

**Report on Act 44 of 2009: Sections 44 and 45
An Act Relating to Making Miscellaneous
Amendments to Education Law: Measuring
Secondary School Completion Rates; Flexible
Pathways to Graduation**

**Report/Recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on
Education**

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Submitted by:



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Sections of Act 44 of 2009, an act relating to making miscellaneous amendments to education law, establish the goal of a 100 % graduation rate for Vermont secondary schools by the year 2020. In order to achieve this goal, the Act charged the Commissioner of Education with responsibility for the following:

- (1) Develop guidelines for use by schools in fulfilling the expectation for identification of eligible students and the implementation of flexible pathways to graduation
- (2) Develop a format in which schools will submit the required reports
- (3) Develop an accurate, uniform, and reliable method for defining and measuring secondary school completion rates on a school-by-school basis
- (4) Report to the Senate and House Committees on Education regarding the state's progress in achieving the goal of a 100% completion rate and the implementation of flexible pathways to graduation
- (5) Recommend other initiatives, if any, to improve both graduation rates and secondary school success for all Vermont students.

Guidance to schools will be available through the Vermont Department of Education Web site and other direct communications as needed. Because primary responsibility at the school level for achieving this goal resides with the Educational Support Teams (EST), the primary location for related guidance will be through the Web pages associated with the Educational Support System (ESS). In addition, new pages will be developed specifically related to Act 44 and its implementation.

Act 44 did not really establish a new expectation for the Educational Support System, but did reemphasize the importance of the existing charge to “develop and maintain an educational support system for students who require additional assistance in order to succeed or to be challenged in the general education environment”. That is, the responsibility of the ESS extends to all students, and therefore the expectations of Act 44 extend to all students.

Guidance, in the form of information regarding research-based effective practice, has been available and will be continually updated. However, this information has not been as easily accessible as it might be. Therefore, information available through the Department's Web site will be updated, revised and reorganized in an effort to make it more readily available and to connect it directly with the goals of Act 44.

Reporting requirements established for schools by Act 44 will also be directly related to the work of ESTs. Therefore, some requirements may be met through the addition of items to existing reports. New reports will be developed as needed.

Vermont has been measuring secondary school completion rates for several years. Following is a chart showing both event and cohort graduation rates for FY99 through FY08. Since FY99, the event completion rate has been at a low in FY01 of 89.53% and a high in FY05 of 93.54%. In FY08 the rate was 92.44%.

Year	Promoted 12th Graders	Adjusted Enrollment	Event Completion Rate	Cohort Graduation Rate
FY99	6,391	7,048	90.68%	-
FY00	6,468	7,192	89.93%	-
FY01	6,658	7,437	89.53%	-
FY02	6,978	7,749	90.05%	-
FY03	6,938	7,625	90.99%	-
FY04	7,070	7,667	92.21%	-
FY05	7,094	7,584	93.54%	87.18%
FY06	7,113	7,787	91.34%	84.88%
FY07	7,245	7,890	91.83%	86.41%
FY08	7,326	7,925	92.44%	85.70%

Data from FY08, by school and including the percent still enrolled at the end of 4 years, are listed below.

