

# Iowa Department of Education announces 2023 high school graduation rate, corrects other rates after identifying error

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DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Education today announced a graduation rate of 87.5% for Iowa's class of 2023. Lower than graduation rates reported in previous years, the 2023 rate was calculated using a newly corrected code after the department identified an error in the legacy calculation code that had been used for at least ten years to determine the state's four- and five-year graduation rates.

The Department's Information and Analysis Services team discovered that mobile students who transferred between districts and later dropped out had been inadvertently removed from the student cohort rather than included as

non-graduates. As a result, graduation rates for the previous 10 years were calculated and reported at a higher than actual rate. Education leaders were informed about the error, which has now been corrected.

Using the corrected code, the Department of Education reports that Iowa's four-year high school graduation rate for the graduating class of 2023 is 87.5%, up 0.1% from the corrected rate for the graduating class of 2022.

Iowa's four-year graduation rate for the class of 2023 is consistent with the national standard and its neighboring states. Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota recently reported 2023 graduation rates below Iowa's, at 83.3%, 87.2% and 84.1%, respectively. Illinois' reported class of 2023 graduation rate was 87.6%. Among neighboring states, only Missouri and Wisconsin reported class of 2023 graduation rates meaningfully above Iowa's, at 89.9% and 90.5% respectively.

"The Department is committed to empowering Iowans with accurate, actionable information on education outcomes," said Iowa Department of Education Director McKenzie Snow. "Focused on transparency, the Department identified, corrected, and communicated the error in the underlying code, which has existed for at least 10 years, and its impact on previously reported graduation rates. The Department immediately instituted additional quality assurance measures and, moving forward, is modernizing its data verification procedures."

"Calculating graduation rates is a complex process that requires examining four years of student-level data and includes taking into account multiple change events, such as when students move between districts or initially drop out but choose to re-enroll at a later date," said Jay Pennington, Bureau Chief of Information and Analysis Services at the Iowa Department of Education. "Upon a fresh review of the legacy code that had been used to calculate prior graduation rates, we identified that the code had not properly sequenced certain events. Specifically, students who transferred between districts and later dropped out were removed when they should have been kept in the cohort. The Department

corrected the error, conducted a comprehensive review of the underlying code, and will conduct student-level data reviews and data comparisons to ensure data quality in future years.”

Corrected four-year graduation rates for the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 dropped slightly from what were originally reported. The corrected four-year graduation rate for the class of 2022 is 87.4%, down 2.5 percentage points from what was previously announced last year. For the graduating class of 2021, the corrected rate is 87.8%, down 2.4 percentage points from what was announced in 2022.

Iowa’s corrected five-year graduation rate — which reflects students who were part of a graduating class but took an extra year to finish high school — was 89.7% for the Class of 2022, and 90.1% for the Class of 2021. The five-year graduation rate for the class of 2023 will not be available until spring 2025.

Iowa’s annual dropout rate was not impacted by the code error and reflects the percent of students in grades 9-12 who dropped out of school during a single year. The annual dropout rate was 3.02% for the 2022-23 school year, which represents 4,718 students in grades 9 through 12. This is down slightly from the 3.04% annual dropout rate for the 2021-22 school year.

Corrected rates for the graduating classes of 2021, 2022 and 2023, including rates by school district and student group, are available on the Department of Education’s **Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates webpage**

(<https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/data/education-statistics/graduation-dropout-rates>).