



## 2021 Graduation Rate Interpretation Guide

Because of the disruptions to school operations caused by COVID, DEED advises caution when interpreting data from the 2020-2021 school year. We have never experienced such widespread interference to our educational systems, which means that there is no standard for understanding the impact on data quality. It is possible that the 2020-2021 graduation rates were impacted by the changes in instructional delivery throughout the school year. DEED has developed this interpretation guide to help you determine whether these data are appropriate for your proposed use.

To provide a frame of reference for the 2020-2021 data, DEED has calculated the year-over-year change in state-level graduation rates for both the four- and five-year cohorts from school years 2016-2017 to 2020-2021 for several key student groups (i.e., ethnicity and underserved groups). Comparing the magnitude of the differences of the various student groups provides critical information about how stable graduation rates are year-to-year. DEED advises users of statewide graduation rate data to assess the usability of the 2020-2021 data in the context of the year-to-year differences pre-pandemic.

The differences can be found on the second page of this interpretation guide. The following procedure was used to generate the table. First, four- and five-year graduation rates were calculated at state-levels for each of the student groups for school years 2016-2017 to 2020-2021. Second, the between year differences were calculated for each consecutive pair of years. For example, for the 'All Students' group in cohort 4, there was a graduation rate of 79.04% in 2020 and 78.09 in 2021. The difference between the 2021 and 2020 graduate rate is -0.95% (as seen in the table). Compared to the differences between prior years for all students in cohort 4 (i.e., -1.35%, 1.89%, 0.26%), the magnitude of the difference between 2021 and 2020 is not unexpected; however, the negative difference represents the second decline of graduation rates for this group of students in 5 years.

If you have any questions about the data or this interpretation guide, please contact John Jones, Data Manager for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

### Questions to Consider

- 1) Is the difference between the current year and last year larger or smaller than differences between prior pairs of years?
- 2) How do the differences for my district/school compare to the state-level differences?
- 3) Are there any differences in instructional delivery in my district/school that could explain any differences observed above?

Table 1. Between Year Graduation Rate Differences from School Year 2016-2017 to 2020-2021

Cohort	Student Groups	SY 20-21 – SY 19-20	SY 19-20 - SY 18-19	SY 18-19 - SY 17-18	SY 17-18 - SY 16-17
4	All Students	-0.95	-1.35%	1.89%	0.26%
4	Male	-1.1	-0.58%	1.53%	0.35%
4	Female	-0.79	-2.33%	2.36%	0.15%
4	African American	1.9	-5.33%	6.83%	-1.22%
4	Alaska Native/American Indian	-1.41	-0.77%	-0.27%	-0.29%
4	Asian/Pacific Islander	-2.72	-0.08%	3.07%	-0.74%
4	Caucasian	-0.69	-1.31%	2.01%	1.49%
4	Hispanic	-0.17	-3.28%	4.44%	-1.45%
4	Two or More Races	-2.68	-0.96%	2.05%	-0.83%
4	Economically Disadvantaged	-2.5	-2.38%	2.76%	-0.11%
4	Students With Disabilities	0.23	-0.79%	2.81%	-1.79%
4	English Learners	1.54	2.3%	4.42%	3.28%
5	All Students	-0.84	0.98%	1.02%	1.6%
5	Male	-0.59	0.72%	0.8%	2.31%
5	Female	-1.22	1.3%	1.27%	0.91%
5	African American	-2.47	1.97%	1.59%	-1.62%
5	Alaska Native/American Indian	0.26	-2.08%	-0.03%	3.94%
5	Asian/Pacific Islander	-0.12	1.06%	0.92%	2.28%
5	Caucasian	-1.4	2.11%	1.5%	1.36%
5	Hispanic	-1.95	1.41%	2.72%	0.01%
5	Two or More Races	0.15	2.29%	0.66%	-1.64%
5	Economically Disadvantaged	-0.89	0.33%	1.02%	1.88%
5	Students With Disabilities	-1.03	1.28%	0.25%	2.89%
5	English Learners	2.67	-0.31%	3.14%	3.77%

Note: “SY 20-21 – SY 19-20” means: The graduation rate from the 2019-2020 school year subtracted from the 2020-2021 graduation rate.