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## **State Posts Highest Graduation Rate in a Decade**

### ***Across the board, more Minnesota students are graduating from high school***

ROSEVILLE – Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Commissioner Brenda Cassellius was joined today by Office of Higher Education (OHE) Commissioner Larry Pogemiller and Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben to announce that graduation rates are the highest in the last decade, with more than 79.5 percent of Minnesota high school seniors graduating in 2013, up from 77.6 percent in 2012. This increase is twice the yearly increase seen over the past three years, showing acceleration in progress for Minnesota seniors.

"Today is a great day for students throughout Minnesota," Cassellius said. "We are not only seeing a higher graduation rate for all students, but increases in the number of students graduating in every single group. These increases are the result of targeted investments by Governor Mark Dayton and the Legislature, as well as greater accountability for schools through our waiver, and the incredible work being done each and every day by Minnesota's educators."

Across the board, all student groups showed gains, with some of the largest increases being made by black students—up 6 percentage points over last year—and students learning English, whose rate increased by 7.5 percentage points over 2012. In fact, no single group of minority students made less than a 3 percentage point gain.

"Minnesota has one of the most highly educated workforces in the country and today's announcement of increased graduation rates among our high school students reinforces the longevity of our state's greatest asset—our talent," said DEED Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben. "Increasing graduation rates among Minnesotans of all backgrounds is essential for the future growth of our businesses and economy and will allow us to remain competitive in a global economy."

The benefits of earning a high school diploma are both immediate and wide-reaching. From ensuring access to postsecondary options to providing better career opportunities and future earning potential, graduating from high school is an important step on a student's path to success.

"The Pew Research Center just released a report indicating that while the cost of pursuing a postsecondary education is daunting, the cost of not going is even more expensive in terms of lifetime earnings, job satisfaction and full-time employment," said Pogemiller. "Graduating from high school is a necessary step toward achieving postsecondary success; I want to commend

the educators, policy makers and especially the students for their hard work and focus on making these improved graduation rates a reality."

Additionally, the data show reduction in gaps between white students and students of color. The gap for both black and Hispanic students closed by 8 percentage points since 2010, while Asian students closed the gap by 5 percentage points and American Indian students saw a 2 percentage point gap closure.

The state has developed several initiatives with increased focus on graduation in recent years:

- The Minnesota Early Indicator and Response System (MEIRS) is a tool for districts to identify and support students in grades six and nine who are at increased risk of not completing high school in four years.
- The Regional Centers of Excellence provide a statewide system of support to help school leaders create and implement plans to narrow achievement gaps, increase graduation rates and improve student outcomes to ensure all students are ready for a career or college.
- Minnesota's waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind law has allowed for the graduation rates of students of color, students in special education, students living in poverty and English language learners to be an integral part of our accountability system, which also provides recognition and support to schools.
- Minnesota is a participant in Grad Nation, a collaborative effort to increase the overall four-year graduation rate in Minnesota to 90 percent by 2020. A key effort is to highlight positive and alternative solutions to out-of-school suspensions, which contribute to students disengaging from school.

While today's data show Minnesota graduation rates are trending in the right direction, Commissioner Cassellius acknowledged there is more work to do.

"The gains we see today are something to celebrate," Cassellius said. "But one student who does not graduate from high school is one student too many. We must continue investing in our schools, pursuing meaningful reform and eliminating barriers to graduation so every child succeeds in career and college."

[View statewide, district, school and county graduation rates in an Excel spreadsheet.](#)

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