On-Time Graduation Rates

Virginia Department of Education defines on-time graduation as the percentage of students who earned a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years of entering high school for the first time. On-time graduation rates have been steadily climbing in Virginia from 2009 thru the 2020 school year moving from 85.5% in 2010 to 92.5% in 2020. Black students have made even greater gains across this period, from 80.4% in 2011 to 91.4% graduating within four years in 2020.

Across Hampton Roads, the same upward state trend is evident across the decade. The regional average on-time graduation rate increased steadily from 82% in 2010 to 92.6% in 2020. Black students mirrored the trend, from a regional average of 79.7% in 2010 to 92.4% in 2020, effectively matching the total regional and state population average.

Due to the large variation between localities, we examine local differences. For Black students, gains ranged from 7.8 to approximately 24 percentage points, with an average improvement of 17 percentage points. Portsmouth and Southampton made the most dramatic gains, both showing upward trends from lows in 2010 of 66.1% and 72.9% respectively, to highs of 89.6% and 95% in 2020, a similar pattern to Hampton, which also showed very impressive steady gains (from 78% in 2010 to 96% in 2020).

While every locality showed improvement over time, two locality rates remained notably lower to the state average. Norfolk and Suffolk remained more than 6.8 and 7.2 percentage points lower than the state average in 2020. Future research could help better understand whether on-time graduation rates reflect students leaving school, obtaining alternate certification, or moving out of state without transfer notice (Suffolk in particular borders North Carolina).

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