

Graduation Rate



Special Education Indicator 1
Fact Book

October 2024



**Department of
Education &
Workforce**

What is Graduation Rate (Indicator 1)?

Indicator 1 is an Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) indicator¹ that measures the percentage of youth with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) exiting special education due to graduating with a regular high school diploma. This is a results measure for which targets are set by the state with stakeholder input.

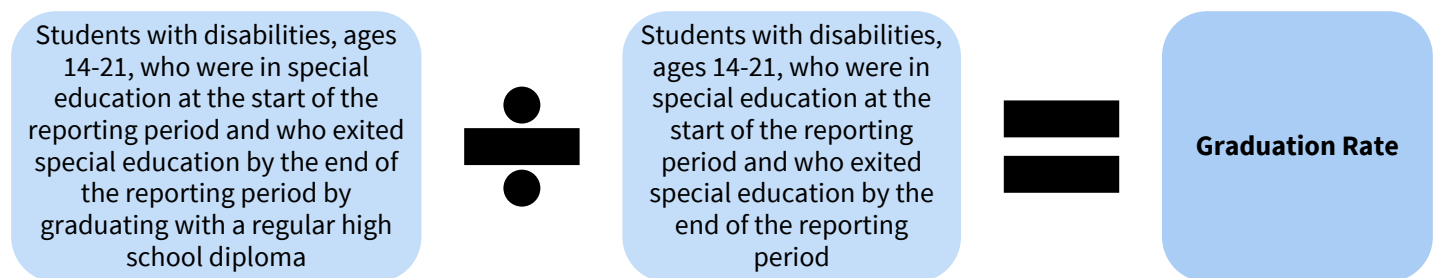
Why is Graduation Rate Important?

This indicator measures how well Ohio is preparing all students for success after high school in postsecondary education, work, and life.

How is Graduation Rate Calculated?

Ohio calculates graduation rate by taking the number of students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who were in special education at the start of the reporting period and who exited special education by the end of the reporting period by graduating with a regular high school diploma divided by the total number of students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who were in special education at the start of the reporting period and who exited special education by the end of the reporting period (see Figure 1). The following categories of students with disabilities are included in the total number of students with disabilities who left special education: (a) graduated with a regular high school diploma; (b) graduated with a state-defined alternate diploma; (c) received a certificate; (d) reached maximum age; and (e) dropped out. Ohio does not have a state-defined alternate diploma or certificate. Students with disabilities who earn a diploma by meeting their IEP goals are counted as part of the denominator for this indicator. The below graphic shows how to calculate graduation rate.

Figure 1. Graduation Calculation



Recent Changes to Graduation Rate

A new baseline was implemented for the 2022-2023 school year due to new methodology related to another related IDEA indicator. Indicator 2 calculates the percentage of youth with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) dropping out of high school. Students were previously counted as dropouts even if they reenrolled within the same reporting period. Now, students who dropout and reenroll within the same reporting period are *not* counted as dropouts. For example, students who exited *and* reenrolled between July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023, are no longer counted as dropouts. This change in methodology impacts the number of students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who exited special education (the denominator) for both Indicators 1 and 2. As a result of this new methodology, Indicator 1 data for the 2022-2023 school year are not comparable to prior years.