High School Completion Report for 2007-2008: (Event & Longitudinal Completion Rates by School)					
School ID	School Name	Adjusted Enrollment	Event Completion Rate	Cohort Graduation Rate	Still Enrolled at the End of 4 Years
Statewide Totals		7,925	92.44%	85.54%	4.58%
PS011	Arlington Memorial	39	97.44%	86.49%	10.81%
PS025	Bellows Falls UHSD #27	83	77.11%	63.92%	14.43%
PS405	Bellows Free Academy (Fairfax)	100	99.00%	87.16%	1.83%
PS406	Bellows Free Academy (St. Albans)	258	93.41%	85.56%	4.58%
PS035	Black River USD #39	39	94.87%	87.80%	2.44%
PS036	Blue Mountain USD #21	35	91.43%	76.32%	5.26%
PS040	Brattleboro Sr. UHSD #6	289	81.66%	75.77%	11.60%
PS052	Burlington Senior High Sch	279	94.98%	84.95%	6.58%
PA002	Burr And Burton Academy	176	98.30%	0.00%	0.00%
PS055	Cabot School	15	86.67%	72.22%	0.00%
PS059	Canaan Schools	31	93.55%	87.10%	0.00%
PS066	Champlain Valley UHSD #15	337	97.92%	93.10%	2.87%
PS069	Chelsea Elem. High School	19	100.00%	82.61%	8.70%
PS072	Colchester High School	203	93.60%	87.61%	3.21%
PS074	Concord Schools	24	91.67%	85.19%	0.00%
PS078	Craftsbury Schools	14	92.86%	75.00%	12.50%
PS082	Danville School	27	96.30%	88.89%	0.00%
PS098	Enosburg Falls Jr/Sr High Sch	79	88.61%	90.67%	1.33%
PS388	Essex Comm. Ed. Ctr. UHSD #46	397	95.21%	88.92%	6.55%

**High School Completion Report for 2007-2008:
(Event & Longitudinal Completion Rates by School)**

School ID	School Name	Adjusted Enrollment	Event Completion Rate	Cohort Graduation Rate	Still Enrolled at the End of 4 Years
PS104	Fair Haven UHSD #16	144	91.67%	83.89%	5.37%
PS124	Green Mountain UHSD #35	63	95.24%	83.56%	6.85%
PS134	Hartford High School	197	95.43%	87.98%	3.37%
PS138	Harwood UHSD #19	160	93.75%	87.86%	2.89%
PS139	Hazen UHSD #26	49	91.84%	80.36%	7.14%
PS157	Lake Region UHSD #24	80	93.75%	82.61%	3.26%
PS158	Lamoille UHSD #18	173	85.55%	86.39%	7.10%
PS161	Leland And Gray UHSD #34	70	88.57%	89.55%	4.48%
PA003	Lyndon Institute	169	88.17%	0.00%	0.00%
PS180	Middlebury Sr. UHSD #3	178	91.01%	88.83%	5.03%
PS183	Mill River USD #40	141	91.49%	89.44%	1.41%
PS186	Milton Sr High School	133	92.48%	85.42%	4.86%
PS187	Missisquoi Valley UHSD #7	191	95.81%	81.43%	2.86%
PS191	Montpelier High School	106	99.06%	88.89%	4.27%
PS195	Mount Abraham UHSD #28	161	93.17%	85.55%	3.47%
PS196	Mt. Anthony Sr. UHSD #14	293	84.64%	75.74%	5.57%
PS199	Mt. Mansfield USD #17	254	96.06%	93.57%	2.81%
PS208	North Country Sr UHSD #22	231	91.77%	80.99%	3.87%
PS211	Northfield Middle/High School	69	81.16%	80.30%	9.09%
PS219	Otter Valley UHSD #8	139	95.68%	91.67%	3.79%
PS220	Oxbow UHSD #30	98	88.78%	80.00%	3.81%
PS224	Peoples Academy	94	90.43%	89.80%	4.08%
PS230	Poultney High School	49	93.88%	88.68%	3.77%
PS233	Proctor Jr/Sr High School	29	93.10%	87.10%	3.23%
PS237	Randolph UHSD #2	96	87.50%	83.33%	5.88%
PS242	Richford Jr/Sr High School	42	100.00%	95.12%	0.00%
PI004	Rivendell Academy	52	98.08%	85.71%	3.57%
PS247	Rochester Elem/High School	21	100.00%	83.33%	0.00%
PS253	Rutland Senior High School	286	94.41%	89.27%	2.42%
PS272	So. Burlington High School	256	92.58%	92.97%	2.34%
PS274	So. Royalton Elem/High School	55	90.91%	84.21%	0.00%
PS276	Spaulding HSUD #41	225	90.67%	84.10%	5.86%
PS278	Springfield High School	112	90.18%	69.78%	4.32%
PA004	St. Johnsbury Academy	267	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
PS287	Stowe Middle/High School	67	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
PA005	Thetford Academy	73	89.04%	0.00%	0.00%
PS346	Twin Valley High School	57	94.74%	85.71%	3.17%
PS304	Twinfield USD #33	34	76.47%	75.00%	8.33%
PS305	U-32 High School (UHSD #32)	148	87.84%	84.46%	4.73%

