Graduation Rate Rises to 72.2 Percent for L.A. Unified

Los Angeles Unified’s graduation rate has improved for the fifth straight year – reaching 72.2 percent for 2014-15, with nearly half of the new graduates qualifying for admission to California’s public universities.

The graduation rate climbed nearly 10 percentage points since 2009-10, even as the dropout rate plummeted from nearly 25 percent to 16.7 percent. About 46 percent of the Class of 2015 earned a “C” or better on the rigorous college-prep curriculum known as the A-G, a requirement for admission to the University of California or California State University systems. Three years earlier, the UC-CSU eligibility rate was less than 36 percent.

Superintendent Michelle King said the steadily climbing graduation and A-G rates are a testament to the District’s efforts to provide a meaningful education that earns students a diploma and prepares them for life after high school.

“I am very proud of the work we are doing – not only in raising our graduation rates, but in preparing our graduates to enter college or the workforce,” Superintendent King said. “Our students, parents, faculty and staff have worked together as a team, and they can take great satisfaction in this accomplishment.”

When examined by subgroup, graduation rates have increased for all major subgroups in L.A. Unified since 2009-10, with double-digit jumps for Latino and African-American students. African-American students have increased by 13.3 percentage points and Latino students by 10.8 points. Although there have been fluctuations in the last five years, rates for English-learners increased by 10.3 points and students with disabilities increased by 13 points.

In addition, 24 schools distributed in local districts across L.A. Unified had graduation rates in 2014-15 of 90 percent or higher. Two schools – Roosevelt Math/Science Magnet and Harbor Teacher Preparatory Academy – recorded rates of 100 percent.

The official graduation rates are calculated by the California Department of Education, which tracks first-time ninth-graders over the course of four years to determine who graduates on time. Students who transfer for re-enroll in other public schools in California are removed from the cohort. Similarly, students who enter L.A. Unified after ninth grade are added to the cohort.
The state’s calculation typically lags about a year behind the graduating class, so it will be next spring before official results are available for the Class of 2016. However, the District is working to have preliminary estimates available by late August.

For Los Angeles Unified, this year’s graduating class was the first that was required to pass the A-G slate of classes in order to earn their diploma. To support students struggling with the rigor of the courses, the District bolstered its credit-recovery offerings with expanded Adult School and new online classes. Through virtual and blended-learning courses offered by Arizona-based Edgenuity, L.A. Unified students this year completed more than 8,500 courses.

In addition, the District is offering summer school – newly rebranded as summer term – at 71 secondary schools, giving more than 68,700 students the opportunity to make up credits or take enrichment classes. Students who complete their graduation requirements during summer term will receive their diploma during a special ceremony, and they will be included when the 2015-16 graduation rate is calculated.

“While I am pleased with our progress, we need to recommit with urgency to graduating each and every one of our students,” said School Board President Steve Zimmer. “We will continue to provide high-quality choices and personalized instruction that keeps our students engaged while preparing them for life after graduation.”

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