

Series 3 | Week 1: Exploring the Graduation Rate Gap for Students With Disabilities

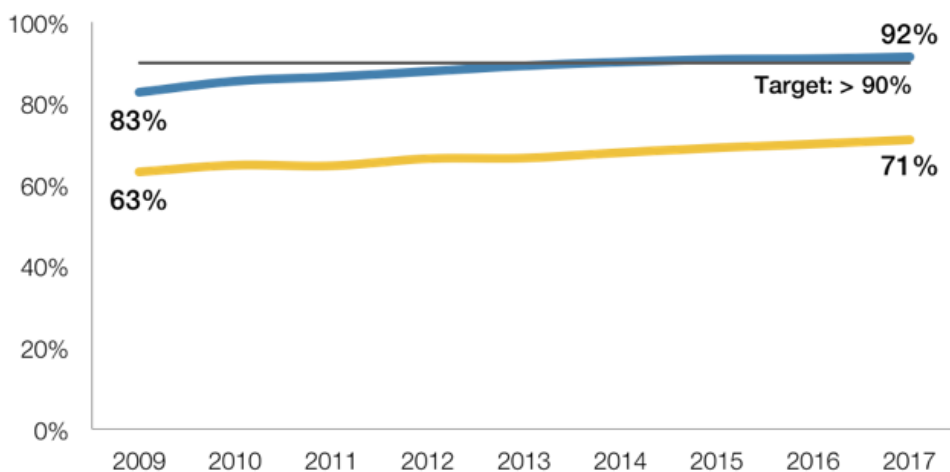
About the Data Dialogue Series

Thank you for participating in the New England Secondary School Consortium’s (NESSC) Data Dialogue Series, an opportunity to explore, reflect on, and talk about our region’s education data with your students, colleagues, and community.

This week, let’s start by exploring the gap in four-year high school graduation rates for students with disabilities from the high school graduating class of 2017. We will compare these rates with trends in the extended six-year graduation rates for the class of 2015.

Exploring the Data

High School Graduation Rates (4-Year): Students With Disabilities (All NESSC)

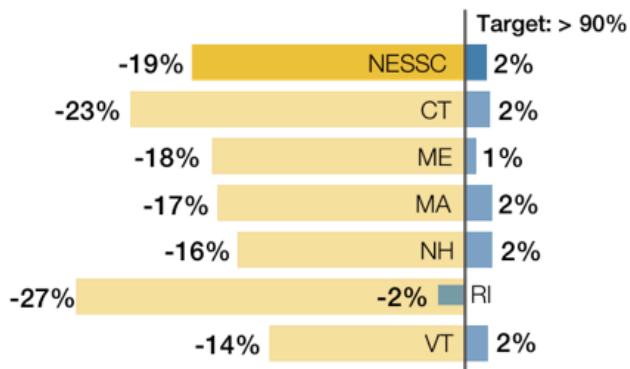


Graduation rates have increased comparably among **students with disabilities** and **students without disabilities** since 2009.

Despite an overall increase in graduation rates, the graduation gap between **students with disabilities** as compared to their peers continues to persist; the 20 percentage points difference between groups in 2009 has remained steady over time, increasing only slightly to 21 percentage points by 2017.

High School Graduation Rates (4-Year): Students With Disabilities (Class of 2017)

Distance from target by state (percentage points)



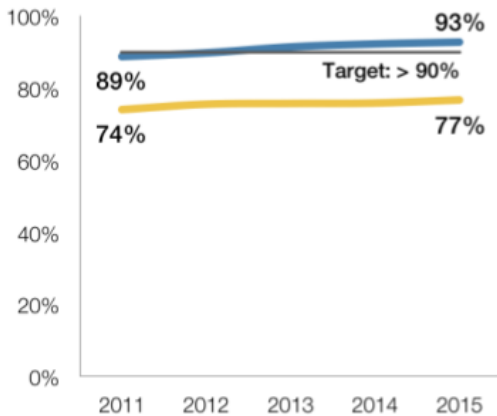
4-year graduation rate & number of graduates by state

| | Students w/ Disabilities | | Students w/o Disabilities | |
|-------|--------------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------|
| NESSC | 71.1% | 20,369 | 91.5% | 120,191 |
| CT | 66.7% | 4,408 | 91.8% | 32,956 |
| ME | 72.5% | 2,181 | 90.8% | 10,066 |
| MA | 72.8% | 10,232 | 91.9% | 54,415 |
| NH | 74.2% | 1,787 | 91.9% | 10,852 |
| RI | 63.0% | 1,024 | 88.2% | 7,348 |
| VT | 76.5% | 737 | 91.6% | 4,554 |

