

For immediate release
Tuesday, February 28, 2017
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Massachusetts' Four-Year Graduation Rate Improves for 10th Consecutive Year

MALDEN - The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education today announced that the state's four-year graduation rate improved for the 10th consecutive year, with 87.5 percent of students who entered as ninth graders in 2012-13 – or who transferred into that same cohort at any time during high school – graduating within four years. In addition to the overall improvement in the graduation rate, the graduation rate for all major ethnic and racial groups and for urban districts continues to grow. The state's annual dropout rate remained at 1.9 percent in 2015-16, the lowest overall rate in more than three decades.

"The Commonwealth's excellent graduation rate is a testament to the strength of our public schools as we strive to deliver a quality education to every student and prepare our kids with the skills they need for a successful future," **Governor Charlie Baker said**. "We are pleased to see the graduation rates continue to strengthen in our urban school districts and that the state's annual dropout rate remains at its lowest point in more than 30 years."

"I congratulate everyone whose hard work made this possible and who remains committed to giving families the strongest possible schools," **Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito said**. "This is excellent news for the students, the school districts and the Commonwealth."

"In addition to the successful graduation rates statewide, we see improvements in four-year graduation rates in many groups, including low-income students, English language learners and students in urban districts," **Education Secretary James Peyser said**. "We are especially pleased to see the gap closing in graduation rates, particularly for Hispanic and African-American students."

"It is encouraging to see our graduation rate continue to climb," **said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester**. "A high school diploma is a necessary, although increasingly insufficient, step toward future success. Most students will need to pursue college or career training beyond high school to have access to opportunities in the 21st century."

According to the data released this year, 87.5 percent of the 74,045 students in the 2016 cohort graduated within four years, an increase of 0.2 percentage points from the 2015 cohort and an increase of 7.6 percentage points from the 2006 cohort, when ESE first began calculating the cohort graduation rate. A cohort is comprised of students who entered high school as ninth graders or who transferred into the same cohort at any time during high school.

The dropout reduction – from the high point of 3.8 percent in 2006-7 to 1.9 percent in 2015-16 – resulted in less than half as many students dropping out in 2015-16, when 5,523 students dropped out, than in 2006-07, when 11,436 students dropped out. Approximately 5,900 fewer

students dropped out in 2015-16 than in 2006-7.

All major subgroups improved their four-year graduation rates compared to the previous year. The largest gains were made by black males (up 2.9 percentage points from 72.8 to 75.7 percent) and students with disabilities (up 1.9 percentage points from 69.9 to 71.8 percent).

Improvements for other major subgroups were: low-income/[economically disadvantaged](#) students overall: up 0.2 percentage points from 78.2 to 78.4 percent, English language learners: up 0.1 percentage points from 64.0 to 64.1 percent, male students: up 0.3 percentage points from 84.7 to 85 percent, female students: up 0.2 percentage points from 90 to 90.2 percent, Hispanic/Latino students overall: up 0.5 percentage points from 72.2 to 72.7 percent, black students overall: up 1.4 percentage points from 77.5 to 78.9 percent, white students: up 0.3 percentage points from 91.6 to 91.9 percent and Asian students: up 0.3 percentage points from 92.4 to 92.7 percent.

Over the past five years (between 2010-11 and 2015-16), the urban school districts that have seen the largest percent change in the number of dropouts include:

- Springfield, which had 448 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in 2010-11, a 57 percent decrease;
- Holyoke, which had 104 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in 2010-11, a 54 percent decrease.
- Lawrence, which had 150 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in 2010-11, a 51 percent decrease; and
- Brockton, which had 110 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in 2010-11, a 41 percent decrease.

In addition, several urban school districts had annual dropout rates below the statewide dropout rate of 1.9 percent. They are: Cambridge at 0.8 percent, Quincy at 0.9 percent and, at 1.8 percent, Framingham, Lowell and Taunton.

In addition, Quincy (90.1 percent), Cambridge (88.8. percent) and Taunton (88.7 percent) had four-year graduation rates above the statewide rate.

In October 2015, ESE was awarded \$200,000 through the America's Promise Alliance for a multi-year effort to raise statewide graduation rates. The Department is using the grant to create a coalition of 10 districts to improve high school graduation rates for students whose first language is not English. The participating districts are: Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Holyoke, Lowell, New Bedford, Revere, Somerville and Worcester.

Graduation rate data is available online at http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/gradrates.aspx and <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/>. For additional information on the annual dropout rate, including school and district numbers, go to http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/dropout.aspx and <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/dropout/>.