
An Analysis of States' FFY 2011 Annual Performance Report Data for Indicator B1 (Graduation)

**A Report Prepared for the
U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs
by the
National Dropout Prevention Center
for Students with Disabilities**

July 2013

Indicator B1: Graduation Rate

INTRODUCTION

The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) was assigned the task of compiling, analyzing, and summarizing the data for Indicator 1—Graduation—from the FFY 2011 Annual Performance Reports (APRs) and amended State Performance Plans (SPPs), which were submitted by states to OSEP in February of 2013. The text of the indicator is as follows:

Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma.

This report summarizes NDPC-SD’s findings for Indicator 1 across the 50 states, commonwealths, and territories, and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), for a total of 60 agencies. For the sake of convenience, in this report the term “states” is inclusive of the 50 states, the commonwealths, the territories, and the BIE.

MEASUREMENT

The Part B Measurement Table indicates that states are to use the, “Same data as used for reporting to the Department under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). States must report using the graduation rate calculation and timeline established by the Department under the ESEA.” These data are reported in the Consolidated State Performance Report exiting data.

Sampling is not permitted for this indicator, so states must report graduation information for all of their students with disabilities. States were instructed to, “Describe the results of the State’s examination of the data for the year before the reporting year (e.g., for the FFY 2011 APR, use data from the 2010-2011 school year), and compare the results to the target for the 2009-10 school year.” States were also instructed to provide the actual numbers used in the calculation. Additional instructions were to, “Provide a narrative that describes the conditions youth must meet in order to graduate with a regular diploma and, if different, the conditions that youth with IEPs must meet in order to graduate with a regular diploma. If there is a difference, explain why.” Finally, states’ performance targets were to be the same as their annual graduation rate targets under Title I of the ESEA.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE GRADUATION RATE MEASUREMENT

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate defines a “graduate” as someone who receives a regular high school diploma in the standard number of years—specifically,

four. Students who do not meet the criteria for graduating with a regular diploma cannot be included in the numerator of the calculation, but must be included in the denominator. The new calculation also excludes students who receive a modified or special diploma, a certificate, or a GED from being counted as graduates. It is adjusted to reflect transfers into and out of the cohort (i.e., out of the school), as well as loss of students to death.

The equation below shows an example of the four-year graduation rate calculation for the cohort entering 9th grade for the first time in the fall of the 2007-08 school year and graduating by the end of the 2010-11 school year.

of cohort members receiving a regular HS diploma by end of the 2001-11 school year

of first-time 9th graders in fall 2007 (starting cohort) + transfers in – transfers out – emigrated out – deceased during school years 2007-08 through 2010-11

States may obtain permission from the U.S. Department of Education to report one or more additional cohorts that span a different number of years (for example, a five-year cohort or a five-year plus a six-year cohort, etc.). Because students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency face additional obstacles to completing their coursework and examinations within the standard four-year timeframe, the use of such extended cohort rates can help ensure that these students are ultimately counted as graduates, despite their longer stay in school than the traditional four years. It should be noted that states are prohibited from using this provision exclusively for youth with disabilities and youth with limited English proficiency. Several states have taken advantage of this option, and it is likely that this provision for using extended cohorts will become more important in years to come, as many states have increased their academic credit and course requirements for all students to graduate.

The requirement to follow every child in a cohort necessitates the use of longitudinal data systems that employ unique student identifiers. Most states have these in place, or are well on the way to developing such systems. A few states have had difficulty meeting this need and have had to request permission from the Department of Education for permission to report using a different calculation method or data set.

CALCULATION METHODS

States were required to implement the new adjusted cohort rate calculation in the 2010-11 school year. Most states have officially adopted this calculation method, though based on the phrasing in the APRs, it was unclear whether some states that reported they were using an adjusted cohort rate were perhaps reporting estimated cohort rates (AKA leaver rates). In FFY 2011 47 states (78%) reported using the required adjusted cohort calculation. Of the remaining 14 states, nine (15%) reported a leaver rate, two

states (3%) reported a cohort rate, and two states (3%) reported an event rate. Figures 1 – 4 show states' graduation rates, based on the type of calculation employed.

