



# Graduation Rate (Indicator 1) and Dropout Rate (Indicator 2) Calculator User's Guide

**Author:** Matthew Klare



IDEA DATA  
CENTER

Collect, Report, Analyze, and  
Use High-Quality Part B Data



The IDEA Data Center (IDC) and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) created this publication under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs grant numbers H373Y190001 (IDC) and H326E200003 (NTACT:C). Richelle Davis and Rebecca Smith serve as IDC project officers. Selete Avoke and Tara Jordan serve as NTACT:C project officers.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. This product is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted.

Westat is the lead organization for IDC. For more information about the center's work and its partners, see [www.ideadata.org](http://www.ideadata.org).

November 2021

**Suggested Citation:**

Klare, M. (2021, November). *Graduation Rate (Indicator 1) and Dropout Rate (Indicator 2) Calculator User's Guide*. IDEA Data Center. Rockville, MD: Westat.



# Graduation Rate (Indicator 1) and Dropout Rate (Indicator 2) Calculator User's Guide

## Introduction

This user's guide accompanies the [Graduation Rate \(Indicator 1\) and Dropout Rate \(Indicator 2\) Calculator](#). The calculator is an Excel-based tool that supports state, local education agency (LEA), and school building staff in calculating their graduation and dropout rates, Part B State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicators 1 and 2, respectively. The calculator uses the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) Section 618 Exiting data, a long-established data collection that will become the basis for graduation- and dropout-rate calculations of states' APRs to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in coming years. The guide provides tips for entering data into the tool to calculate graduation and dropout rates and for using the calculator to generate trend displays, note year-to-year changes, flag slippage and unexpected cell values, and provide information on met or missed targets. The guide also suggests considerations for using the calculator for setting targets.

## Using the Calculator

Figure 1 shows the calculator tabs.

**Figure 1. Tabs of the tool**



The **README** and **Directions** tabs provide valuable context about the indicators and the calculator, along with instructions for using the tool. You enter or paste your 618 Exiting data for the current Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) from File Specification 009 (FS 009) into the table at the **Exiting Data Worksheet** tab and the tool will calculate your graduation and dropout rates from these data.

The **Graduation Rate** and **Dropout Rate** tabs show the graduation and dropout rates the tool calculates based on the data you enter. The **Graduation Rate** and **Dropout Rate** tabs are identical in layout and function, so for the sake of brevity, this guide focuses on the **Graduation Rate** tab. Note that there are rollover or hover over tips in the calculator's worksheets to help you use the tool. You can print the formatted pages of the calculator, and you can copy, edit, and print the individual charts from the **Editable Charts** tab.

The calculator requires that your 618 Exiting data are in the format shown in Figure 2, which is a screen shot of the worksheet from the in the Exiting Data Worksheet tab of the tool. The calculator uses the column totals (from the rows labeled ages 14-21) to perform calculations.





# Simple Calculation of Graduation and Dropout Rates

For a simple calculation of graduation and dropout rates from your 618 Exiting data, if your Exiting data are already in the format shown in Figure 2 above, copy the data, open the **Exiting Data Worksheet** in the tool, place the cursor in **cell A9** and paste the data into the worksheet. If your data are not already appropriately formatted, enter the data directly into the **Exiting Data Worksheet** in the tool. The tool will display the graduation and dropout rates in **cells B24 and B25**, respectively. Figure 3 shows what the results will look like in the calculator.

**Figure 3. Exiting Data Worksheet with calculated rates**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	IDC								NTACT THE COLLABORATIVE Improving Opportunities & Outcomes	
2										
3										
4	Exiting Data Worksheet									
5										
6										
7										
8		Exiting total	Died	Dropped out	Graduated with alternate high school diploma	Graduated with regular high school diploma	Moved, known to be continuing	Reached maximum age	Received a certificate	Transferred to regular education
9	14	58,882	202	3,608	0	20	40,056	0	5	14,991
10	15	57,722	270	5,823	0	135	38,078	0	30	13,386
11	16	66,420	245	11,646	0	5,194	36,266	0	431	12,638
12	17	203,305	329	18,323	1	135,047	27,598	0	12,118	9,889
13	18	169,307	214	17,131	0	117,019	14,462	0	15,839	4,642
14	19	48,747	117	7,777	0	29,808	4,799	16	5,209	1,021
15	20	20,665	75	3,248	1	8,922	1,680	1,121	5,142	476
16	21	14,742	47	1,155	0	5,290	675	3,530	3,759	286
17	14-21	639,790	1,499	68,711	2	301,435	163,614	4,667	42,533	57,329
18										
19	In cell A20 enter the first Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) of the data you plan to accumulate in the tables of the Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate worksheets (E.g., 2020).									
20	2017									
21	Note: If you just want a quick calculation of the graduation and dropout rates, paste your data into the table above. The calculated rates will display below.									
22										
23	Quick rates from the data above									
24	Graduation rate:	72.23%								
25	Dropout rate:	16.46%								
26										
27										
28										
29										



## Comparing Rates to Targets and Accumulating Data

If you plan to use the data accumulation and charting features of the tool to compare performance on the indicators to state targets or to examine multiple years of data, follow the steps below.

