

Region VII On-Time Graduation Rate Report

Virginia's On-Time Graduation Rate is the measure of students who earn a Virginia Board of Education approved diploma within four years of entering the ninth grade. Virginia Board of Education approved diplomas used in the definition of the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate (OGR) are listed below. It is important to note that the Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is not used in state or federal accountability measures.

Advanced Studies Diploma
Standard Diploma
Modified Standard Diploma
Special Diploma
General Achievement Diploma

Data

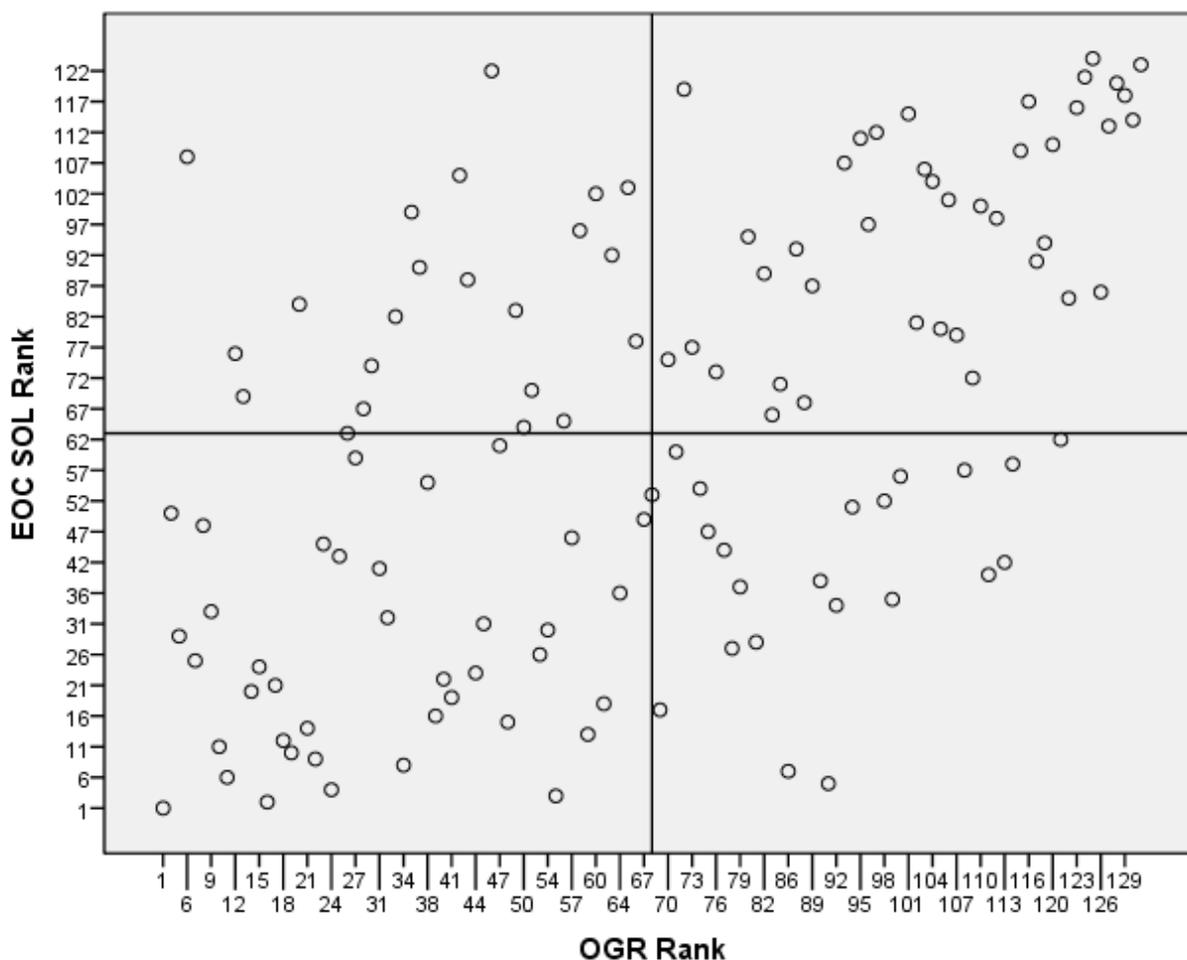
Across the Commonwealth, a public school division's success in helping students earn a passing score on SOL tests does have a correlation with that division's ability to ensure that students graduate on-time. SOL pass rates and Comparisons were conducted between the overall SOL pass rate performance and the OGR performance. These figures were compiled from VDOE data sets, and school divisions were rank ordered relative to their SOL and OGR performance, and ranks assigned accordingly.