High School Completion Report for 2007-2008: (Event & Longitudinal Completion Rates by School)					
School ID	School Name	Adjusted Enrollment	Event Completion Rate	Cohort Graduation Rate	Still Enrolled at the End of 4 Years
PS312	Vergennes UHSD #5	122	94.26%	93.10%	3.45%
PS331	West Rutland School	28	89.29%	85.71%	7.14%
PS338	Whitcomb Jr/Sr High School	26	88.46%	73.08%	0.00%
PS344	Williamstown Middle/High Sch	47	78.72%	80.00%	11.11%
PS348	Windsor High School	59	98.31%	93.55%	0.00%
PS351	Winooski High School	37	86.49%	73.58%	9.43%
PS356	Woodstock Sr. UHSD #4	100	93.00%	88.79%	1.87%

The event completion rate data for school year 2007-2008 are reported alongside with a cohort graduation rate for the class of 2008. The event completion rate represents the number of students enrolled in the senior class who graduate or complete school at the end of their senior year. The statewide event graduation rate for school year 2007-2008 is 92.44%. The cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students from a given class who receive a high school diploma. The cohort graduation rate for the class of 2008 is 85.70%. It is important to distinguish the difference between the event completion rate and the cohort graduation rate. The event rate is the percentage of 12th-grade students that complete 12th grade in a given year; it represents a measure of one year and it includes diploma recipients and students who receive certificates of completion. The cohort graduation rate follows students in a particular 9th grade class through consecutive grades through four years and is a percentage of the students who leave the cohort with a diploma.

For future reporting it will be useful to know the relationship between diplomas and various “flexible pathways” to graduation. For example, diplomas earned through the Adult Diploma Program or the High School Completion Program should be reported as such. It will also be useful to include actual numbers of diplomas in any category, not just percentages. The existing information demonstrates that our statewide completion rate has remained relatively stable, hovering around 90% for the past decade. That in turn suggests that we must engage in a concerted effort to change the status quo. The transformation of Vermont’s education system is intended to enable every student to achieve success (i.e. graduation) and to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the 21st century. Improving graduation rates will be one measure of our success in achieving the greater goal of transformation.

Over the course of this decade there will likely be a number of legislative initiatives designed to affect the transformation of Vermont’s schools. One that should be given serious consideration now calls for the formation of regional education districts. Recently, the Education Transformation Policy Commission issued its final report of policy recommendations, [Opportunity to Learn: Defining Vermont Education for a New Generation of Learners](#). The report offered the following observations about the value of regional education districts.

- (1) Larger districts can offer learners access to multiple schools, to learning opportunities beyond any school walls, to distance and on-line learning, and to learning opportunities at postsecondary institutions.

- (2) Larger districts would engage learners and their families in planning their educational services rather than passively attending the town school as the sole educational option.
- (3) Larger districts would engage each learner in broadened educational opportunities tailored to their own needs and interests.
- (4) Larger districts could also encourage schools to specialize and refine what they do well and to jettison those services they lack capacity to do effectively.
- (5) Larger districts could encourage the development of magnet schools that are responsive to unique learner interests.

Act 44 presents a great challenge and an equally significant opportunity. The Vermont Department of Education is committed to meeting this challenge and taking advantage of this opportunity to transform public education in Vermont.