

Understanding Graduation Rates

What are graduation rates?

Graduation rates count how many students graduate from high school within four years. A school's graduation rate may reveal the success of the system built to help students progress through school and beyond¹ as well as the effectiveness of the supports available to students while in school.²

Why is measuring graduation rates important?

A high school diploma is often a standard requirement for jobs – students who don't graduate from high school may struggle with limited employment opportunities and wage restrictions.²

In addition, knowing the graduation rate of schools provides some insight on how both students and teachers are performing.² Studies have shown that students with more "high quality" teachers, rated by the students themselves, are more likely to graduate.^{3,4}

Ultimately, graduating from high school provides students with more opportunities to pursue different careers and higher education.² Studies have also shown that students who earn a high school diploma decreases the risk of premature death, positively impacting their health for the longterm.²

Who gets measured?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines, Ascend tracks the graduation rate on an annual basis for students in grade 12 at Weaver High School, the Promise Neighborhood high school.

How is the graduation rate measured?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines and Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) guidelines, Ascend calculates and reports the graduation rate annually using a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. The graduation rate includes students who graduate from high school in four years.

The graduation rate is calculated by:

1. Counting how many students graduated from high school in four years.
2. Counting how many students were in the graduating cohort after removing the students who transferred out of the school and adding the students who transferred in during the four years of high school.
3. Dividing the number of students who graduated by the number of students in the graduating cohort.
4. Multiplying by 100 to get the percentage of students graduating by cohort.

This calculation tells us the percentage of students that graduated from high school in four years.

Where does the data come from?

The information comes from publicly available data from the Connecticut State Department of Education (see public-edsight.ct.gov), though some details are limited due to privacy rules. This data lets Ascend track the graduation rate for the Promise Neighborhood high school each year. For comparison, Ascend also calculates the graduation rate for other Hartford Public Schools and for schools across the state.

How to Read the Graph

The graph below shows the graduation rate for high school students from the Class of 2021 through the Class of 2024.

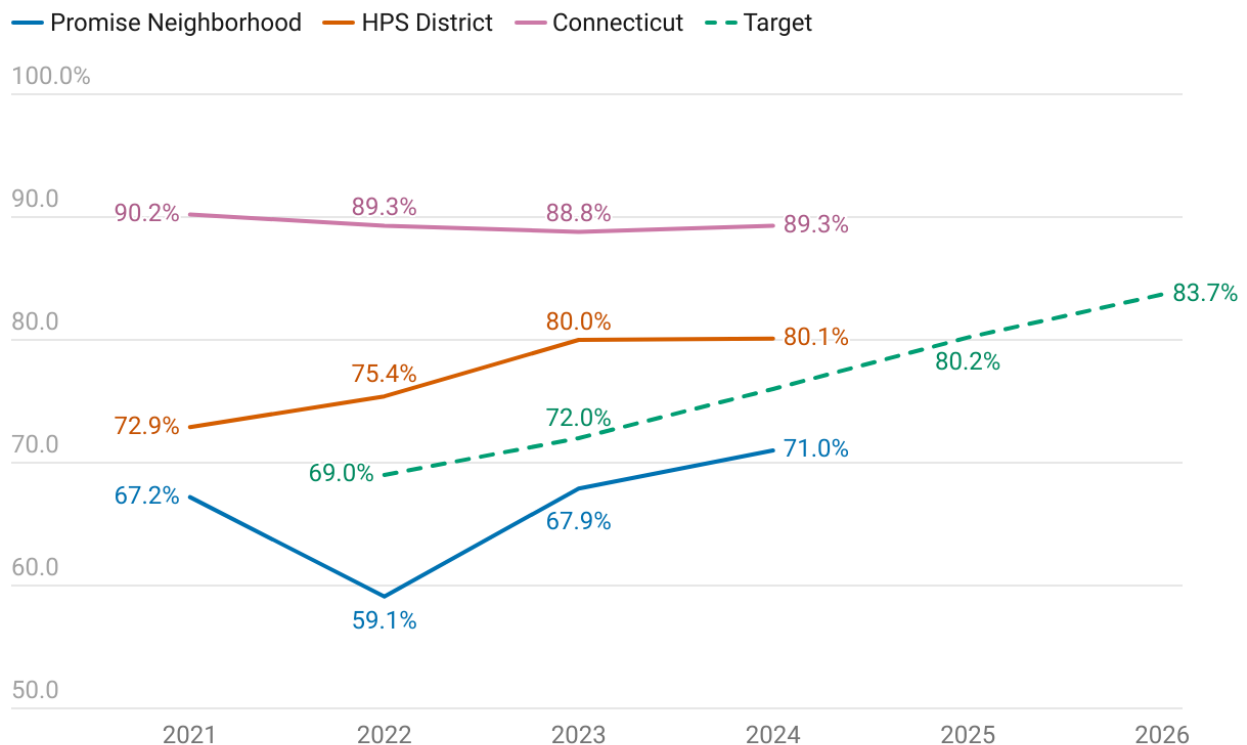
The orange line in the graph shows the graduation rate for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school, the blue line shows the percentages for students attending other Hartford Public Schools, and the pink line shows the percentages for students attending other Connecticut public schools. The dashed green line represents the Ascend target value set for this indicator for the years covered by the Promise Neighborhood grant.

