

# High School Graduation

## Definition

*High school graduation* is the number and percent of students graduating within four years of entering high school and those with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who take longer than four years to complete high school.

## Data in context

High school graduation provides youth with the first step toward future success. All youth need supportive environments, including components such as challenging and meaningful coursework, skilled and engaged teachers, and individualized attention, to succeed in high school.<sup>1</sup> The cost of not having these opportunities is great. High school graduates earn an average annual salary of \$29,448, compared to \$19,915 for workers without high school diplomas.<sup>2</sup> The financial reward is just one of the advantages of high school graduation. Studies show high school graduates are less likely to face unemployment, access public assistance, or serve time in prison than those who do not complete high school.<sup>3</sup>

Research indicates only 75 percent of all students entering the ninth grade graduated on time with a regular diploma in the 2004-05 school year.<sup>4</sup> Disproportionate access to quality schools means rates of graduation vary by region, income, and race. The Southern region of the United States is particularly susceptible to high dropout rates; students in low-income, racially isolated areas have lower graduation rates regardless of their race.<sup>5</sup> In 2005, Black and Hispanic students had higher dropout rates than White students in Kentucky.<sup>6</sup> The state is investigating options to address these disparities and the issue of dropouts, including a major overhaul of secondary education and improved technology to better track and analyze data on youth leaving Kentucky schools.<sup>7</sup>

Dropout measures, such as the number of youth who are not attending school and have not graduated



from high school or earned an equivalent degree, provide an estimate of the total number of youth with limited educational attainment. Nine percent of the Commonwealth's youth ages 16 to 19 had dropped out of high school in 2005, a rate comparable to rates in other Southern states.<sup>8</sup> While this represents an improvement over Kentucky's 2000 rate, the Commonwealth still lags behind the national average and ranks in the bottom half among states.<sup>9</sup>

Kentucky's graduation rate increased from 79 percent in SY 2003 to 83 percent for SY 2006. Graduation rates improved in 115 Kentucky school districts during this time, with Dayton Independent leading (a 65 percent increase). Twenty-one school districts reported a 95 percent or better graduation rate, including three school districts with 100 percent: Augusta Independent, Jackson Independent, and Silver Grove Independent. In contrast, nine school districts reported that at least one quarter of their students did not graduate. Middlesboro Independent had the lowest graduation rate (61 percent).

Research suggests that dropping out of school is a process with multiple components including community, school, family, and individual factors.<sup>10</sup> Kentucky can strengthen its workforce and economy by increasing the relevancy of high school for young

students and keeping them engaged. All students benefit from having highly qualified teachers and individualized attention, especially when they struggle with courses.<sup>11</sup>

**Data Source:** Kentucky Department of Education.

**Data Note:** Independent school districts are listed after the school district for the county in which they are located. For the rate calculation, dropouts from the graduating class include students from the class that dropped out at any point during the four years.

**Rate Calculation:** (Number of on-time high school graduates in school year 2003 \* 100) / (Total number of high school graduates in school year 2003 + dropouts from graduating class)  
(Number of on-time high school graduates in school year 2006 \* 100) / (Total number of high school graduates in school year 2006 + dropouts from graduating class)

- 1 Alliance for Excellent Education (2006). *Is Your Local High School Making the Grade? 10 Elements of a Successful High School*. Available at <http://www.all4ed.org>. Accessed August 2007.
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau (2007). *Earnings Gap Highlighted by Census Bureau Data on Educational Attainment*. Press release. Available at <http://www.census.gov>. Accessed August 2007.
- 3 Kaufman, P., Alt, M., and Chapman, C. (2004). *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2001 (NCES 2005-046)*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- 4 Sable, J., and Garofano, A. (2007). *Public Elementary and Secondary School Student Enrollment, High School Completions, and Staff from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2005-06*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov>. Accessed August 2007.
- 5 Swanson, C. (2005). *Who Graduates in the South?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- 6 Kentucky Board of Education (2006). *Briefing Paper: Dropout Prevention and Persistence to Graduation*. Available at <http://www.education.ky.gov>. Accessed August 2007.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Annie E. Casey Foundation (2007). *2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Hammond, C., Smink, J., Drew, S., and Linton, D. (2007). *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: a Technical Report*. Available at <http://www.dropoutprevention.org>. Accessed August 2007.
- 11 Alliance for Excellent Education (2006). *Is Your Local High School Making the Grade? 10 Elements of a Successful High School*. Available at <http://www.all4ed.org>. Accessed August 2007.

