Common Data Project
2014 Annual Report
School Year 2012–2013

Improving the Quality and Comparability of State Educational Data in New England
The New England Secondary School Consortium Common Data Project:
2014 Annual Report: School Year 2012-2013

This report was written by Research in Action, Inc. (d.b.a., The RIA Group) under contract with the Great Schools Partnership. The report was produced in collaboration with the departments and agencies of education in the New England Secondary School Consortium’s five member states of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

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ABOUT THE COMMON DATA PROJECT

Beginning in 2009, the five state education agencies (SEAs) participating in the New England Secondary School Consortium have been collecting, calculating, and reporting graduation rates, dropout rates, and postsecondary-enrollment and -persistence rates using consistent procedures and methodologies co-developed by a regional team of data specialists from the departments and agencies of education in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. To our knowledge, the New England Secondary School Consortium’s Common Data Project is the first initiative of its kind in the United States.

Recognizing the critical importance of high-quality data to effective school improvement, our five participating states decided to proactively address data quality, reliability, and comparability, rather than waiting for an outside entity to establish new guidance and regulations.

To promote more accurate and reliable data comparability across the five NESSC member states, the Common Data Project develops and implements standardized procedures designed to eliminate unwanted variance that may result from divergent data systems, the misinterpretation of agreed-upon rules, or computational errors. The Data Project has also created a series of quality-control mechanisms that further improve the reliability and comparability of state-reported data.

How the Project Works

- Data specialists from the participating SEAs, along with representatives from higher education and other data experts, meet several times throughout the year to discuss best practices, refine agreements, and coordinate the collection and reporting of data. Each participating SEA shares and discusses its data practices with other SEAs, and several refinements of in-state data procedures have resulted from lessons learned from other states.

- All five states use common metrics, procedures, and rules when compiling, calculating, and reporting data. A full description of these procedures can be found in the Common Data Project 2013–2014 Procedural Guidebook. The goal is continual improvement of data reliability and comparability across the region.

- The common procedures and rules are published under a Creative Commons license, which allows for the free use of all content, and other SEAs and educational organizations are encouraged to use and adapt our work.

- Each year, the NESSC produces a comprehensive report on graduation rates, dropout rates, and postsecondary enrollments and persistence for each of the five states. The NESSC, and its participating SEAs and partners, use these annual reports to help evaluate the impact of state policies and initiatives designed to improve secondary schools and student performance.

- Each year, the five SEAs publish the NESSC metrics on their websites, making the data available to the educators, policy makers, and the public.

- The common data procedures and metrics are compliant with all state and federal rules, regulations, and guidance related to data quality and reporting.

- The common-data reporting is used to track statewide and regional improvements in school and student-subgroup performance within and across states. The comparable data
set—in place since the baseline year of 2009—allows for more reliable cross-state comparisons.

- A comprehensive “college-readiness index” that takes into account academic, socioeconomic, and behavioral data is currently under development. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation at the University of Southern Maine have been collaborating on the development of the index.

Project Innovations

- **Common Metrics:** The Common Data Project has produced a set of common formulas that are used to calculate secondary graduation rates, secondary dropout rates, and postsecondary-enrollment, -persistence, and -completion rates. A multiple-measure “college-readiness index” is currently under development.

- **Common Rules:** All five departments of education follow the same “business rules” and procedures when collecting, calculating, and reporting common data to improve consistency, comparability, and quality.

- **Common Definitions:** Each variable in the common regional data set is determined using consistently applied definitions. For example, all five departments of education follow the same definitions for economically disadvantaged students, English-language learners, students with disabilities, and other student subgroups.

- **Common Reporting Windows:** All five departments of education follow common data-collection and data-reporting timelines. Since most large-scale databases are continually updated, common reporting windows improve the consistency and comparability of multistate data sets.

- **Common Quality-Control Procedures:** The Common Data Project uses both internal (state-by-state controls) and external (third-party coordination and auditing) as part of its common quality-control framework. The redundant, multistage protocol is designed to improve data quality throughout the collection, calculation, and reporting cycle.