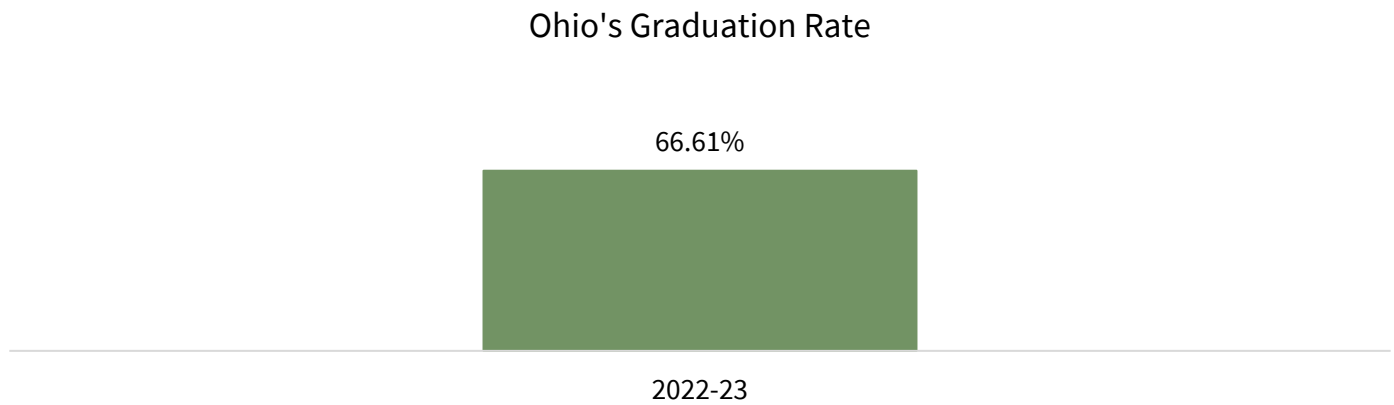
¹ IDEA 20 U.S.C. [1416 \(a\)\(3\)\(A\)](#)

Data for Graduation Rate

Table 1. Ohio's graduation rate for the 2022-2023 school year.

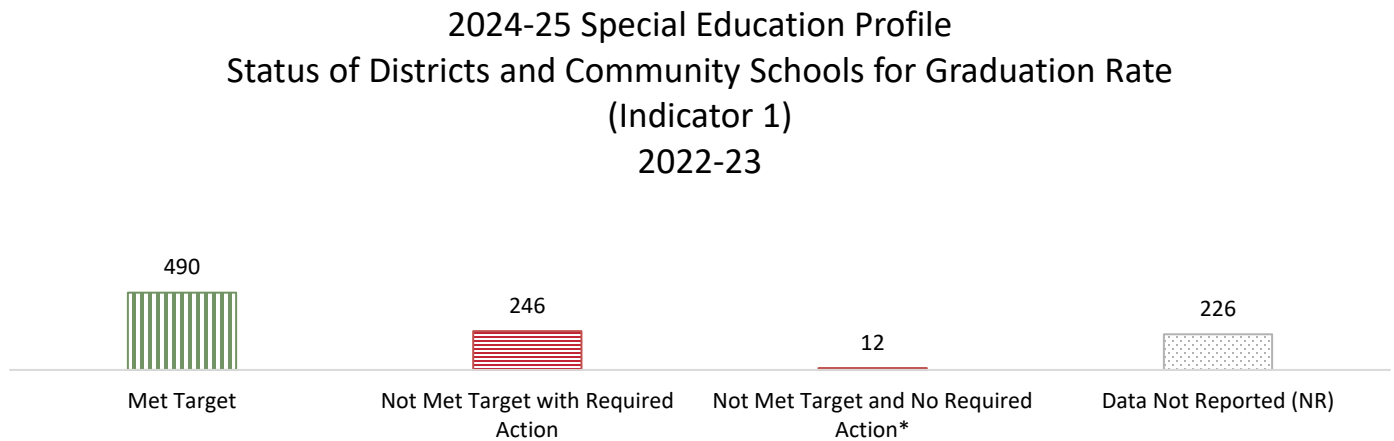
Calculation	Description	2022-23
A	Students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who were in special education at the start of the reporting period and who exited special education by the end of the reporting period by graduating with a regular high school diploma	13,410
B	Students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who were in special education at the start of the reporting period and who exited special education by the end of the reporting period	20,133
$C = A \div B$	Students with disabilities graduation rate	66.61%

Figure 2. Ohio's graduation rate for the 2022-2023 school year.



State-level data for Indicator 1 will be reported to the U.S. Department of Education in the Annual Performance Report due February 2025. District and community-school level data for Indicator 1 will be reported within the 2024-25 Special Education Profile targeted for release in December 2024. Figure 3 identifies the number of districts and community schools that did not meet the 2022-23 target of 66.61 percent.