# High school graduation (number & percent of all students)

|                    | SY 2003       |           | SY 2006       |           |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
|                    | Number        | Percent   | Number        | Percent   |
| <b>Kentucky</b>    | <b>36,379</b> | <b>79</b> | <b>37,083</b> | <b>83</b> |
| Adair Co.          | 141           | 66        | 155           | 72        |
| Allen Co.          | 194           | 74        | 201           | 89        |
| Anderson Co.       | 227           | 88        | 235           | 86        |
| Ballard Co.        | 66            | 83        | 96            | 94        |
| Barren Co.         | 235           | 80        | 237           | 85        |
| Caverna Ind.       | 41            | 79        | 51            | 91        |
| Glasgow Ind.       | 109           | 79        | 90            | 87        |
| Bath Co.           | 89            | 67        | 114           | 83        |
| Bell Co.           | 173           | 69        | 184           | 74        |
| Middlesboro Ind.   | 83            | 67        | 77            | 61        |
| Pineville Ind.     | 28            | 85        | 38            | 88        |
| Boone Co.          | 899           | 91        | 840           | 87        |
| Walton Verona Ind. | 74            | 99        | 89            | 98        |
| Bourbon Co.        | 168           | 90        | 171           | 88        |
| Paris Ind.         | 48            | 91        | 33            | 89        |
| Boyd Co.           | 229           | 86        | 199           | 85        |
| Ashland Ind.       | 184           | 86        | 215           | 84        |
| Fairview Ind.      | 43            | 88        | 61            | 98        |
| Boyle Co.          | 178           | 82        | 159           | 89        |
| Danville Ind.      | 98            | 85        | 113           | 88        |
| Bracken Co.        | 77            | 92        | 87            | 95        |
| Augusta Ind.       | 16            | 100       | 24            | 100       |
| Breathitt Co.      | 110           | 50        | 114           | 81        |
| Jackson Ind.       | 28            | 82        | 20            | 100       |
| Breckinridge Co.   | 173           | 79        | 180           | 87        |
| Cloverport Ind.    | 22            | 100       | 14            | 93        |
| Bullitt Co.        | 627           | 81        | 627           | 79        |
| Butler Co.         | 141           | 89        | 143           | 89        |
| Caldwell Co.       | 146           | 85        | 142           | 90        |
| Calloway Co.       | 189           | 90        | 202           | 95        |
| Murray Ind.        | 118           | 99        | 143           | 97        |
| Campbell Co.       | 303           | 85        | 299           | 86        |
| Bellevue Ind.      | 47            | 85        | 62            | 93        |
| Dayton Ind.        | 36            | 54        | 67            | 89        |
| Fort Thomas Ind.   | 180           | 97        | 185           | 96        |
| Newport Ind.       | 142           | 87        | 111           | 85        |
| Silver Grove Ind.  | 15            | 94        | 14            | 100       |
| Southgate Ind.     | *             | *         | *             | *         |
| Carlisle Co.       | 58            | 88        | 46            | 85        |
| Carroll Co.        | 89            | 70        | 94            | 85        |
| Carter Co.         | 273           | 84        | 286           | 83        |
| Casey Co.          | 134           | 82        | 137           | 88        |
| Christian Co.      | 475           | 75        | 421           | 83        |
| Clark Co.          | 280           | 69        | 297           | 74        |