1. Enter the 4-digit Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) of the first year of data you want to accumulate in **cell A20** of the **Exiting Data Worksheet**. The tool will automatically populate that FFY and subsequent years in the tables of the Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate worksheets.
2. Paste the first year's worth of 618 Exiting Data into the table on the **Exiting Data Worksheet**.
3. Go to the **Graduation Rate worksheet**, shown in figure 4. **Cell B12** will show the graduation rate calculated from the data you pasted into the Exiting Data Worksheet. Type this calculated rate into the cell in column D for the appropriate FFY. Note: Do not copy/paste the rate from **cell B12**, as it's a formula!

Figure 4. Graduation Rate tab

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	IDC									
2										
3										
4										
5	Graduation Rate Calculator									
6										
7										
8										
9	# SWD dropouts	# Alternate diplomas	# SWD regular diplomas	# Max age	# Certificates					
10	68,711	2	301,435	4,667	42,533					
11										
12	SWD graduation rate:	72.23%	<div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px;">                     The first FFY displayed in this column is the year you entered in cell A20 of the Exiting Data Worksheet. The rest of the FFYs and the years in Columns C and D of this table populate automatically.                 </div>							
13										
14										
15	Data (lagged) from this school year	FFY	Year APR is due to OSEP	Graduation rate (%)	Change from last year	Rate changed by ≥ 5 percentage points	Slippage of ≥ 1 percentage point	Graduation rate target (%)	Distance from target	Met or missed target
16	2016-2017	2017	2019						0.00	Met
17	2017-2018	2018	2020		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
18	2018-2019	2019	2021		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
19	2019-2020	2020	2022		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
20	2020-2021	2021	2023		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
21	2021-2022	2022	2024		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
22	2022-2023	2023	2025		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
23	2023-2024	2024	2026		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
24	2024-2025	2025	2027		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
25	2025-2026	2026	2028		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met



4. Go to the **Dropout Rate worksheet** and transcribe the calculated dropout rate from **Cell B12** of that worksheet into the cell in **Column D** for the appropriate FFY. Again, this is a calculated value, so do not copy/paste this!
5. Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4 for each year of data you want to include in the tables and charts.
6. Enter your graduation and dropout rate targets for each FFY in **Column H** of the **Graduation Rate** and **Dropout Rate worksheets**.

Figure 5 shows the **Graduation Rate worksheet** populated with several years of fictitious data and targets. Note that for each year's data, the tool calculates the change in rate from the previous year (Column E), whether the rate changed by 5 percentage points or more, whether the rate worsened by one 1 percentage point or more, the distance the rate is from the target, and whether the target was met or missed. Note the pink shading in columns F, G, I, and J. The tool automatically flags the cells in these columns to call attention to unexpected values (i.e., large changes in the rate, slippage, or missing a target).

**Figure 5. Graduation Rate Calculator populated**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	IDC									
5	Graduation Rate Calculator									
9	# SWD dropouts	# Alternate diplomas	# SWD regular diplomas	# Max age	# Certificates					
10	68,711	2	301,435	4,667	42,533					
12	SWD graduation rate:	72.23%								
	<div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     The first FFY displayed in this column is the year you entered in cell A20 of the Exiting Data Worksheet. The rest of the FFYs and the years in Columns C and D of this table populate automatically.                 </div>									
15	Data (lagged) from this school year	FFY	Year APR is due to OSEP	Graduation rate (%)	Change from last year	Rate changed by ≥ 5 percentage points	Slippage of ≥ 1 percentage point	Graduation rate target (%)	Distance from target	Met or missed target
16	2016-2017	2017	2019	72.23				75.00	-2.77	Missed
17	2017-2018	2018	2020	73.00	0.77	No	No	75.00	-2.00	Missed
18	2018-2019	2019	2021	76.50	3.50	No	No	75.00	1.50	Met
19	2019-2020	2020	2022	72.10	-4.40	No	Yes	75.00	-2.90	Missed
20	2020-2021	2021	2023		-72.10	Yes	Yes		0.00	Met
21	2021-2022	2022	2024		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
22	2022-2023	2023	2025		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
23	2023-2024	2024	2026		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
24	2024-2025	2025	2027		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met
25	2025-2026	2026	2028		0.00	No	No		0.00	Met

The tool automatically generates two charts at the bottom of the **Graduation Rate** and **Dropout Rate worksheets**: the first showing the graduation (or dropout) rates over time (figure 6) and the second showing graduation (or dropout) targets and rates over time (figure 7). Most of the cells of these worksheets are protected, so you cannot edit them. The **Editable Charts worksheet** is not protected, however, so you can edit or copy the charts in this worksheet and paste them into other documents or presentations.