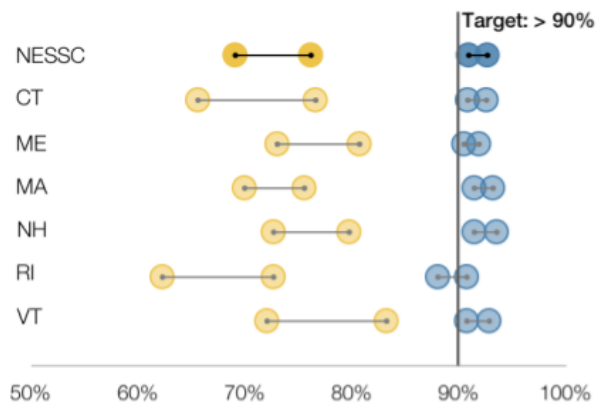
The graduation rate gap varies by state. Across New England, **Students with disabilities** in the class of 2017 have four-year graduation rates 19 percentage points below the target, ranging from 14 percentage points below the target in Vermont to 27 percentage points below in Rhode Island.

Extended High School Graduation Rates (6-Year): Students With Disabilities (Class of 2015)

Extended High School Graduation Rates (6-Year) (All NESSC)



Comparison of 4- and 6-year graduation rates by state



With up to two extra years to complete, high school graduation rates among **students with disabilities** increase substantially. The gap in six-year graduation rates for students with disabilities as compared to their non-disabled peers, however, has remained at 15 percentage points or more since 2011.

The high school graduation rate across New England for **students with disabilities** in the class of 2015 increased eight percentage points from 69% (four-year rate) to 77% (six-year rate). A smaller increase, just two percentage points, in the graduation rate from 91% (four-year rate) to 93% (six-year rate) was also reported for **students without disabilities**.

What This Means & Why It Matters

Across New England, 17.9% of the class of 2017 (28,664 total students) qualified as having a disability, defined as having an individual education plan (IEP).

Given the size of the population, the 21 percentage point gap in four-year graduation rates for students with disabilities represents a substantial inequity in New England's schools. While an increasing proportion of students are completing high school within four years, many students are not.

On the one hand, the gap between groups does narrow slightly to 16 percentage points when comparing students with disabilities extended six-year graduation rates to those without disabilities. Graduation rates increased for students with disabilities by eight percentage points with two additional years as compared to a two percentage point gain for students without disabilities. This may indicate that with additional time and support, students with disabilities can meet requirements necessary to graduate high school.

However, the gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers has remained constant despite four- and six-year graduation rates trending upward over time for all student groups. Closing this substantial gap will require innovative thinking, but doing so is essential in order to achieve our collective goal of educational equity and opportunity for all students.

Let's use the discussion questions below to consider how we can effect change in our schools and communities that will continue to narrow this gap.

Reflection & Dialogue Questions

While the visuals are a rich starting point for personal reflection, we urge you to consider exploring the data through inclusive conversations with colleagues, students, parents, and community members.

1. These visuals show regional and state-level data from across New England, which was calculated by aggregating data from each state (meaning that your school's data contributed to this visual). What does the visual make you wonder? What additional data might you need in order to understand whether and how this gap exists in your own school? Where can you find that data?
2. What assumptions (e.g., about students, about your role, about your community, and/or about the purpose of school) might have been present in your analysis of the data? How might those assumptions influence your interpretation of the data? How can you seek out other perspectives on the data?
3. What changes can you make at your school to understand and meet the needs of all students so that they complete high school successfully?

Would you like to share your reflection with the NESSC? Don't hesitate to reach out at info@newenglandssc.org.