

**Overview of the Annual Performance Report Development:****Monitoring Priority: FAPE in the LRE**

**Indicator 1:** Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma.

(20 U.S.C. 1416 (a)(3)(A))

**Measurement:** States must report using the graduation rate calculation and timeline established by the Department under the ESEA.

FFY	Measurable and Rigorous Target
2009	70.0%

**Actual Target Data for FFY 2009 (data and target from FFY 2008 as per instructions from OSEP regarding a one year data lag):**

	# of Students in 2008-2009 cohort	# of Students in 2008-2009 cohort who graduated in four years or less	2008-2009 Graduation Rate
Students with IEPs	14,845	9,631	64.9%

**Discussion of Improvement Activities Completed and Explanation of Progress or Slippage that occurred for FFY 2009 (2008-2009 data):**

Explanation of Progress or Slippage

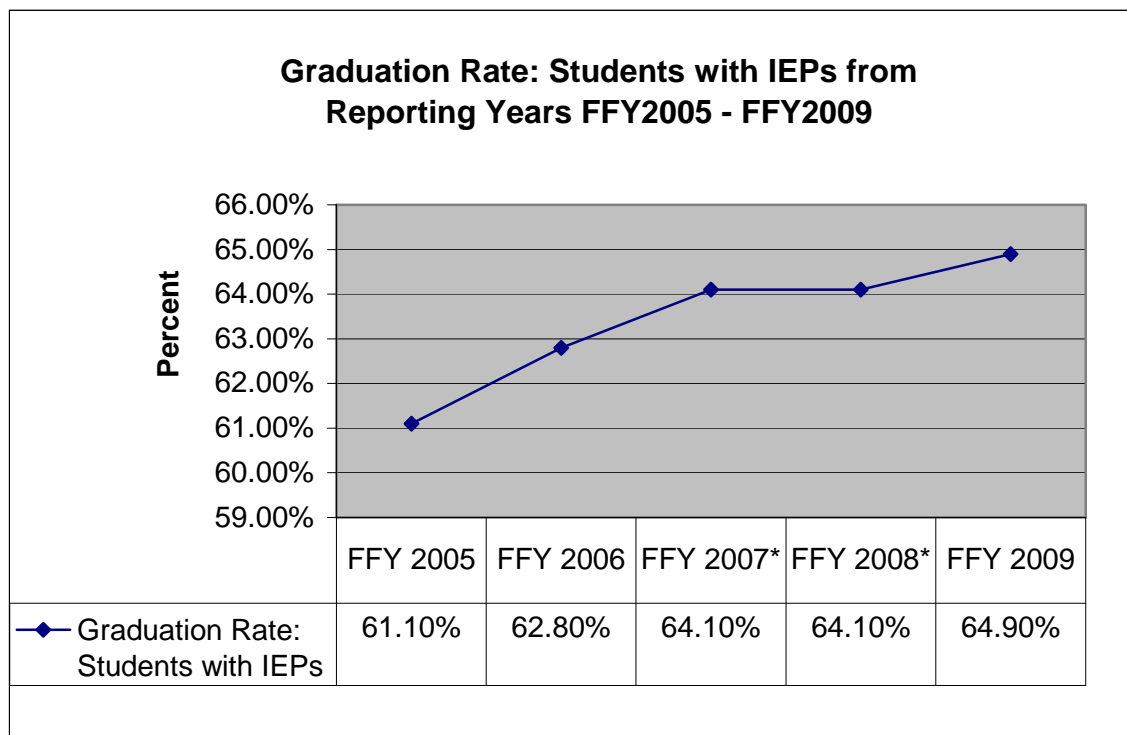
For this reporting year, **64.9%** of students with IEPs in the 2008-2009 cohort graduated from high school in four years or less. This represents an increase of 0.8 percentage points over the reported graduation rate in the FFY 2008 MA Annual Performance Report (MA APR). While MASSDE did not meet its measurable and rigorous target of 70.0% for this period, the current data shows continuous improvement since FFY 2005, the first reporting year. This trend is illustrated in the graph below.

Although MASSDE is not required to use a five-year graduation rate, MASSDE regularly calculates this rate because a significant number of students with disabilities require more than four years to meet graduation standards. The FFY 2009 five-year graduation rate for students with IEPs is 69.6%, a 1.3% increase from the previous year, and very close to the FFY 2009 target. MASSDE will continue to calculate and publicly report the five-year rate for subsequent cohorts as an additional measure of year-to-year progress for students with and without IEPs.

States' reports are subject to a one year data lag, which requires reporting of actual target data for FFY 2008 against the FFY 2008 measurable and rigorous target. Therefore, this report uses the graduation data for students with IEPs using FFY 2008 (school year 2008-2009) graduation rate data for students with IEPs, and uses revised graduation rate targets approved by MASSDE in December 2009. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted the targets of 95% percent for

the statewide four-year graduation rate and 100% for the statewide five-year graduation rate for all students, to be achieved by 2018.

