

Why is Maryland using an adjusted cohort graduation rate?

The US Department of Education explained in their guidance to states, “Establishing a uniform and accurate measure of the high school graduation rate that is comparable across states is a critical step toward improving high school accountability. An adjusted cohort graduation rate will improve our understanding of the characteristics of the population of students who do not earn regular high school diplomas or who take longer than four years to graduate.”

An adjusted cohort is an accurate way of keeping track of all students in the school who entered 9th grade the same year and following through high school. It ensures that each student is assigned to a single cohort. This is important because without a single cohort assignment, a student who repeated 9th grade might be included in two separate cohorts of 9th graders—the class in which the student originally started 9th grade and the class in which the student was assigned for his or her second year of 9th grade. Unless the student skipped a grade later in high school or caught up with the original cohort in some other manner, that student would not graduate within four years of starting 9th grade. Therefore, to ensure an accurate measure of a four-year graduation rate, the original cohort must be based only on students who are first-time 9th graders.