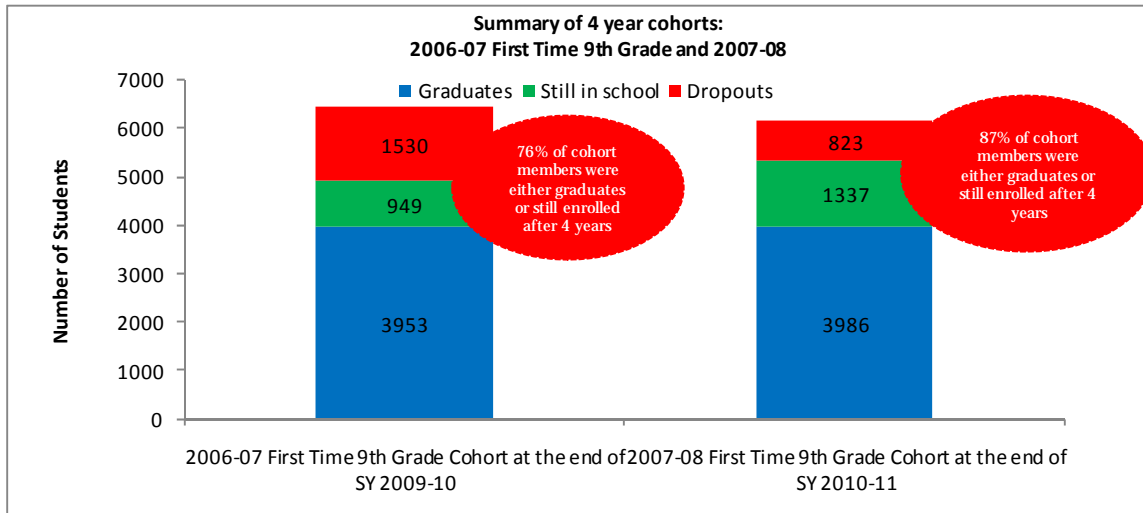
2011 Leaver Rate

The leaver rate reflects the percentage of students who received a Maryland high school diploma during the reported school year, and counts all graduates instead of a particular group of students, or cohort. For 2010-11, City Schools’ leaver graduation rate is 71.9 percent, up from 65.9 percent in 2009-10 and 60.1 percent in 2006-07, a four-year increase of 19.6 percent. When those students who dropped out of school and returned and graduated are factored in, the district’s adjusted leaver rate for 2010-11 is 76.7 percent. Because the official leaver rate does not account for these students who leave and come back, MSDE has recognized this “unduplicated” leaver rate for City Schools in the past, stating that it more accurately reflects the achievements of students, and City Schools’ efforts to recapture students who may have left school. The district’s 2010-11 adjusted rate is up from 70.8 percent in 2009-10 and 62.8 percent in 2006-07, a four-year increase of 22 percent.

2010 and 2011 Cohort Rates

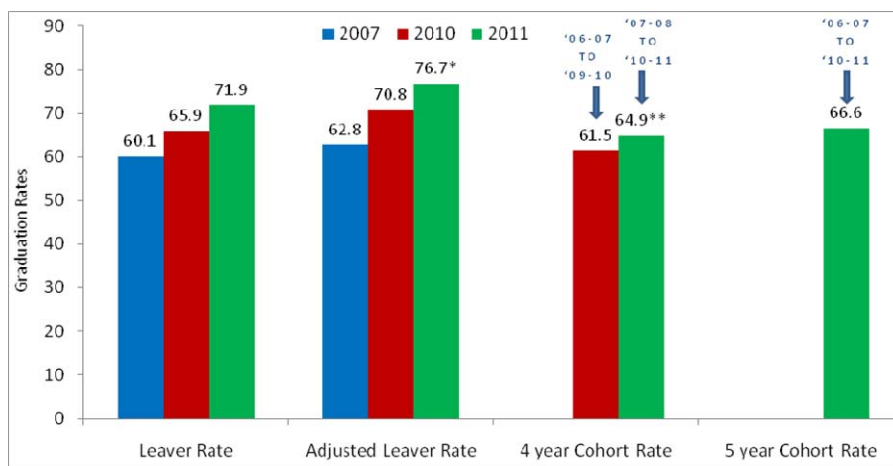
The cohort rate reflects the number of students who entered high school in a given year—adjusted for those who transfer in and out of the district—and graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma. The state also reports a five-year cohort rate, reflecting the number of students in the cohort who graduate within five years.

Under the new, cohort formula, City Schools’ four-year graduation rate for 2009-10 was 61.5 percent, and its five-year cohort graduation rate was 66.6 percent. For 2010-11, the district’s unofficial, four-year cohort rate is 64.9 percent. This means that of the 6,146 City Schools students who entered 9th grade in fall 2007, 3,986 (or 64.9 percent) graduated after four years, 1,337 remain in school and 823 dropped out. In short, 87 percent of students in the cohort that entered high school in 2007 graduated on time or are still pursuing their diploma, up from 76 percent for the cohort that entered high school in 2006.