Figure 1

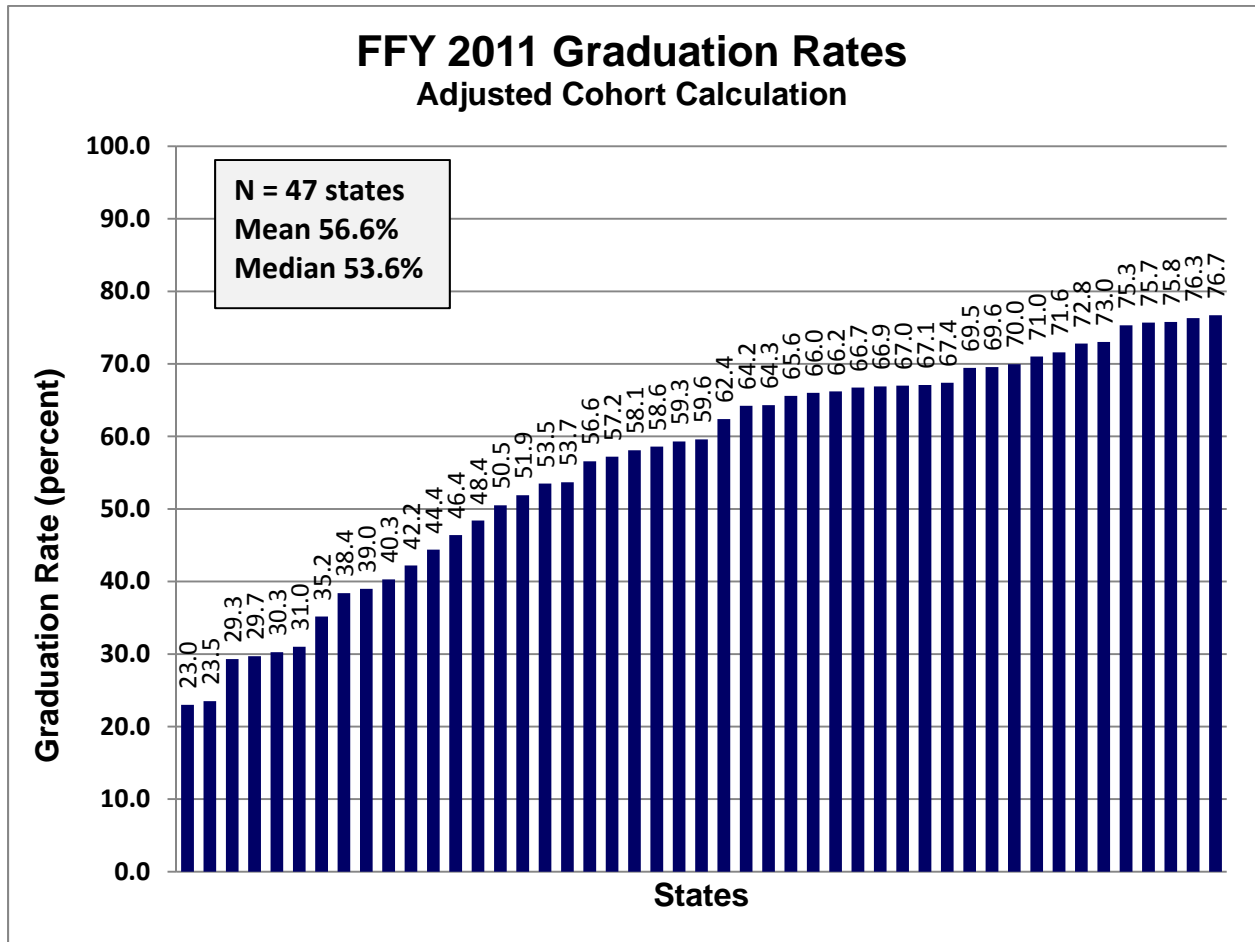


Figure 2

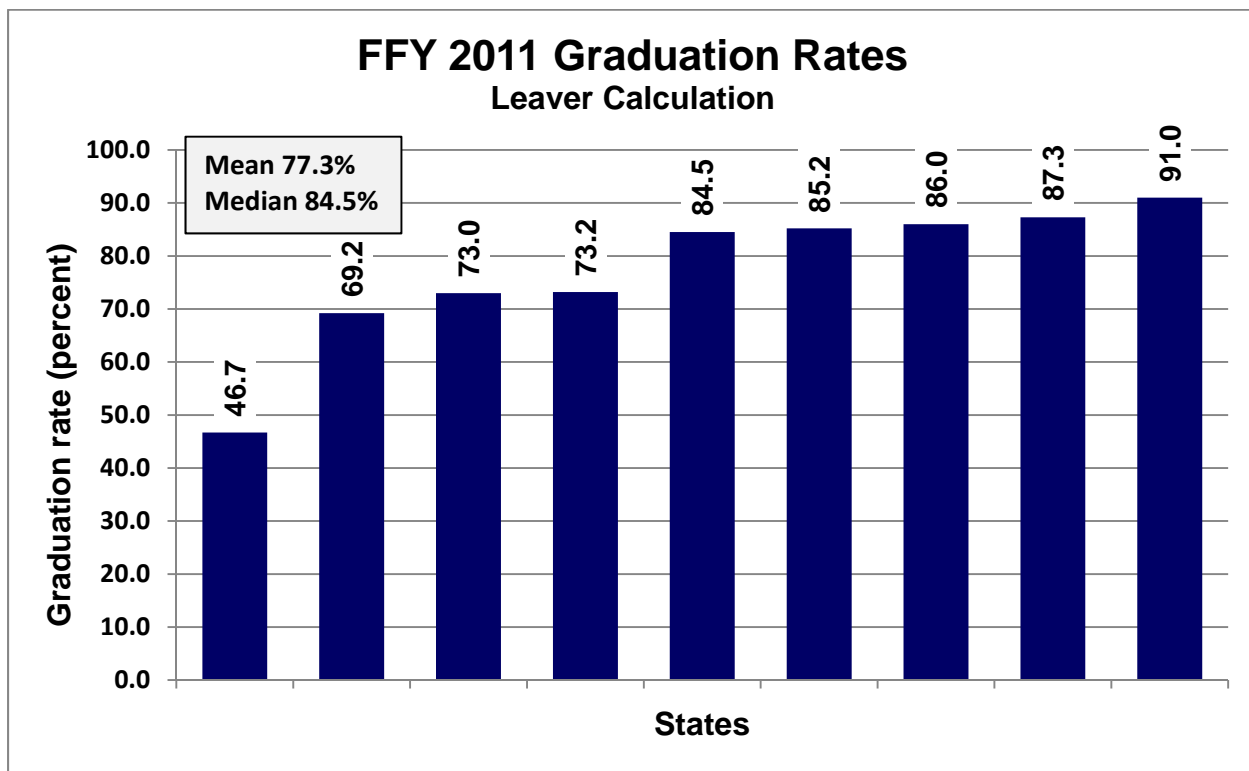


Figure 3

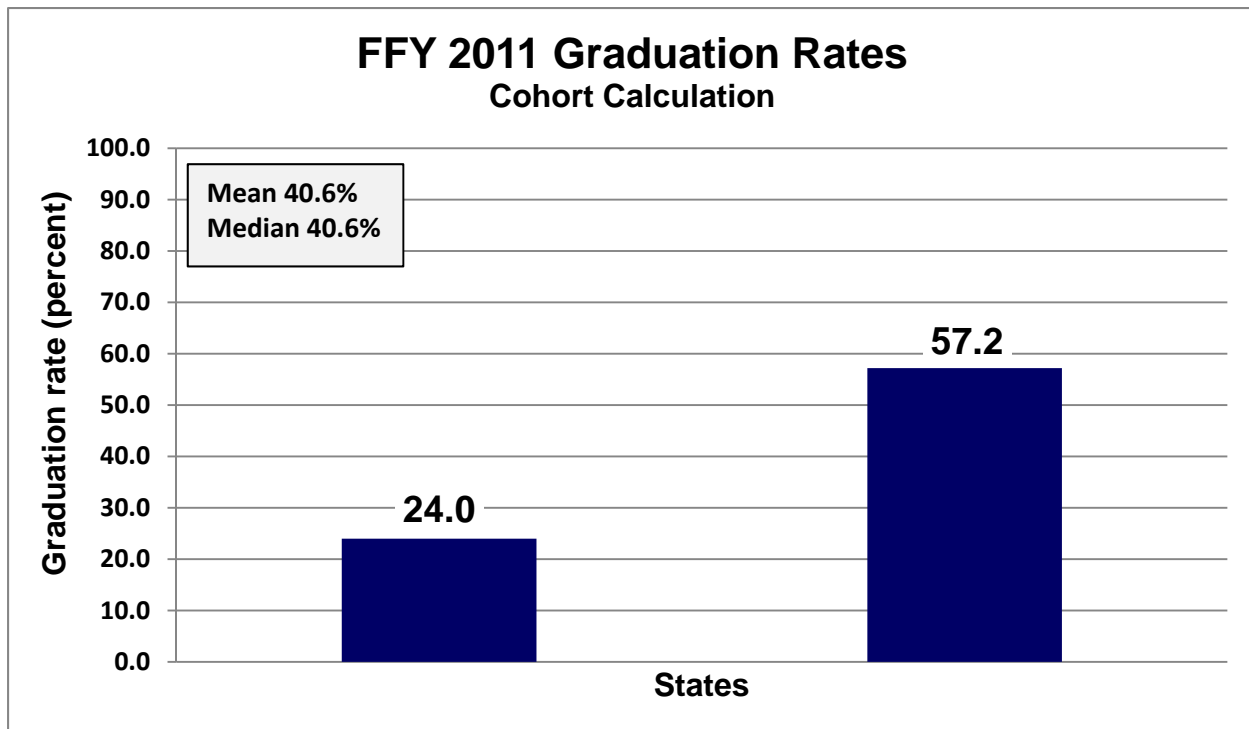
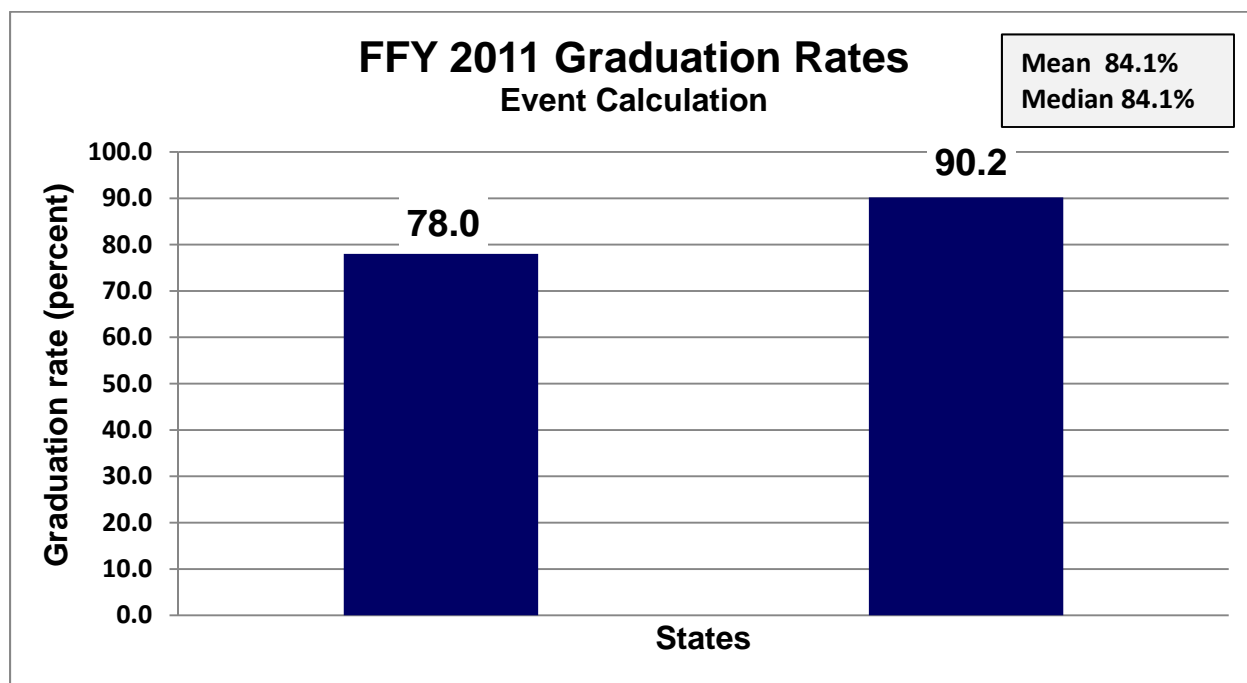


Figure 4



STATES' PERFORMANCE ON THE INDICATOR

In FFY 2011, states' targets for improvement ranged from 24.0% to 90.0%. As was the case last year, the average state target was 72.8% and the median was 80%. As shown in Figure 5, 12 states (20%) met or exceeded their FFY 2011 graduation rate targets and 48 states (80%) did not. These results are down from FFY 2010, during which 17 states (28%) met their graduation rate targets. As was the case in FFY 2010, five (8%) of the states that met their graduation target for FFY 2011 also met their dropout rate target.

