

Report on Act 44 of 2009: Sections 44, 45

**An Act Relating to Making Miscellaneous Amendments to
Education Law: Measuring Secondary School Completion
Rates; Flexible Pathways to Graduation**

REPORT
November 2015

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

**Submitted by Secretary of Education
Rebecca Holcombe**



Section 44 of Act 44 of 2009, an act relating to making miscellaneous amendments to education law, established 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 Secretary 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*
- (5) *Recommend other initiatives, if any, to improve both graduation rates and secondary school success for all Vermont students.*

Guidance to schools is available through the Vermont Agency of Education website and other direct communications as needed. Because primary responsibility at the school level for achieving this goal resides with the Educational Support Team (EST), the primary location for related guidance is through the web pages associated with the Educational Support System (ESS).

[Act 44 of 2009](#) did not 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.

Vermont has been measuring secondary school completion rates for several years. Following is a chart showing both event and cohort graduation rates for SY05 through SY14. Since SY05, the event completion rate has been at a low in SY06 of 91.34% and a high in SY09 of 93.77%. Since SY05, the 4-year cohort graduation rate has been at a low in SY06 of 84.88% and a high in SY10 and SY14 of 87.80%.

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, as a percentage of the total number of students who completed and those who did not complete. The statewide event graduation rate for school year 2013-2014 is 92.44%.

The cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students from a given class who receive a high school diploma. The 4-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2014 is 87.80%.

It is important to distinguish 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 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 over four years and is a percentage of the students who leave the cohort with a diploma. The 2014 4-year cohort rate is a calculation based on the 9th grade class of 2011.

Year	Promoted 12th Graders	Adjusted Enrollment	Event Completion Rate	Cohort Graduation Rate
SY05	7,094	7,584	93.54%	87.18%
SY06	7,113	7,787	91.34%	84.88%
SY07	7,245	7,890	91.83%	86.41%
SY08	7,326	7,925	92.44%	85.70%
SY09	7,115	7,588	93.77%	85.60%
SY10	7,108	7,630	93.16%	87.46%
SY11	6,792	7,322	92.76%	87.45%
SY12	6,722	7,248	92.74%	87.63%
SY13	6,661	7,202	92.48%	86.60%
SY14	6,287	6,801	92.44%	87.80%

Under Act 44 of 2009, the Legislature established the goal of a 100% graduation rate for Vermont schools by 2020. The focus is on successful completion, not on the timing of that completion. Vermont has received Federal authorization to report on 5 and 6-year cohort graduation rates, in addition to the traditional 4-year rate. Therefore, within a group of graduates, there may be students in the 4-year cohort (9th graders four years earlier), 5-year cohort (9th graders five years earlier), and 6-year cohort (9th graders six years earlier). There are approximately 100 Vermonters earning diplomas each year who would fall outside of the 4, 5, or 6-year calculations. Therefore, nearly 99% of graduates are included in the cohort graduation rates.

Data from SY14, including 4, 5, and 6 year cohort rates, by school:

High School Completion Report for 2013-2014:

PS ID	School Name	4 Year Cohort Class of 2011	5 Year Cohort Class of 2010	6 Year Cohort Class of 2009
Statewide Totals		88%	89.8%	89.8%
PS011	Arlington Memorial	86%	86%	97%
PS025	Bellows Falls UHSD #27	62%	78%	76%
PS405	Bellows Free Academy (Fairfax)	93%	93%	94%
PS406	Bellows Free Academy (St. Albans)	88%	90%	92%
PS035	Black River USD #39	86%	77%	90%
PS036	Blue Mountain USD #21	83%	81%	87%
PS040	Brattleboro Sr. UHSD #6	87%	85%	88%
PS052	Burlington Senior High School	88%	84%	90%
PS055	Cabot School	87%	92%	94%
PS059	Canaan Schools	89%	94%	93%
PS066	Champlain Valley UHSD #15	96%	98%	97%
PS069	Chelsea Elementary/High School	88%	69%	91%
PS072	Colchester High School	96%	94%	96%
PS074	Concord Schools		92%	77%
PS078	Craftsbury Schools	100%	94%	100%
PS082	Danville School	91%	89%	92%
PS098	Enosburg Falls Junior/Senior High School	88%	81%	86%
PS388	Essex High School	93%	95%	96%
PS104	Fair Haven UHSD #16	90%	88%	93%
PS124	Green Mountain UHSD #35	81%	88%	89%
PS134	Hartford High School	88%	92%	95%
PS138	Harwood UHSD #19	89%	96%	94%
PS139	Hazen UHSD #26	95%	91%	92%
PS157	Lake Region UHSD #24	90%	89%	92%
PS158	Lamoille UHSD #18	89%	92%	91%
PS161	Leland and Gray UHSD #34	78%	94%	88%
PS180	Middlebury Senior UHSD #3	86%	91%	94%
PS183	Mill River USD #40	88%	88%	91%
PS186	Milton Senior High School	91%	87%	91%
PS187	Missisquoi Valley UHSD #7	80%	88%	92%
PS191	Montpelier High School	90%	90%	94%
PS195	Mount Abraham UHSD #28	88%	91%	95%
PS196	Mt. Anthony Senior UHSD #14	82%	85%	86%