**Figure 6. Graduation rates chart**

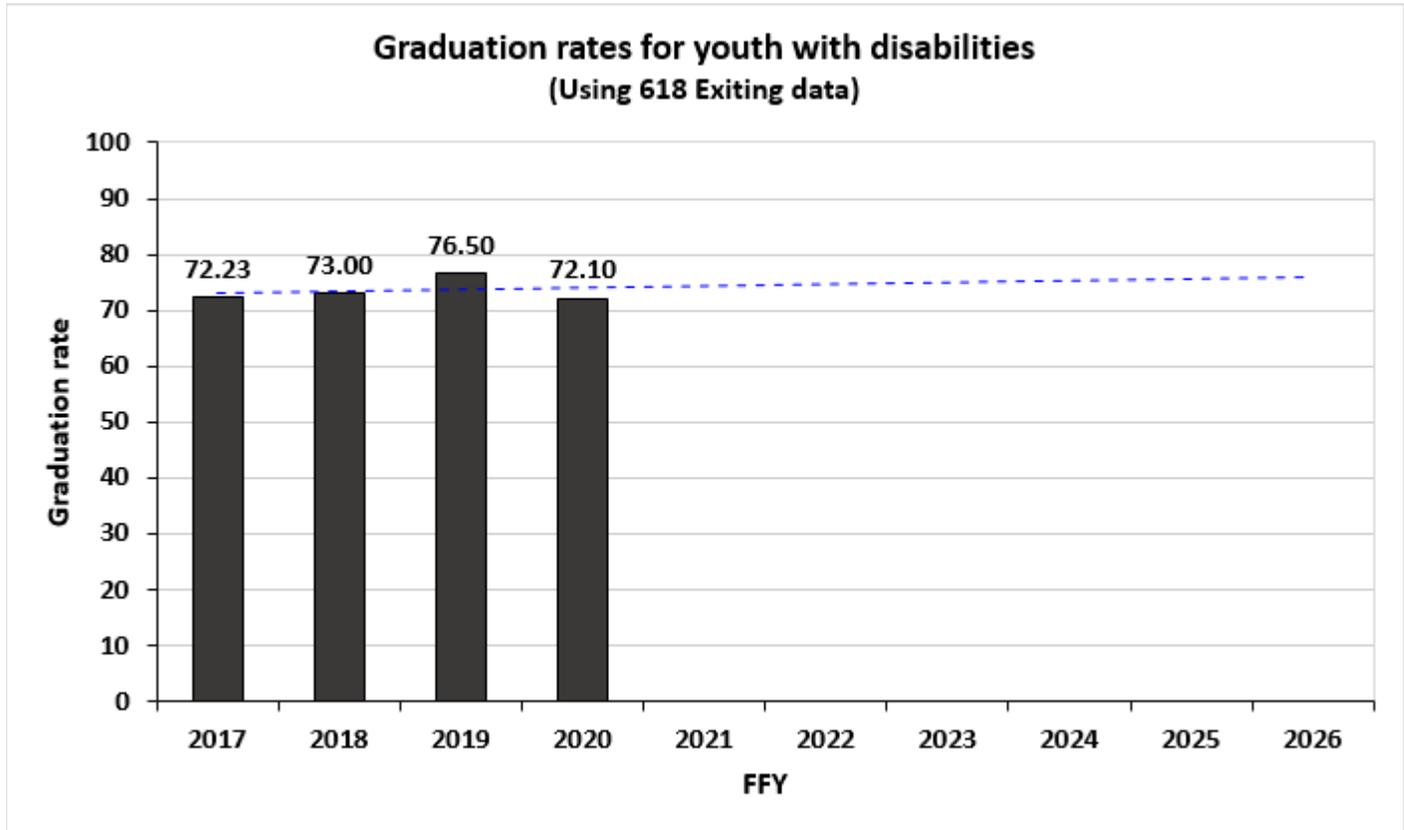
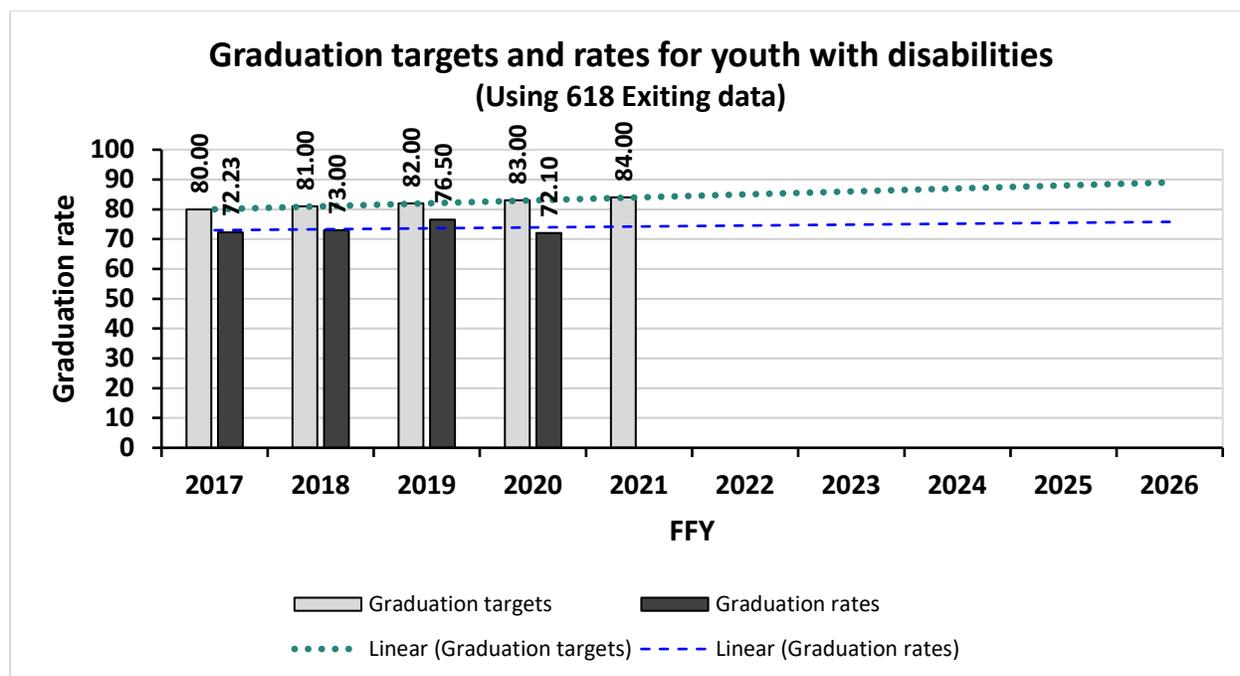


