

## State 4-Year Graduation Rate Hits Historic High - 85.8 Percent

By Administrator

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North Carolina's four-year high school graduation rate ticked up to 85.8 percent with the class of 2016, adding an 11th year of consecutive gains on a critical measure of student success. The four-year rate has climbed 17.5 percentage points since 2006, the first year North Carolina reported a cohort rate.

Gains among a number of student groups outpaced the state's overall increase last year, continuing a trend in the state that has seen gaps closing for minority and economically disadvantaged students against the rate for white students and the state's total overall. Except for students with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency, the four-year graduation rate for all groups exceeded 80 percent for the first time in 2016.

State Superintendent June Atkinson said North Carolina's steady improvement in graduation outcomes means that more students from all backgrounds are now finishing high school better positioned for college and careers.

"This is good news for our state, and especially good news for students who will have more opportunities available to them because they have completed high school," Atkinson said.

"I've highlighted high school graduation rates as one of my major priorities since becoming state superintendent, and I'm especially pleased to see these numbers improve for our diverse student population at the same time that we've raised graduation requirements and expectations for students."

The four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families increased by 1 percentage point from 2015, reaching 80.6 percent, while the rate for black students increased by 0.7 points, to 82.9 percent. The gain for both the state overall and for white students was 0.3 percent from 2015 to 2016.

The latest increases for student groups that have been underrepresented as high school graduates and in postsecondary education add to 10 years of strong gains in graduation outcomes that have exceeded the state's overall growth.

Compared to the 17.5-point increase for all students combined since 2006, the four-year cohort graduation rate for American Indian students has increased by 30.9 percentage points; for Hispanic students, 27.8 points; for economically disadvantaged students, 25 points; and for black students, 22.5 percent.

As a result of those improvements, persistent gaps evident in 2006 have narrowed significantly. The gap between white and black students, for example, has closed by more than

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half, from 13.1 points in 2006 to 5.7 points in 2016; a similar trend is seen between students from low-income families and the state as a whole, closing from 12.7 points in 2006 to 5.2 points in 2016.

The gains in recent years have been achieved along with more demanding graduation requirements. Since 2009, high school students have been required to earn a minimum of 22 course credits, up from 20 previously, and they are expected to complete mathematics through Math 3 as a minimum.