Figure 3. Number of Districts and Community Schools that Did Not Meet the 2022-23 Target.



* Districts and community schools that do not serve grade 12 and thus do not offer the opportunity to graduate do not have required actions for Indicator 1. It is possible for districts and community schools to have data for Indicator 1 because the calculation requires inclusion of all students with disabilities ages 14-21 regardless of graduation cohort or grade level.

Stakeholder Input on Targets

Ohio sought stakeholder input on targets for Indicator 1 in fall 2024. See Ohio’s [Special Education Methodology and Target Setting webpage](#) for more information about the stakeholder engagement process. Stakeholders recommended the targets as outlined in Table 2. The goal for Indicator 1 is to be at or above the target.

Table 2. Final Indicator 1 Targets

Indicator 1 Final Targets	2023-2024 Baseline/Target	2024-2025 Target	2025-2026 Target
Final Targets	66.61%	68.00%	70.00%
Data Year*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025

* Due to data availability, Indicator 1 lags one year behind other indicators for reporting purposes. Targets for this indicator reflect the reporting year rather than the year of the data. For example, the 2022-2023 graduation rate is held to the target for the 2023-2024 reporting year. The Data Year row of this table identifies the data year for each target.

Rationale for Final Indicator 1 Targets

Stakeholders who recommended these final targets identified these targets as more realistic, specifically as staff at local education agencies are still presented with challenges with student engagement post-COVID and have little resources to effectively address the needs of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Some stakeholders also mentioned the need for developing a growth mindset in the education of students with disabilities.

Stakeholders who did not support these final targets and were in favor of more rigorous targets noted that educators must have high expectations for all students with the priority of keeping students in school regardless of subgroup and especially for students with disabilities who are historically un- or underemployed.

Other comments included:

- Alternate pathways are not realistic for special education students who are unable to meet competency requirements
- Districts and community schools have difficulty meeting targets when they change from year to year
- A general lack of understanding of the different graduation pathways and rates reported by the state agency

Resources for Improving the Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities

Table 3. Resources for improving the graduation rate for students with disabilities

Resource	Resource Description
Each Child on Track	The Department’s State Systemic Improvement Plan to keep students with disabilities on track for graduation. Interested schools may contact EachChildOnTrack@education.ohio.gov .
Students with IEPs Graduation Decision-Making Tool	This tool can help an IEP team answer two questions: (1) Has the student with an IEP followed a typical pathway to meet graduation requirements? And (2) When must the student with an IEP exit secondary school?
Ohio Employment First	Employment First is a philosophy that presumes all Ohioans, including people with significant disabilities, can and should have opportunities to work in the community. Resources for professionals, job seekers, families, and employers are available to support the vision of Ohio Employment First.
Establishing Families as Partners in Secondary Transition Planning	The intended short-term outcome of this experience is to increase capacity of agency personnel to understand, at a minimum, the following critical topics through the lens of secondary transition: the value of family partnership; cultural and linguistically diverse families; implicit bias and the evolution of disability; having authentic and necessary conversations; and universal design, which includes creating and redesigning communication and experiences to better represent and serve families. The professional learning series is targeted to a group of local cross-agency professionals for local schools, career-technical centers and education service centers, county boards of developmental disabilities, mental health providers, counselors, and supervisors from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Those interested may contact ItStartsWithFamilies@dodd.ohio.gov .
Early Warning System and Progress Toward Graduation Reporting Systems	The Department has developed an Early Warning System and a Progress Toward Graduation reporting system in the Ohio District Data Exchange (ODDEX). These tools are available free of charge to Ohio’s schools and may be accessed through OH ID.
Ohio Transition Support Partnership	The Department partners with Ohioans for Disabilities to increase access to vocational rehabilitation services starting at age 14.
Secondary Transition Enhancement Funds	Ohio’s current budget supports Transition to Work Endorsement course tuition reimbursements and other grant opportunities to improve the provision of secondary transition services for students with disabilities age 14 and above. Grant notifications and other resources can be found on the Secondary Transition and Workforce Development webpage.