Figure 7. Graduation targets and rates chart



## Additional Considerations for Using the Calculator

With the FFY 2020 APR that states will submit in February 2022, states will no longer report an adjusted-cohort graduation rate to OSEP. Rather, states must calculate and report a leaver/exiter graduation rate using the 618 Exiting data. In the following year's APR (due to OSEP in 2023), states will no longer have the option of reporting an event dropout rate in the APR but must calculate a leaver/exiter dropout rate, also using the 618 Exiting data. The difficulty for states will come in setting their FFY 2020–2025 performance targets for Indicators 1 and 2, which they must include in the FFY 2020 APR, when they lack a basis of comparison to estimate future performance under the new calculations.

One strategy that could help with the target-setting process is to upload several past years of your state's 618 Exiting data, which should be readily available, into the calculator and let the tool calculate and accumulate the graduation and dropout rates for the previous years. Examining the charts the calculator generates will allow you to observe past trends in the data and better gauge the amount by which Indicators 1 and 2 may change in coming years, thereby supporting a data-driven target-setting process.

When examining previous years' data, make sure you change the FFY value in **cell A20** or that the Exiting Data worksheet match the first year of the data you want to examine. This will ensure that your graduation and dropout targets and rates charts show the correct years for the data. Use the data tables and charts to start your conversations with stakeholders and inform the challenging process of setting new graduation and dropout rate targets.

Keep in mind that targets should be reasonable and achievable and show improvement over the current base graduation or dropout rate. Generally, OSEP will not approve targets that do not show improvement over baseline; however, there have been specific instances when OSEP has allowed states to set targets that do not reflect improvement over baseline. If, based on prior year's performance, a state decides to establish



---

FFY 2020–2025 targets that are lower than the targets they established from FFY 2016–2019, OSEP encourages the state to provide information regarding this decision in the state's narrative.

For additional resources to help with setting APR targets, see [Templates for Part B SPP/APR Stakeholder Involvement and Target Setting](#) on the IDC website.