Selected Indicators

The New England Secondary School Consortium has established four performance goals to be achieved in each of the five states: (1) increase high school graduation rates, (2) decrease dropout rates, (3) increase the percentage of students enrolling in two- and four-year postsecondary programs or pursuing industry-certified and accredited postsecondary certificates, and (4) increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school college ready. The Data Team, in conjunction with external third parties, created five performance indicators using agreed-upon metrics. The common metrics, in conjunction with a standardized set of business procedures and rules, significantly increase the comparability of reported data on each indicator across the five Consortium states. To our knowledge, only the federal government, via the National Center for Educational Statistics, has attempted to provide the public with comparable metrics on key educational initiatives.

**Graduation Rate** [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2009]
Graduation rates have been computed using the formula articulated in 34 C.F.R. §200.19. The rate relies on the identification and tracking of a four-year graduation cohort. All states in the Consortium currently report the federal graduation rate. The following formula is used for calculating the graduation rate:

\[
\frac{\text{(# of Graduating Seniors)}}{\text{(# of First-time Freshman +/- Transfers In or Out)}}
\]

**Dropdown Rate** [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2009]

The Consortium dropout data is closely linked to the data used in calculating the adjusted cohort graduation rate. Data Team members recognize that, as the graduation rate and dropout rate have often been reported using disparate methods, a clearer relationship between these measures would be helpful. The National Governors Association offered guidance on the dropout rate by recommending that dropouts be counted as those students who have not completed high school and are no longer enrolled in high school. This rate is calculated as a cohort formula using the same adjusted freshman cohort used for the graduation rate. The following formula is used for calculating dropout rate:

\[
\frac{\text{(# in Adjusted Freshman Cohort) - (Graduates + Students Still Enrolled + Other Completers)}}{\text{Adjusted Freshman Cohort}} = \text{Dropouts} \quad \text{Dropout Rate} = \frac{\text{Dropouts}}{\text{Adjusted Freshman Cohort}}
\]

**College Enrollment** [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2009]

The rationale for collecting postsecondary-enrollment data is to determine the percentage of students who go on to further education after completing high school. All five Consortium states use data collected by the National Student Clearinghouse. All reports using Clearinghouse data are run during a common reporting window to reduce variance associated with ongoing updating of the Clearinghouse’s national database. The following formula is used for calculating postsecondary enrollment:

\[
\frac{\text{(# of Students Enrolled in Postsecondary)}}{\text{(# of High School Graduates)}}
\]

**College Persistence** [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2011]

Postsecondary persistence is determined by the number of high school graduates who attend two- or four-year institutions of higher education and graduate. This indicator will eventually include enrollment and completion data for students who attend one-year postsecondary professional certificate programs (e.g., LPN). The data reported by this indicator does not reflect all students starting and completing their postsecondary education “on time.” For that reason, the college-persistence rate will be computed over a six-year period. All Consortium states use data collected by the National Student Clearinghouse. The following formula is used for calculating postsecondary success in four-year programs (the same formula is modified for two-year programs):

\[
\frac{\text{( # of Students Completing Postsecondary within 6 Years)}}{\text{(Freshman College Cohort) }}
\]
College-Readiness Index (CRI) [Status: Pending] [Baseline Year: TBD]

Since college readiness is such a complex and important metric to capture, the Data Team recommended that the Consortium use multiple measures to create a “college-readiness index.” The Consortium’s college-readiness index is currently under development, and the Data Team is collaborating with the Annenberg Center for School Reform at Brown University and the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation at the University of Southern Maine (for more information, see pages 15–16). The team agreed on a working definition of college readiness for the purposes of creating a college-readiness index that utilizes multiple measures. The following formula is used as a working definition of college readiness:

Completion of 24 credit hours of college coursework and a GPA of 2.5 or enrollment in a third semester of college (two- or four-year programs)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


Key Findings

1. Graduation Rates

   - No state rate reached the long-term goal of 90 percent. All member states demonstrated improvements in graduation rates since the baseline year (2009). The graduation rates of economically disadvantaged students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities lag behind all other student subgroups.

2. Dropout Rates

   - No state rate reached the long-term goal of less than 1.0 percent. All member states demonstrated improvements in reducing dropout rates since the baseline year (2009). The dropout rates of economically disadvantaged students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities are higher than all other student subgroups.

3. College-Enrollment Rates

   - No state rate reached the long-term goal of 80 percent. Most member states demonstrated relatively stable college-enrollment rates since the baseline year (2011). The college-enrollment rates of economically disadvantaged students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities lag behind all other student subgroups.

