



Statement from the ARISE Coalition regarding graduation rates for NYC's class of 2009

Last week, the New York State Education Department and the New York City (NYC) Department of Education (DOE) released graduation rates for the class of 2009. New York City quickly celebrated the improvements on behalf of students in general education. The data regarding graduation rates for students with disabilities was, however, nothing to be proud of. Buried at the end of the statistics and the DOE's press package was the deeply disturbing fact that only 1 in 4 students with disabilities in the class of 2009 graduated within 4 years.

Even if it represents a minute improvement over the cohort from the previous year, 1 in 4 is an abysmal statistic. The data released does not include the performance of many students with disabilities measured by alternate assessments, which are notably overused for far too many students with disabilities who can, and should, be prepared to master the curriculum necessary to pass exams and graduate with Local, Regents, or Advanced Regents diplomas.

Additionally, graduation rates for students in District 75, NYC's district charged with meeting the needs of its students with the most profound special education needs, were not released separately, but folded into the graduation rates distributed with regard to NYC's community school districts. While we recognize that this practice is likely designed with the intent of holding local schools accountable for all their students, including those they send to District 75, it is also essential that District 75 be held similarly accountable. The failure to isolate the statistics for the District 75 students makes it particularly difficult to assess the performance of District 75.

The ARISE Coalition is a group of parents, educators, and advocates who have come together to push for systemic changes to benefit all students, including student with disabilities, in NYC's public school system. We call for the DOE to track and disseminate metrics on student performance and outcomes for all students, regardless of how they are assessed. In addition, data, some of which the DOE already collects but does not share with parents, must be made more readily available and accessible to the public. In particular, the DOE must share information for all students, including those with the most profound disabilities, regarding graduation rates broken down by the type of diplomas received (IEP, local, Regents, or Advanced Regents). Data for District 75 needs also to be disaggregated and released separately.

March 19, 2010, 2010

The DOE, through the Chief Achievement Office of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, recently announced a reform plan to emphasize long-term educational outcomes and assure that every school will be able to educate and embrace the overwhelming majority of students with disabilities. The graduation numbers just released drive home the critical need for the DOE to take all necessary steps to remove the many roadblocks to quality supports and services for youth with disabilities. The DOE must hold all schools, districts, School Support Organizations, Children First Networks, and the Central DOE administration responsible and accountable for improving graduation rates for the overwhelming majority of NYC's students with disabilities who for far too long have been left behind.