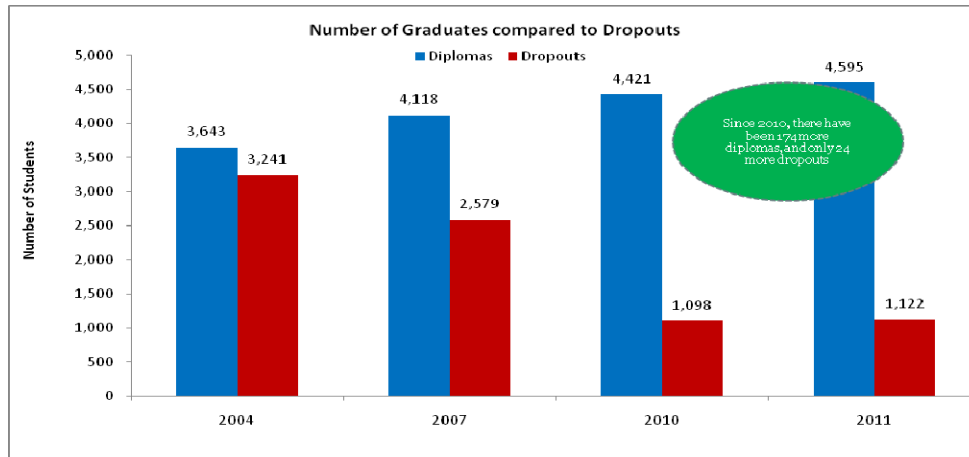
The Progress Continues on All Fronts

Across all measures, City Schools’ 2010-11 graduation rate is up markedly from 2009-10, and this growth is particularly significant over the last four years.



Also during the last four years, the district has cut its dropout rate by more than half, from 9.4 percent in 2006-07 to 4.2 percent in 2010-11, a decrease of 55.3 percent. In 2003-04, City Schools had significantly more dropouts than graduates. In 2006-07, it had almost the same number of graduates as dropouts. By contrast, in 2011 the district had three times as many graduates as dropouts. This year’s dropout rate is essentially flat from last year; it is up by 0.1 percentage points over 2009-10, when it was 4.1 percent.

City Schools’ 2010-11 high school results affirm that its ongoing efforts to retain and graduate more high school students are paying off—from bringing dropouts back and focusing like never before on attendance, to providing students with more and better school options that meet their individual needs. Overall high school enrollment was 24,311 in 2010-11, up from 24,152 in 2009-10 and 24,123 in 2006-07. And as more students progress to 12th grade, more are receiving diplomas: 4,595 students received diplomas last year, up from 4,421 in 2009-10 and 4,118 in 2006-07, a four-year increase of 11.6 percent.



City Schools’ 2010-11 high school results, and the growth in its graduation and dropout rates over time, are consistent across student subgroups, with the largest driver being the progress of African American males. The district’s overall graduation rate is up 20 percent in the last four years and its dropout rate is down 55 percent. The gains for African American male students during this same time outpaced that district growth: Their graduation rate is up 26.3 percent from 51 percent in 2006-07 to 64.4 percent in 2010-11, and their dropout rate is down 58 percent over four years, from 11.9 percent to 5 percent.

“We are so proud of the progress that Baltimore City students continue to make in increasing graduation rates,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “Thanks to our dedicated students, parents and educators, more children are graduating from Baltimore City schools with skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.”

“The historic jump in the graduation rate is a reflection of the progress, reform and renewed commitment to student achievement taking place in Baltimore City Public Schools,” said Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. “The improvement in our graduation rate is driven by African American males, who are no longer slipping through the cracks of low expectations. I want to congratulate Dr. Alonso, members of the School Board, principals and teachers for their commitment to improving educational opportunities for all students, and creating an environment that fosters success.”

In addition to these strong results, the district saw an increase in the number of 12th-grade students who passed the state’s High School Assessments (HSAs) across all four subjects—algebra, biology, English and government. It also saw an increase in the number of 12th-grade students who met the state’s graduation requirements of passing all four HSAs or earning a combined total score of 1602 on all HSAs. Meanwhile, the total number of tests passed by high school students in 2011 was down from 2010, due in part to a decrease in the overall number of test participants this year, and a decrease in the number of Biology tests passed.

Lastly, the state reported Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) today—for the state and for individual districts. In 2010-11, 760 of the state’s 1,376 elementary and secondary schools made AYP, or 55.2 percent. This is down from 2009-10, when 936 schools, or 68 percent, made the federal standard for progress under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). Because the NCLB targets for districts and schools get more difficult to meet each year, the number of districts and schools making the federal progress standard has been in steady decline. In 2010-11, 12 of City Schools’ 46 high schools made AYP, compared with 14 of 46 in 2009-10.

A more detailed summary of high school data is available on the City Schools website, www.baltimorecityschools.org.