4. College-Persistence Rates

   - Two member states demonstrated slight rate increases from the baseline year (2011). The college-persistence rates of economically disadvantaged students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities lag behind all other student subgroups.
SECTION I
Graduation Rates

1.0 Graduation Rates: Cross-State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did the graduation rates in 2013 compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 8.2 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 86.4 percent, and the highest reported rate was 87.9 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of 90.0 percent.

*NOTE: Throughout this report, the “NESSC” value represents the median rate.*
1.1 Graduation Rates: Five-Year Trend

Guiding Question

To what degree did graduation rates change over the past five years?

Major Findings

- All member states demonstrated graduation-rate improvements since the baseline year (2009).
- The average change rate was 4.8 percentage points and the largest change rate was 6.8 percentage points (New Hampshire).
- Most states are on a trajectory to reach the 90.0 percent goal within the next five years.

*NOTE: The 2009 New Hampshire data were estimated and the 2009 Connecticut data may not be comparable with previous years.*
1.2 Graduation Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students

Guiding Question

How did the 2013 graduation rates for economically disadvantaged (ED) students compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 7.6 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 75.2 percent and the highest reported rate was 76.9 percent (Maine).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of 90.0 percent, but all states had non-economically disadvantaged rates at the long-term goal of 90.0 percent.
1.3 Graduation Rates: English-Language Learners

**Guiding Question**

How did the 2013 graduation rates for English-language learners (ELLs) compare across the member states?

![2013 Graduation Rates: English-Language Learners](image)

**Major Findings**

- The state rates had a range of approximately 9.8 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 70.4 percent and the highest reported graduation rate for English-language learners was 72.8 percent (Maine).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of 90 percent.
1.4 Graduation Rates: Students with Disabilities

Guiding Question

How did the 2013 graduation rates for students with disabilities (SWDs) compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 13.9 percentage points.
- The median state rate for students with disabilities was 68.1 percent and the highest reported students with disabilities rate was 73.1 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of 90.0 percent, but two states (New Hampshire and Vermont) had non-SWD rates at the long-term goal of 90.0 percent.
SECTION II
Dropout Rates

2.0 Dropout Rates: Cross-State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did the dropout rates in 2013 compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 4.2 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 8.8 percent and the lowest reported rate was at 5.4 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of <1.0 percent.
2.1 Dropout Rates: Five-Year Trend

Guiding Question

To what degree did dropout rates change over the past five years?

[Graph showing dropout rates over five years for different states, with a decrease trend over time.]

Major Findings

- All member states have demonstrated decreased dropout rates since the baseline year (2009).
- The average change rate was 3.3 percentage points; and the largest change rate was 6.1 percentage points (Maine).
- Most states will need more than five years to reach the long-term goal of <1.0 percent.

*NOTE: The 2009 New Hampshire data were estimated.*
2.2 Dropout Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students

Guiding Question

How did the 2013 dropout rates for economically disadvantaged (ED) students compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 7.8 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 15.5 percent; and the lowest reported rate was 10.6 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of <1.0 percent.
2.3 Dropout Rates: English-Language Learners

Guiding Question

How did the 2013 dropout rates for English-language learners (ELLs) compare across the member states?

![2013 Dropout Rates: English-Language Learners](chart)

**Major Findings**

- The state rates had a range of approximately 17.6 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 12.5 percent; and the lowest reported rate was 6.4 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of <1.0 percent.
2.4 Dropout Rates: Students with Disabilities

Guiding Question

How did the 2013 dropout rates for students with disabilities (SWDs) compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 9.9 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 14.8 percent; and the lowest reported rate was 9.3 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of <1.0 percent.
SECTION III
College-Enrollment Rates

3.0 College-Enrollment Rates: Cross-State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did college-enrollment rates in 2013 compare across the member states?

2013 College Enrollment

- **CT**: 66.9%
- **ME**: 62.6%
- **NH**: 58.1%
- **RI**: 59.2%
- **VT**: 52.0%
- **NESSC**: 59.2%

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 14.9 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 59.2 percent and the highest reported rate was 66.9 percent (Connecticut).
- No state rates reached the long-term goal of 80.0 percent.

