

What are adjusted cohorts?

Reporting Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates is a new requirement of the US Department of Education. The purpose of the new calculation is to address the need for a graduation rate that is accurate, ensures that students who drop out are not counted as transfers, allows for comparisons across states, and gives credit for students who take longer than 4 years to graduate. The adjusted cohort graduation rates are based on a prescribed method of tracking a given cohort of students to determine how many of them graduated from high school on time.

The cohort being tracked is a group of students who all entered 9th grade for the first time in a specific school year. The cohort number is adjusted at the end of each high school year by adding students who transfer in and subtracting any students who transferred out. Any student who passes away is also removed from the cohort. You will find the cohort calculation display on the MDK12 and MD Report Card websites when you click on "Show Cohort Calculation" on the grad rate data tables. The cohort calculation display provides an example of how a cohort would be tracked and adjusted each year across the typical four years of high school.

We can see that in this school there were 100 first-time 9th graders who entered the school in 2006-07 school year. That year there were 15 students who transferred in to this school and 10 students who transferred to another school. There were no deaths that year. When we add the number of transfers in to the starting cohort number of 100 and then subtract the number of transfers out, we see that the cohort number has been adjusted

to 105 students. That same year there were 4 dropouts who remain in the total number of students in the cohort group. Consequently, they are not included in this table or the adjusted cohort calculations. Now let's take a look at what happened during year 2 for this cohort group. We can see in the graph that the cohort group begins year 2 with an adjusted cohort of 105 students. During this year there were 5 transfers in, 10 transfers out and no deaths. At the end of year 2, the cohort has been adjusted to 100 students. During year 3, 5 students transferred in, 10 students transferred out, and there were no deaths. So at the end of year 3, we have 95 students in the adjusted cohort group. We are now at the beginning of year 4 with 95 students in the adjusted cohort. That year 10 students transferred in, 4 students transferred out, and one student died. There are 100 students in the adjusted cohort group at the end of year 4. That adjusted cohort number is the number that is used as the denominator in calculating the 4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate. You do not see dropouts as part of the calculation for the adjusted cohort because students who drop out of school, and therefore do not graduate, are still part of the cohort, and are not removed.