A Spearman's rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between 124 school divisions' (all the divisions for which data sets are available on VDOE's website) SOL pass rate rank and OGR rank. There was significant correlation between these metrics whether considering all SOL tests ($r_s(124) = .569, p = .000$) or only EOC SOL test ($r_s(123) = .553, p = .000$).

When examining individual division results, there are some inconsistencies between SOL pass rate ranks and OGR ranks. For example, the 4th highest performing division on 2015 SOL tests was the 55th highest performing division on 2015 OGR. Conversely, the 121st highest performing division on 2015 SOL tests was the 46th highest performing division on 2015 OGR. Overall, there was an absolute difference of 27 ranks between SOL performance and OGR performance ranking among divisions in the state. In 2015, 36% of divisions had a higher rank on the OGR, 62% had a higher rank on SOL performance, and 2 divisions (1.6%) had the same rank on OGR and SOL performance.

According to the distributions shown in the scatterplot below, approximately 1/3 of the school divisions are in the top 50th percentile of EOC SOL ranks and in the top 50th percentile of OGR ranks. Conversely, approximately 1/3 of the school divisions are in the bottom 50th percentile of EOC SOL ranks and in the bottom 50th percentile of OGR ranks. These facts demonstrate that higher pass rates make higher OGR ranks more achievable, and that the opposite is somewhat true as well.

On the other hand, the remaining third of school divisions were split among the outlier areas. Approximately 1/6 of the school divisions are in the top 50th percentile of EOC SOL ranks and in the bottom 50th percentile of OGR ranks. The remaining 1/6 of the school divisions are in the bottom 50th percentile of EOC SOL ranks and in the top 50th percentile of OGR ranks. These facts illustrate that there are certainly some other factors than SOL pass rates that influence OGR.



Successful School Analysis

With the understanding that high SOL pass rates do not necessarily guarantee high OGR successes, it is important to understand what divisions have done to realize high OGR performance. This report will attempt to describe the processes, climates, and cultures present which have helped high percentages of students graduate on-time. Two divisions were identified through the use of data provided by the Virginia Department of Education website that experienced a high success rate relative to the OGR in 2015, and also had experienced high achievement on this measure consistently since 2011. High school students in one of these divisions attend school on a six-period day and the other on block schedule. High school and central office personnel from these two divisions were interviewed to determine what they have done to positively impact OGR data.

School Division #1

This division began the journey to improve graduation outcomes for students several years ago. This school made significant improvements in the OGR rank for economically disadvantaged students from 2008 (111th) to 2015 (17th). This division has utilized a 6 period day scheduling model for high school students.

1. Truancy

Truancy is handled very proactively by this division. An attendance committee made up of school, central office, social services, mental health services, and court services personnel, as well as the school resource office, the parent(s), and the student is convened when a student accumulates 5 unexcused absences. The committee examines information about this student, and works collaboratively across the organizations present to provide any services the student may need to be successful in school. Upon the seventh unexcused absence, truancy charges are filed in court. This division files charges very infrequently, and has a 96% daily attendance rate.

2. Daily Grades are entered in student information system.

Teachers enter daily grades in the student information system so that all appropriate stakeholders can monitor student performance in real-time. Students and parents have access to this information through their individual, secure student information system account. Principals monitor this information periodically to determine if any students are in need of interventions.

3. Freshmen Transition Program

This division had implemented a Freshmen Transition Program several years ago. This program is coordinated by a teacher who is granted one duty period per day to address this need. The coordinator meets with all incoming freshmen in small groups during the first few weeks of school to provide intensive high school orientation. Orientation topics include the differences between 8th and 9th grades, how to use the student information system to monitor grades, the effect a 0 has on grade averages, grade promotion requirements, how to effectively deal with teachers, how to access tutoring, as well as other topics. After the first grading period, the coordinator turns her attention turns to students who earned D's and F's. She actively works with these students to determine the cause of their struggles and find solutions.

While the 9th Grade Mentor Program itself is important, it was noted in the interview that the selection of the coordinator is critical. While the coordinator works closely with the assistant principal, this individual must be a self-starter who is committed to the success of the student. This individual typically spends time before and after school ensuring students who need it are involved in tutoring, or meeting with parents, students, and teachers to ensure students are successful.

The coordinator also coordinates the sharing of information among teachers of a specific student. This collaboration helps teachers to better identify the needs of that student and allows them to work together on strategies to help this student.