High School Completion Report for 2013-2014:

PS ID	School Name	4 Year Cohort Class of 2011	5 Year Cohort Class of 2010	6 Year Cohort Class of 2009
PS199	Mt. Mansfield USD #17	97%	93%	98%
PS208	North Country Senior UHSD #22	80%	89%	90%
PS211	Northfield Middle/High School	87%	91%	92%
PS219	Otter Valley UHSD #8	89%	96%	93%
PS220	Oxbow UHSD #30	90%	89%	85%
PS224	Peoples Academy	94%	98%	95%
PS230	Poultney High School	88%	95%	85%
PS233	Proctor Junior/Senior High School	96%	92%	96%
PS237	Randolph UHSD #2	80%	89%	91%
PS242	Richford Junior/Senior High School	79%	78%	89%
PI004	Rivendell Academy	84%	94%	87%
PS247	Rochester Elementary/High School	87%	92%	84%
PS253	Rutland Senior High School	90%	89%	89%
PS272	South Burlington High School	92%	95%	95%
PS274	South Royalton Elementary/High School	90%	84%	94%
PS276	Spaulding HSUD #41	85%	90%	88%
PS278	Springfield High School	82%	75%	78%
PS287	Stowe Middle/High School	98%	100%	100%
PS346	Twin Valley High School	84%	67%	85%
PS304	Twinfield USD #33	92%	85%	94%
PS305	U-32 High School (UHSD #32)	88%	93%	95%
PS312	Vergennes UHSD #5	91%	96%	97%
PS331	West Rutland School	91%	84%	86%
PS338	Whitcomb Junior/Senior High School	65%	100%	95%
PS344	Williamstown Middle/High School	71%	83%	74%
PS348	Windsor High School	76%	84%	86%
PS351	Winooski High School	54%	65%	75%
PS356	Woodstock Sr. UHSD #4	96%	97%	95%

In addition to requiring reporting on progress toward the goal of 100% graduation, Act 44 also encouraged the recommendation of “additional legislation, if any, necessary to ensure effective implementation by all school districts” of flexible pathways to graduation. The following recommendation was offered and resulted in the passage of Act 77, the Flexible Pathways Initiative, in 2013:

Act 44 introduced into law the phrase “Flexible Pathways to Graduation”. That phrase can serve as a useful organizing principle for the action steps needed in order to implement the innovations envisioned by Act 44. To begin this process, it is recommended that the phrase be codified in statute (it now appears in session law) as the title of a section designed to describe and fund a variety of innovative practices and programs leading to secondary graduation through non-traditional, flexible pathways. Innovative pathway elements that might be described under such statute would include work-based learning, virtual/blended learning, early college opportunities, and career and technical education. The practices and programs described would be those operated or contracted for by high schools, and meeting quality standards developed by the Agency of Education. High schools would be required to encourage and enable students to pursue such pathways in compliance with the expectations of Act 44.

It will also be important to define flexible pathways as distinct from the concept of multiple pathways. As the phrase is often used, multiple pathways are offered as a finite menu of programmatic offerings, one of which may be chosen by a student. Flexible pathways are limited in number only by the number of students pursuing them. That is, we should not define pathways in advance of development. Rather, we should continually develop elements that are determined to be of sufficient quality to be used within an approved pathway. Therefore, it will be essential that statute regarding “Flexible Pathways to Graduation” encourage the exploration and use of innovative practices. The goal of this legislation should be development and dissemination of the most promising innovations.

Act 77 of 2013 has codified these ideas and Vermont is now engaged in the implementation of that vision. The Vermont Agency of Education is committed to meeting this challenge and taking advantage of this opportunity to transform public education in Vermont.

Additional information about Vermont’s graduation rates can be found at this link: (http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Data_2013_2014_DropComplReport.pdf).

###