

BOARD BRIEF

Date: September 24, 2021

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION: _____

FROM: Clinton Page, Ed.D., Chief Accountability Officer

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Preliminary 2021 Virginia On-Time Graduation and Dropout Rates

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

SY 2021-2022 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Social Emotional and Academic Learning Recovery

Focus Area 2: Hispanic Males

FY 2022 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Implementation of 2025 Strategic Plan

Continue Engagement with Hispanic Families to Improve Graduation and Chronic Absenteeism

SUMMARY:

This brief and the attached figures are intended to provide the preliminary Virginia On-time Graduation and Dropout rates for the 2021 cohort within Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). The final data will be released publicly by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) on September 30, 2021 for all divisions across the Commonwealth along with aggregate Virginia rates. Overall, graduation rates increased by nine percentage points to 91%. Graduation and dropout rates improved overall and across a vast majority of subgroups with the largest improvements seen in Hispanic and economically disadvantaged subgroups. Dropout rates also improved by nine percentage points with an overall rate of 5%.

BACKGROUND:

Starting with the graduating class of 2008 the state of Virginia began calculating “On-Time” graduation and dropout rates. The “on-time” rates, reported annually, are the official state recognized graduation and dropout statistics. The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate takes into consideration student mobility, changes in student enrollment, and the needs of special education and English learners (EL) students. An “on-time” graduate for 2021 is a student who entered ninth grade for the first time during the 2017-18 academic year and, in four years or less, earned one of

BOARD BRIEF

the Virginia Board of Education recognized diplomas: Advanced Studies, Standard, Modified Standard, Applied Studies, and General Achievement diplomas.

Attached, please find two figures capturing the Virginia On-Time Graduation data for 2021 to be released by VDOE on September 30, 2021. Figure 1 displays ACPS graduation rates reported for all students and by student groups historically. Figure 2 shows the dropout rates reported for all students and by groups within ACPS for the past several years.

ACPS saw an overall On-Time Graduation rate of 91% for the 2021 cohort which represented an increase of nine percentage points compared to the previous year. Increases from the previous year were seen across almost all student groups with the largest increases seen for EL (+19 percentage points), Hispanic students (+15 percentage points), and economically disadvantaged (+10 percentage points). Graduation rates for SWDs and White students increased by one percentage point each. There was no change in graduation rate for Black students with a graduation rate of 93%.

The dropout rate for all students in the 2021 cohort also showed marked improvement at 5% representing a decrease of nine percentage points compared to the previous year. Dropout rates decreased across all subgroups except SWDs when compared to the previous year and also marked historic lows dating back to 2008 when these calculations went into effect. The largest decreases were seen among ELs (-15 percentage points), Hispanic students (-14 percentage points), and economically disadvantaged (-10 percentage points). Black students saw a three percentage point reduction in dropout rate and white students saw a one percent decrease in dropout rate. Students with disabilities had an increase in dropout rate from two to five percent, equal to the division average.

In comparing this year's graduation rates to previous years and future years, it is important to note that in January 2021, the Virginia Board of Education issued emergency guidelines regarding locally-awarded verified credits (LAVC) for the 2020-2021 school year based on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Among the provisions in those guidelines was the allowance for students to earn a LAVC with a SOL score between 350 and 399 in addition to passing the corresponding course creating additional pathways for academically deserving students to earn a diploma.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the 2021 Virginia On-Time Graduation and Dropout figures for possible planning, procedural, programmatic, and/or budgetary changes.

IMPACT:

ACPS, with a purposeful focus on graduation for all students and specifically Hispanic students, saw historic improvements and overall graduation and dropout rates for the 2020-2021 cohort through aligned staff, student, and family efforts and additional pathways to graduation.

ATTACHMENTS:

ACPS 2021 On-Time Graduation and Dropout Figures

CONTACT:

Dr. Clinton Page

clinton.page@acps.k12.va.us