For graduation rates, higher numbers are better!

What do the results show?

Graduation Rates

Percentage of four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates



Years refer to the graduation year.

Chart: Connecticut Data Collaborative • Source: Connecticut State Department of Education • Created with Datawrapper

- For the graduating class of 2024, 71% of eligible seniors attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school graduated, which is five points below the target value for the year.
- Compared to the class of 2023, graduation rates for students attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school improved by 3.1 points for the class of 2024.
- The Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school has achieved a 3.8-point net improvement in graduation rates over the baseline.
- While the graduation rate for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school remained lower than the rest of the district and state, the improvements last year continue to close the gap that expanded with the Class of 2022.

Why is this happening?

Studies have shown that the following are individual-level factors that promote high school graduation⁵:

- Intrinsic motivation, such as being motivated to do tasks that are particularly interesting or enjoyable
- School engagement, such as attending class, completing assignments, liking school, or being curious
- Student expectations for life after high school, such as obtaining an education beyond high school or positive expectations for the future
- Student belief that they control their academic outcomes, such as feeling in control over one's life

This increase may also be a reflection of the positive impact of the current programs in the community and Ascend. The work being done must be sustained to continue the upward trend of graduation rates.

How can Ascend help increase graduation rates?

Several programs within Ascend help students graduate within our neighborhood:

[**COMPASS Youth Collaborative**](#) enrolls youth who have been impacted by violence between the ages 16 and 20 in a four-year program to build transformative relationships if they have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Youth at risk of not transitioning to adulthood successfully
- Youth exposed to violence
- Juvenile justice involvement
- Gang association or affiliation

Youth are provided with comprehensive case management, such as:

- Mental health support
- Life skills classes
- Connections to education and employment

The mission of this program is to take youth from trauma to trusting relationships to transformation.

[**Hartford Promise**](#) offers mentoring and college scholarships to students who:

- Maintain a 93% attendance record
- Have a 3.0 GPA
- Stay Hartford residents throughout high school
- Attend a Hartford public high school continuously from 9th to 12th grade

Students who qualify can receive up to \$100,000 for college, which may encourage students to stay on track and graduate from high school.

Hartford Public Schools offers multiple programs, services, and supports to students and their families as part of the Full-Service Community School model implemented at each of the Promise Neighborhood schools. These services may be provided by either school staff (e.g., FCSSPs, School Social Workers) or community-based organization partner(s), or both working in conjunction with each other. They provide the following types of support to students and to other members of their families:

- Integrated Student Supports (at all schools) promote students' academic success by developing and coordinating supports that target academic and non-academic barriers to achievement, including providing resources and supports to meet basic needs.
- Family Engagement services (at all schools) involve outreach and engagement with family members, including providing direct assistance to family members of the student. A few examples include Parent Engagement Groups, home visits, back-to-school events, and parent-teacher conferences.
- Referrals to outside organizations (at all schools) address needs that require a higher level of care or access to resources available outside of the school, such as housing, employment, food, and energy assistance.
- Family Resource Centers (at S.A.N.D. and Wish elementary schools) provide access to a continuum of services that foster the optimal development and education of children beginning at birth. They provide early childhood education, child care, and family support services to meet the specific needs that are presented when engaging with families.
- Career and Workforce Development (at MLK and Milner middle schools and Weaver High School) includes programs and services that support post-secondary education and career development, in-school or out-of-school, such as those that link students to higher education, vocational training, or work-based learning opportunities, or connect classroom learning to career pathways. This area also includes efforts to engage parents and provide financial resources for continued learning and/or student transition assistance.

The [Hartford Youth Service Corps](#) with Our Piece of the Pie provides youth with:

- The skills to get and keep a job
- Paid service-learning projects
- Internships
- Job placement
- Job readiness training
- Personal development workshops

Youth gain the confidence to grow professionally through this program while supporting the local community.

The [Summer Youth Employment & Learning Program \(SYELP\)](#) with Capital Workforce Partners teaches youth 14 and up how to:

- Manage their money
- Write a resume
- Remain professional in work environments
- Work with local employers to build job skills and gain work experience

With this program, youth are prepared for their future after high school.

[Young Legends](#) with the United Way Central and Northeastern Connecticut connects youth ages 16-29 to quality employment opportunities and resources. The programs and trainings that youth participate in equip them with the skills needed to become successful in and out of the workplace. Youth are also given the opportunity to:

- Be a part of a peer outreach network
- Share their perspectives with leaders in the workforce system to influence policies and practices

The data reveals an opportunity to continue engaging these programs to support high schoolers graduate.

References

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