*NOTE: Only data from students who enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school are included in this section. All the college-enrollment data come from the National Student Clearinghouse (StudentTracker for High Schools), which collects enrollment data from approximately 93 percent of the postsecondary institutions that participate in Title IV Student Loans. While this captures the majority of postsecondary enrollments in the United States, it may not include many trade, vocational, military, and international institutions or apprenticeship programs. Also, students and schools can opt for a “FERPA Block” on their enrollment records, and these students are therefore not included in the National Student Clearinghouse reports. FMI: studentclearinghouse.org/high_schools/studenttracker/ferpa.php*
3.1 College-Enrollment Rates: Three-Year Trend

Guiding Question

To what degree did college-enrollment rates change over the past three years?

### Major Findings

- College-enrollment rates have remained relatively unchanged since the baseline year (2011).
- The average change in college enrollment was 0.7 percentage points and the largest change in college enrollment was 1.3 percentage points (Maine).
- All states will need more than five years to reach the long-term goal of 80 percent.

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<tr>
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<td>51.5%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESSC</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 College-Enrollment Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students

Guiding Question

How did the college-enrollment rates for economically disadvantaged (ED) students compare across member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 12.5 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 46.6 percent and the highest reported rate was 47.5 percent (Maine).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of 80 percent.
3.3 **College-Enrollment Rates: English-Language Learners**

**Guiding Question**

How did the 2013 college-enrollment rates for English-language learners (ELLs) compare across the member states?

**Major Findings**

- The state rates had a range of approximately 4.2 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 41.5 percent and the highest reported rate was 43.9 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of 80 percent.
3.4 **College-Enrollment Rates: Students with Disabilities**

**Guiding Question**

How did the 2013 college-enrollment rates for students with disabilities (SWDs) compare across the member states?

![Graph showing 2013 College Enrollment: Students with Disabilities](chart)

**Major Findings**

- The state rates had a range of approximately 20.8 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 33.3 percent and the highest reported rate was 37.4 percent (Rhode Island).
- No state rate reached the long-term goal of 80 percent.
SECTION IV
College-Persistence Rates

4.0 College-Persistence Rates: Cross-State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did the college persistence rates in 2012 compare across the member states?

![2012 College Persistence Chart]

Major Findings

- State rates had a range of approximately 8.1 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 82.6 percent and the highest reported rate was 85.9 percent (Connecticut).
- All state rates are above 80 percent except for Rhode Island.

*NOTE: The data in this section are lagged to allow sufficient time for first-time freshman to attend college for three semesters.*
4.1 College-Persistence Rates: Two-Year Trend

Guiding Question

To what degree did college-persistence rates change over the past two years?

![College Persistence: Two-Year Trend](image)

### Major Findings

- Three state rates (Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont) demonstrated decreases in college persistence from the baseline year (2011), which may be an artifact of data quality improvements in 2012.
- The average change in college persistence was approximately 1.4 percentage points and the largest change in college persistence was 3.6 percentage points (Vermont).
- All states will need additional time to reach 90 percent.

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<tr>
<td>NESSC</td>
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<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 College-Persistence Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students

Guiding Question

How did the college-persistence rates for economically disadvantaged (ED) students compare across member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 15.7 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 70 percent and the highest reported rate was 73.4 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached 80 percent, but four states had non-ED rates above 80 percent.
4.3 College-Persistence Rates: English-Language Learners

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 college-persistence rates for English-language learners (ELLs) compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 12.5 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 72.5 percent and the highest reported rate was 74.4 percent (Connecticut).
- No state rate reached 80 percent, but four states had non-ELL rates above 80 percent.
4.4 College-Persistence Rates: Students with Disabilities

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 college-persistence rates for students with disabilities (SWDs) compare across the member states?

Major Findings

- The state rates had a range of approximately 40.4 percentage points.
- The median state rate was 63.1 percent and the highest reported rate was 74.3 percent (New Hampshire).
- No state rate reached 80 percent, but four states had non-SWD rates above 80 percent.
Recognizing the critical importance of high-quality data to effective school improvement, the five state education agencies from Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont have been collecting, calculating, and reporting graduation rates, dropout rates, and postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and success rates using consistent procedures and methodologies developed by a regional team of data specialists from the five departments of education. To our knowledge, the New England Secondary School Consortium’s Data Project is the first initiative of its kind in the United States.

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FMI: newenglandssc.org/resources/common-data-project