Figure 6 shows that 22 states or 37% made progress and improved their rates, whereas 26 states (43%) reported a decrease (slippage) in their graduation rates from FFY 2010. Twelve states (20%) switched to a new calculation method or established a new baseline, and thus could not report progress/slippage. In those states which made progress, the mean increase in the graduation rate was 5.0% with a median of 2.4% (N=22 states). The mean amount of slippage in states whose rates decreased was -5.0% with a median of -2.6% (N=26 states).

The graduation rates of those states with very low numbers of students with disabilities fluctuated widely from last year. This was unremarkable, because in these states, small fluctuations in the number of graduates can yield dramatic swings in the graduation rate from one year to the next.

Figure 5

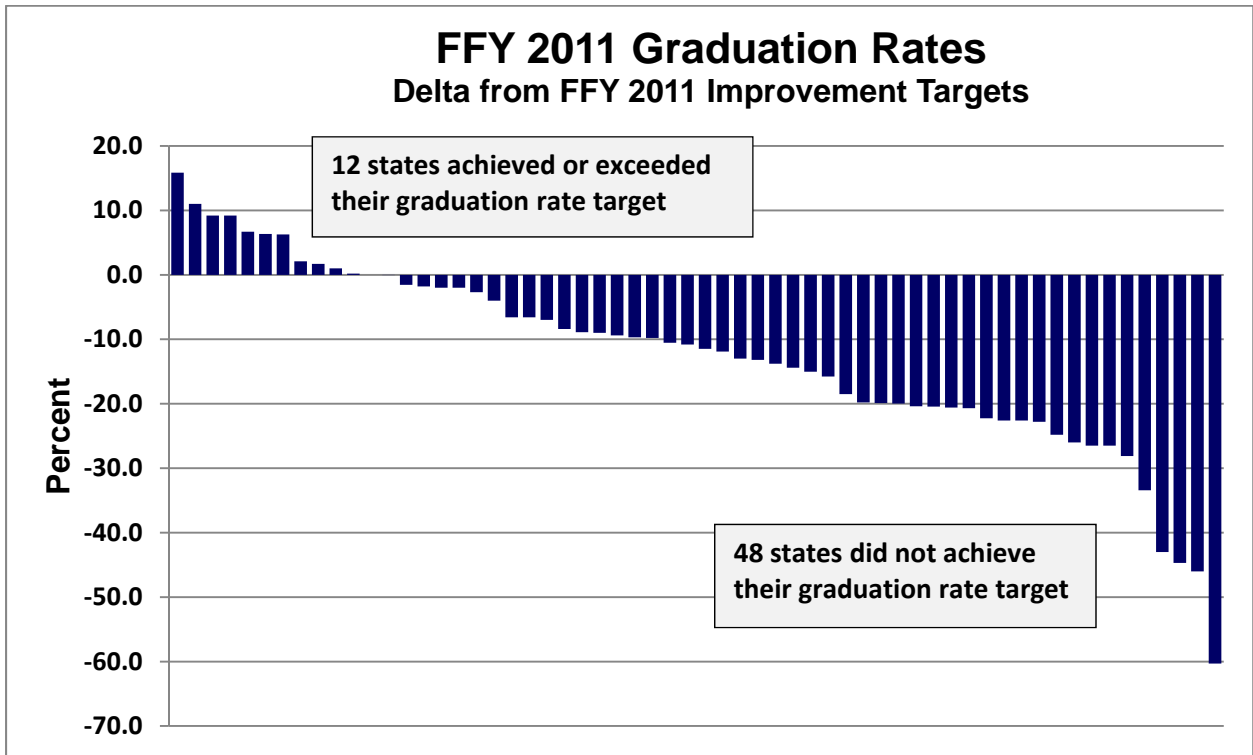


Figure 6

