

ESSA Graduation Rate Expectation and Credit Recovery/Alternative Education Programs and High Schools

Challenge:

ESSA fails to establish differentiated graduation rate expectations for traditional and non-traditional or alternative/credit recovery high schools. Non-traditional high schools' missions are to educate a specific, targeted student population who are at risk of never graduating. These high schools provide instruction to over-aged and under-credited students. Therefore, applying the traditional high school graduation rate expectation, based on a four-year cohort, is inappropriate for these schools.

Opportunity:

ESSA should consider an appropriate expectation for schools designated as credit recovery or alternative education programs and high schools. Exemplary states, including Arkansas, Arizona and Colorado, consider graduation of older students when calculating academic accountability of alternative, credit recovery high schools. An appropriate expectation would include graduation rates of fifth, sixth, and seventh year students or to refer to state policy regarding when a student ages out of public education. ESSA should appropriately differentiate its graduation expectation for credit recovery and alternative education programs and high schools, rather than penalizing the schools serving this highly at-risk student population.

Benefit:

The lifetime cost in terms of social loss for each person who has dropped out of high school is \$421,280¹. The contribution back to society of schools that graduate over-aged and under-credited students is obvious. Such schools re-engage youth who have not been successful in traditional education; they are not dropout factories. Our society benefits in economic gains from wage earnings, health care costs, tax revenues, less welfare and criminal activity, as well as the quality of life for the young people themselves.

Submitted By:

- **Arizona Alternative Education Consortium** - representing over 100 accommodation schools (county), district and charter alternative schools and education programs, county education agencies, community organizations, and dropout recovery programs in Arizona
Officers: Binky Michele Jones, Ombudsman Schools; Karen Callahan, Genesis Academy/City, Phoenix, AZ; Timothy Smith, Learning Matters Educational Group, Arizona & California
Board Members: Joel Kramer, Rio Rico, AZ; Kim Franklin, Casa Blanca Community School, Sacaton, AZ

¹ WestEd. (2014.) How Arizona's dropout crisis affects communities, Creates economic losses for the State of Arizona, retrieved from : https://www.wested.org/wp-content/files_mf/1403888261AZMRT_FullReport.pdf

- Advocacy Chair & Founding President, 2010-14: Amy Schlessman, Ph.D., Rose Academies, Tucson, AZ, ,**
- **Pierson Vocational High School, Nogales, AZ**
 - **ChanceLight™ Behavioral Health, Therapy & Education – 27 states**
 - **Center for Student Achievement, Phoenix, AZ**
 - **Tucson Youth Development, Tucson, AZ**
 - **Genesis City, Phoenix, AZ**
 - **Portable Practical Education Preparation, Inc., statewide in Arizona**
 - **Pima Prevention Partnership, Pima County, Arizona**
 - **Franklin Schargel, Education Division Chair, 2005-07, American Society of Quality**
 - **Lori L. Lamb, previous President, National Alternative Education Association; Arkansas Alternative Education Director, representing 400 Alternative Education programs and more than 10,000 students annually**
 - **Denise Riley, teacher & educational consultant, National Alternative Education Board member, Okemah, OK**
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 - **Carl Melcher, Principal, Saline Alternative High School, Saline, Michigan**
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