The Freshmen Transition Program was begun in 2006 after the division became aware of the fact that 16% of the freshman class was retained from the previous year. By the end of 2006, the retention rate decreased to 6%, and has remained steady at 2%-3% per year since then.

4. SPED Case managers

At this high school, special education teachers are staffed by grade rather than by content area. Special education teachers at each grade serve in the same capacity as the Freshmen Transition Program coordinator, in addition to their special education duties.

5. Tutoring and Credit Recovery

Credit recover addressed through the use of [Apex Learning](#). Students usually don't get involved with credit recovery until their Junior or Senior year. When students are involved with credit recovery, they are scheduled for a period for the entire year to retake the course online.

A handful of teachers provide additional tutoring services year round. Some tutoring takes place before school, some after school, and a total of two periods of one teacher's day are set aside for tutoring.

6. 9th Grade Teachers

Teachers for 9th grade are carefully selected by the school leadership. Only teachers that are highly sensitive of the social, emotional, and educational needs of students are scheduled to teach 9th grade courses.

7. Graduation is a Priority

From the conversations during the interview, it is apparent that the attention of the entire school and central office is focused on ensuring students graduate from high school. School administrators report that they spend much more time on helping students to graduate than they spend on other pursuits, such as athletics. The superintendent and executive central office leaders know the names and situations of students who are at risk of dropping out, as well as the interventions that are in place to support them.

School Division #2

This division has traditionally enjoyed high OGRs relative to the other divisions in the state. In 2008, this division's OGR rank was 11th for all students, 8th for economically disadvantaged students, and 5th for students with disabilities. This division has utilized a 4X4 block scheduling model for high school students.

1. Vocational Program

The school feels that the division has a very strong vocational program which helps to keep some of their students involved in school long enough to earn a diploma.

2. Summer Remediation Programs

This division operates two different summer remediation programs. These programs are held in one attendance area, and students from all attendance areas attend these same programs. Transportation was provided at one time, but is no longer provided. All high school students, regardless of grade placement, who are in need of these services are encouraged to attend. The division reports that while not every student in need takes advantage of these services, attendance is generally very good.

The first program is for students who had failed a SOL test the previous year that the student needs to pass in order to earn a verified credit. Teachers work with students in small groups or in individual settings and use Pearson's Student Detail by Question (SDBQ) reports to target skills for remediation.

The second program is the credit recovery program. This had traditionally focused on English course work only, but within the last year has opened up to math courses as well. Approximately 3% of the division's high school student population participated in this program last summer.

3. Night Program

This division offers a night program to certain graduating seniors as an option to stay in school long enough to earn their diploma. These students attend classes for two days per week after school hours. This program provides credits in English 12 and Government.

4. Early Graduation

At risk students who are overage and who will turn 18 before their senior year (or shortly into senior year) are allowed to graduate early. The school counselor works with the students to develop a schedule and sequence of courses that will accelerate their earning of high school course requirements. Block scheduling affords the provision for early graduation due to the fact that students can earn up to 24 credits in three years.

5. Personal Contacts

Administrative staff (principal, assistant principal, and school counselor) at the school make personal contacts when at-risk students begin to falter. If the student is still enrolled, they make regular contacts with the student to counsel and determine what additional supports are needed. Whether by phone call or home visit, the staff engage with the student and the student's family to reinforce the importance of earning a high school diploma as well as to work out a viable solution to help the student overcome whatever obstacle may be interfering with their schooling. The staff believes that the personal touch of visiting a family at their home makes a real difference in some situations.

6. Truancy

The principal and assistant principal at this school take a very "hands on" approach to attendance. Each student who returns to school following an absence must present his/her excuse to the principal or assistant principal. The administration keeps very good attendance records, and while the student is there, he checks the student's attendance record. If the student has reached the point in the attendance policy when they must thereafter bring a doctor's note to be considered excused, the administrator discusses that fact with the student immediately. Any other communication is conducted with the student on the spot as needed. This division has maintained a consistent 95% attendance rate over the last three years.

7. Success is a Priority

Any time a student begins to falter in a class, the teacher will contact either the principal, assistant principal, or the guidance counselor for help. At that point, they will collaboratively work to help the student be successful. Therefore, there is a relatively small occurrence of students who fail a course. Since students are provided with appropriate supports, in the classroom as well as with regards SOL tests, they have been much more likely to earn the prerequisite credits required to be promoted to the next grade each year, and are therefore graduating on time. The principal of the school said it best: "A kid really has to work hard not to graduate high school on time".