To receive a diploma from a Massachusetts public high school, a student must earn a Competency Determination (i.e., achieving a specified level of proficiency on the Grade 10 English Language Arts and Mathematics statewide assessments administered through the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), or on the MCAS-Alt), and meet local graduation requirements. Students who receive a diploma in four years or less are counted as graduates for purposes of reporting these data in the Massachusetts State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR).



\* As required by data lag instructions, the reported graduation rate for FFY 2007 and FFY 2008 is based on the 2007-2008 school year. This FFY 2009 APR is reporting a graduation rate based on the 2008-2009 school year.

From FFY 2005 to FFY 2009, the graduation rate for students with disabilities in Massachusetts increased from 61.1% to 64.9%. While MASSDE did not meet the measurable and rigorous target of 70% in FFY 2009 (data from 2008-2009 school year), the 3.8% improvement in the graduation rates for students with IEPs in the SPP period to date shows continued progress.

Improvement Activities

The progress illustrated above is attributable in part to a number of improvement activities that were completed in FFY 2009, including the further development of public reporting of special education data, a variety of professional development initiatives for educators, and initiatives and programs described in Appendix A and below. During the current reporting year, MASSDE continued to focus on previously identified improvement activities, and increased the number and intensity of improvement activities that directly affect students' graduation rates. In addition, MASSDE was recently awarded funding for a five year High School Graduation Initiative (HSGI) that will engage targeted districts in the process of identifying their at-risk students and assisting them by implementing high quality interventions through technical assistance, training, and promising practices. These projects are also described below.

In FFY 2009, MASSDE, through its Student Support, Career, and Education Services unit (SSCE); the Special Education Planning and Policy Development Office (SEPP); and the Center for School and

District Accountability, has engaged in the following improvement activities that have a direct effect on high school completion for students with IEPs:

- **[American Recovery and Reinvestment Act \(ARRA\) – IDEA](#)** – Activities funded through the ARRA-IDEA grant were to be designed to help ensure that students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate education (FAPE), to meet each student's unique needs, and to prepare each student for further education, employment, and independent living. Funds were to be used for 1) recovery purposes - to sustain and support existing special education programming; and 2) investment purposes - to improve educator quality and effectiveness; to support schools and districts; to improve assessment and data; and to promote college and career readiness.

Several districts directed their ARRA allocations to new and/or expanded programs designed to insure students with disabilities remained in school and obtained a high school diploma or certificate of completion. Some examples included: hiring consultants to evaluate their programs and practices and provide technical assistance for designing systemic changes to improve them; collaborating with other districts to develop and implement programs, including credit recovery programs, virtual and other alternative high schools for students who have already dropped out or are at high-risk for doing so; creating systemic change through implementation of tiered instruction and/or positive behavioral support systems; and hiring support staff such as guidance counselors, school social workers, school adjustment counselors, with particular therapeutic and counseling skills for this population.

- **[The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act \(ARRA\) Title II-D Technology Competitive Grant Program: Online Courses and Modules Grant for At-Risk High School Students](#)** – This grant will fund projects that work collaboratively with MASSDE to create, implement, and evaluate online courses/modules for underserved high school students in alternative education, credit recovery, or credit acceleration programs. Grant recipients may adapt an online course/module or partner with an organization to design and develop the online courses/modules that align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks or the Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore).

MASSDE is providing funding to a high-need district, or collaborating districts with at least one high-need district, to pilot one or more online courses that serve high school students in alternative education programs or schools (including education collaboratives) or students participating in credit recovery or credit acceleration options (see below for definitions). During the first round of this grant, two awardees were special education collaborative programs.

- **Massachusetts Task Force on Behavioral Health and Public Schools** is an interagency initiative of the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Health and Human Services whose mission is to strengthen, expand, and integrate Massachusetts state services into a comprehensive, community-based system of care, to ensure that families and their children with significant behavioral, emotional, and mental health needs obtain the services necessary for success in home, schools, and community. These wraparound services will provide substantial and specific supports to students who are at high risk for dropping out of school, and to students who have already dropped out and need assistance in returning to schools.
- **Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission Activities - [The Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission Report](#)** – *Making the Connection* was charged with examining current statewide policies and making recommendations on how to retain at-risk students. The Commission's final report, *Making the Connection*, was released in October 2009.
- **[The Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group's](#)** (SSCE) focus is to support district team action planning and to facilitate the sharing of promising practices in order to prevent student dropouts and consequently improve graduation rates. The group's work was expanded to 77 urban districts with at least one high school that exceeded the state's dropout rate. There were

133 high schools in the state that met this criterion. This year, three of the districts hosted face-to-face meetings and demonstrated their promising programs, policies, and practices regarding attendance, discipline, homework, and related activities that were showing progress in retaining students with disabilities. [The Dropout Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery Website](#) (SSCE) includes an extensive collection of graduation and dropout prevention related news and trainings, articles/reports, and websites for students, parents, and educators.