|                     | SY 2003 |         | SY 2006 |         |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                     | Number  | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| Clay Co.            | 190     | 58      | 199     | 74      |
| Clinton Co.         | 64      | 74      | 76      | 78      |
| Crittenden Co.      | 98      | 90      | 99      | 88      |
| Cumberland Co.      | 76      | 72      | 68      | 80      |
| Daviess Co.         | 737     | 91      | 696     | 93      |
| Owensboro Ind.      | 223     | 84      | 200     | 87      |
| Edmonson Co.        | 138     | 84      | 118     | 81      |
| Elliott Co.         | 76      | 78      | 59      | 76      |
| Estill Co.          | 142     | 74      | 133     | 81      |
| Fayette Co.         | 1,672   | 75      | 1,848   | 79      |
| Fleming Co.         | 137     | 79      | 154     | 80      |
| Floyd Co.           | 395     | 75      | 400     | 84      |
| Franklin Co.        | 336     | 78      | 336     | 84      |
| Frankfort Ind.      | 68      | 80      | 73      | 80      |
| Fulton Co.          | 51      | 85      | 51      | 84      |
| Fulton Ind.         | 37      | 86      | 22      | 85      |
| Gallatin Co.        | 50      | 74      | 79      | 87      |
| Garrard Co.         | 142     | 74      | 123     | 83      |
| Grant Co.           | 212     | 79      | 223     | 76      |
| Williamstown Ind.   | 41      | 77      | 37      | 76      |
| Graves Co.          | 250     | 79      | 273     | 87      |
| Mayfield Ind.       | 80      | 84      | 78      | 74      |
| Grayson Co.         | 270     | 78      | 266     | 87      |
| Green Co.           | 107     | 91      | 112     | 97      |
| Greenup Co.         | 193     | 77      | 181     | 83      |
| Raceland Ind.       | 70      | 99      | 57      | 95      |
| Russell Ind.        | 158     | 95      | 153     | 92      |
| Hancock Co.         | 83      | 98      | 100     | 98      |
| Hardin Co.          | 876     | 80      | 891     | 78      |
| Elizabethtown Ind.  | 167     | 85      | 170     | 90      |
| West Point Ind.     | *       | *       | *       | *       |
| Harlan Co.          | 327     | 75      | 280     | 70      |
| Harlan Ind.         | 51      | 75      | 40      | 80      |
| Harrison Co.        | 211     | 88      | 187     | 92      |
| Hart Co.            | 140     | 84      | 148     | 86      |
| Henderson Co.       | 424     | 74      | 410     | 85      |
| Henry Co.           | 137     | 81      | 113     | 79      |
| Eminec Ind.         | 18      | 86      | 26      | 87      |
| Hickman Co.         | 45      | 82      | 57      | 90      |
| Hopkins Co.         | 432     | 84      | 431     | 79      |
| Dawson Springs Ind. | 32      | 80      | 39      | 83      |
| Jackson Co.         | 130     | 84      | 116     | 79      |
| Jefferson Co.       | 4,610   | 69      | 4,739   | 74      |
| Anchorage Ind.      | *       | *       | *       | *       |
| Jessamine Co.       | 342     | 72      | 371     | 78      |

|                       | SY 2003 |         | SY 2006 |         |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                       | Number  | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| Johnson Co.           | 211     | 84      | 217     | 92      |
| Paintsville Ind.      | 57      | 77      | 50      | 91      |
| Kenton Co.            | 753     | 91      | 844     | 90      |
| Beechwood Ind.        | 81      | 99      | 80      | 98      |
| Covington Ind.        | 194     | 89      | 155     | 89      |
| Erlanger-Elsmere Ind. | 94      | 87      | 106     | 88      |
| Ludlow Ind.           | 64      | 93      | 73      | 97      |
| Knott Co.             | 153     | 72      | 150     | 83      |
| Knox Co.              | 225     | 63      | 247     | 77      |
| Barbourville Ind.     | 44      | 100     | 36      | 97      |
| Larue Co.             | 152     | 80      | 141     | 88      |
| Laurel Co.            | 440     | 72      | 507     | 80      |
| East Bernstadt Ind.   | *       | *       | *       | *       |
| Lawrence Co.          | 164     | 76      | 154     | 78      |
| Lee Co.               | 70      | 78      | 78      | 76      |
| Leslie Co.            | 147     | 79      | 122     | 77      |
| Letcher Co.           | 201     | 77      | 170     | 84      |
| Jenkins Ind.          | 38      | 97      | 34      | 97      |
| Lewis Co.             | 143     | 81      | 127     | 89      |
| Lincoln Co.           | 240     | 71      | 253     | 77      |
| Livingston Co.        | 87      | 89      | 77      | 85      |
| Logan Co.             | 195     | 78      | 244     | 88      |
| Russellville Ind.     | 85      | 89      | 68      | 85      |
| Lyon Co.              | 64      | 86      | 52      | 93      |
| McCracken Co.         | 415     | 91      | 391     | 94      |
| Paducah Ind.          | 159     | 70      | 155     | 79      |
| McCreary Co.          | 175     | 76      | 192     | 88      |
| McLean Co.            | 114     | 85      | 101     | 89      |
| Madison Co.           | 449     | 88      | 575     | 89      |
| Berea Ind.            | 61      | 86      | 71      | 90      |
| Magoffin Co.          | 144     | 72      | 135     | 89      |
| Marion Co.            | 172     | 84      | 167     | 82      |
| Marshall Co.          | 276     | 83      | 259     | 90      |
| Martin Co.            | 151     | 79      | 119     | 79      |
| Mason Co.             | 165     | 86      | 153     | 81      |
| Meade Co.             | 323     | 81      | 353     | 86      |
| Menifee Co.           | 98      | 74      | 68      | 91      |
| Mercer Co.            | 152     | 94      | 178     | 94      |
| Burgin Ind.           | 21      | 84      | 35      | 95      |
| Harrodsburg Ind.      | 50      | 86      | 43      | 88      |
| Metcalfe Co.          | 55      | 73      | 95      | 88      |
| Monroe Co.            | 118     | 84      | 116     | 87      |
| Montgomery Co.        | 203     | 79      | 194     | 83      |
| Morgan Co.            | 150     | 78      | 143     | 80      |
| Muhlenberg Co.        | 348     | 83      | 307     | 87      |

