

A Credential by Age 26?

Seven-Year Outcomes for 2006 Washington Public High School Graduates

The Washington State Board of Education has recommended a set of indicators that describe the health of the state education system.¹ One proposed indicator is the percentage of high school graduates attaining credentials² prior to age 26. For this analysis we use a cohort of 2006 Washington public high school graduates to estimate that percentage.

In a previous study that focused on progress toward bachelor's degrees, traditional educational outcomes of the graduates were assessed using enrollment and completions data from the six public baccalaureate higher education institutions in the state and Washington community and technical colleges. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) was the source of information for private institutions in Washington and all out-of-state postsecondary institutions.³

This analysis includes traditional educational outcomes and also taps three new sources that reflect career-focused education – private career schools, state apprenticeship programs, and professional licenses.

High school graduates are considered to have earned a credential if they have earned any of the following:

- postsecondary degree or certificate awarded by a public baccalaureate institution
- degree or certificate from a community or technical college in Washington
- degree or certificate from Washington private institutions or any out-of-state institution reported by NSC, which represents over 90 percent of U.S. four-year degrees⁴
- completion of an apprenticeship program administered by Washington State Department of Labor & Industries
- completion of a program of study offered by a Washington private vocational school (2012-13 only)
- professional license issued by the Washington Department of Licensing that required training

Even though the list of data sources is comprehensive, the estimates of those attaining a credential is understated for the following reasons:

- Some degree completions are not reported by the NSC and some students block their information from being reported.

¹ “Statewide Indicators of Educational System Health – 2014 Report to the Legislature.” Washington State Board of Education, December 1, 2014. [<http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/20145491Report1.pdf>]

² The term ‘credential’ as used in this report includes degrees and postsecondary certificates, and training completions that are career-related.

³ “Washington’s Postsecondary Education Pipeline: Six-Year Outcomes for Public High School Graduates, 2005-06.” Washington Education Research & Data Center ERDC Brief 2014-01, February 2014. [<http://www.erd.c.wa.gov/briefs/pdf/201401.pdf>]

⁴ “Clearinghouse Facts.” National Student Clearinghouse [accessed 9/25/2015 at http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/about/clearinghouse_facts.php]

- Some graduates complete Federal apprenticeship programs or those based outside Washington. ERDC does not receive this information.
- Private vocational school data are included for the most recent year only, so completions in this sector between 2006-07 and 2011-12 are not incorporated into this analysis.
- Many credentials earned in medical and dental fields, including massage therapy, are represented in professional license data from the Department of Health. ERDC does not have access to this source.

Washington high school graduates in 2006 ranged in age from 13 to 21 on July 1 following high school graduation. As of July 1, 2013, approximately 89 percent of the graduates were 25 or 26 years of age. A seven-year follow-up of high school graduates is reasonable to use for determining the percent of high school graduates earning a credential by age 26.

Overall, 42 percent of the 2006 high school graduates had earned a credential by July 1, 2013. Breakouts by demographic characteristics and by program participation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Status of 2006 Washington Public High School Graduates as of July 1, 2013

	Number of graduates (rounded)	Share of all graduates	Percent with Credential
Age			
24 or younger	9,400	16%	45%
25	44,100	73%	44%
26	5,100	8%	23%
27	1,100	2%	11%
28	700	1%	6%
Gender			
Male	29,500	49%	37%
Female	30,900	51%	46%
Program Participation			
Free or Reduced-Price Meal-eligible	15,000	25%	25%
Limited English	1,900	3%	25%
Students with Disabilities	5,100	8%	11%
Race/Ethnicity (for students whose race/ethnicity was reported)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,200	2%	23%
Asian	5,300	9%	55%
Black/African-American	2,700	4%	29%
Hispanic	5,200	9%	24%
White	45,700	76%	44%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*	<1%	25%
Two or More Races	200	<1%	39%
All Graduates	60,400	100%	42%

**Counts below 100 are suppressed.*