- [Massachusetts FOCUS Academy \(MFA\)](#) (SEPP) provides online, graduate level coursework to middle and high school educators across the state. The course offerings have significant impact on supporting and retaining all students but especially students with disabilities. The courses enable educators to gain a better understanding of how disabilities affect student learning and behavior, and provide educators the opportunity to improve their skills in the areas of curriculum design, instruction, evaluation, and technology. Improved educator skills translate into improved student outcomes, which will lead to improved graduation rates. The course offerings include: Creating and Sustaining Positive Learning Environments, Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning, and Collaborative Co-Teaching. In addition there are six Transition courses to improve post-secondary placements for graduates and two additional courses focused on family engagement and designed to help educators partner with parents and families to increase student success.
- [National Association of State Directors of Special Education \(NASDSE\) Professional Development Series](#) (SEPP) – The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), with support from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), provides the NASDSE Satellite Series. These telecasts bring nationally recognized experts to the Commonwealth via technology, providing an affordable means of quality personnel development for a variety of stakeholders.
- [Secondary Transition- TransitionWorks: Innovative Strategies for Transitioning Youth with Disabilities from School to Work](#) – The **Transition Works** Project is an interagency partnership developed to create and deliver innovative and non-traditional career development, job placement and career advancement activities for over 750 transition age students with significant disabilities in the cities of Boston, Springfield, and Worcester. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), in partnership with MASSDE, the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), Urban Pride, the Massachusetts workforce development system, the Commonwealth Corporation, and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), is addressing the unmet transition, career development, and employment needs of young adults with significant disabilities aged 16-26.
- [Trauma Sensitive Schools Initiative](#) (SSCE) – Through this initiative, MASSDE is working to bring “trauma sensitive” practices to schools across the Commonwealth. These efforts include annual trainings and technical assistance regarding safe and supportive student learning environments for reducing barriers that may affect classroom behavior, relationships, and academic performance, thereby creating a climate that encourages students to stay in school.
- [Educational Proficiency Plans \(EPP\)](#) (SSCE) - The purpose of the EPP is to increase the support students need to stay in school to meet graduation standards, and have the requisite skills needed for post-secondary success.
- [Worked-Based Learning Plans \(WBLP\) for Students with Disabilities](#) (SSCE) – Through work-based learning experiences, students have an opportunity to learn about various career areas and try different work styles, find out what type of work they enjoy, find out how they learn best in a workplace setting, and find out what natural supports are available. By providing students with the opportunity to explore a variety of career areas and discover what type of work they enjoy in the context of their academic environment, the WBLP assists students with disabilities staying in school.

- **Early Warning Indicator Index** – The FFY2009-2010 Early Warning Indicator Index is the continuation of work begun by MASSDE in cooperation with districts and other partners in May 2008. The Commonwealth's Early Warning Indicator Index uses statewide data from the most recent graduating cohort as the starting point for helping local school districts identify students who may be at risk of not graduating on time from high school.
- **[District and School Assistance Centers \(DSACs\)](#)** – MASSDE has opened six regionally-based DSACs to help identified districts and their schools access and use professional development and targeted assistance to improve instruction and raise achievement for all students. MFA courses (see above), including *Universal Design for Learning*, *Creating Positive Classroom Environments*, *Differentiated Instruction*, *the Collaborative Co-Teaching Model*, and *Transition Planning*, have been integrated into the menu of professional development options available to districts. Districts are encouraged to focus on a particular course and have educators in the district participate as teams to improve instruction and learning district-wide. The planning for this work began in FFY 2009 - FFY 2010. District/cohort-based teams are presently participating in the above listed courses.

MASSDE has combined efforts within the agency and in cooperation with stakeholders to develop a series of initiatives targeted toward at-risk youth and the communities in which they reside. The following activities include those that are underway as well as projects planned for the future that will increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities. Each of the initiatives allows for inter/intra-agency collaboration, program development for students with disabilities, and/or professional development for practitioners working with students with disabilities:

- Collaboration with Stakeholders
- [Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summit](#)
- [Secondary School Reading Grant](#)
- [Special Education Professional Development Institutes](#)

For detailed information about all improvement activities, please see Appendix A.

**Revisions, with Justification, to Proposed Targets / Improvement Activities / Timelines / Resources for FFY 2009 (2009-2010):**

Targets, improvement activities, timelines, and resources for Indicator 1 have been amended in the Massachusetts Part B State Performance Plan (MA SPP). They include targets for FFY 2011 and FFY 2012, and a revised target for FFY 2010. The targets were developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Statewide Special Education Steering Committee. Please see the Indicator 1 MA SPP for more information.