|                     | SY 2003 |         | SY 2006 |         |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                     | Number  | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| Nelson Co.          | 304     | 87      | 318     | 89      |
| Bardstown Ind.      | 103     | 74      | 116     | 86      |
| Nicholas Co.        | 69      | 85      | 64      | 85      |
| Ohio Co.            | 244     | 89      | 221     | 86      |
| Oldham Co.          | 612     | 93      | 674     | 94      |
| Owen Co.            | 92      | 74      | 110     | 76      |
| Owsley Co.          | 53      | 79      | 49      | 88      |
| Pendleton Co.       | 185     | 91      | 191     | 92      |
| Perry Co.           | 200     | 68      | 231     | 86      |
| Hazard Ind.         | 77      | 88      | 68      | 99      |
| Pike Co.            | 583     | 84      | 568     | 86      |
| Pikeville Ind.      | 79      | 83      | 83      | 94      |
| Powell Co.          | 125     | 68      | 140     | 79      |
| Pulaski Co.         | 503     | 79      | 469     | 83      |
| Science Hill Ind.   | *       | *       | *       | *       |
| Somerset Ind.       | 91      | 85      | 104     | 88      |
| Robertson Co.       | 14      | 82      | 27      | 90      |
| Rockcastle Co.      | 185     | 77      | 193     | 85      |
| Rowan Co.           | 171     | 80      | 167     | 78      |
| Russell Co.         | 135     | 70      | 187     | 70      |
| Scott Co.           | 332     | 77      | 350     | 81      |
| Shelby Co.          | 305     | 78      | 316     | 86      |
| Simpson Co.         | 167     | 87      | 159     | 82      |
| Spencer Co.         | 131     | 89      | 123     | 88      |
| Taylor Co.          | 204     | 90      | 190     | 89      |
| Campbellsville Ind. | 76      | 76      | 82      | 89      |
| Todd Co.            | 127     | 85      | 95      | 92      |
| Trigg Co.           | 109     | 78      | 129     | 84      |
| Trimble Co.         | 92      | 87      | 89      | 84      |
| Union Co.           | 147     | 81      | 142     | 82      |
| Warren Co.          | 693     | 87      | 803     | 91      |
| Bowling Green Ind.  | 208     | 87      | 192     | 85      |
| Washington Co.      | 140     | 84      | 116     | 94      |
| Wayne Co.           | 145     | 74      | 170     | 84      |
| Monticello Ind.     | 48      | 81      | 57      | 93      |
| Webster Co.         | 139     | 84      | 125     | 86      |
| Providence Ind.     | 24      | 89      | 29      | 97      |
| Whitley Co.         | 209     | 79      | 239     | 87      |
| Corbin Ind.         | 158     | 91      | 161     | 98      |
| Williamsburg Ind.   | 46      | 84      | 43      | 93      |
| Wolfe Co.           | 84      | 76      | 79      | 99      |
| Woodford Co.        | 245     | 86      | 274     | 93      |

\* No high school in the district.