



QUICK-LOOK ANALYSIS OF GRADUATION IMPROVEMENT

2018 NEW MEXICO

May 2019

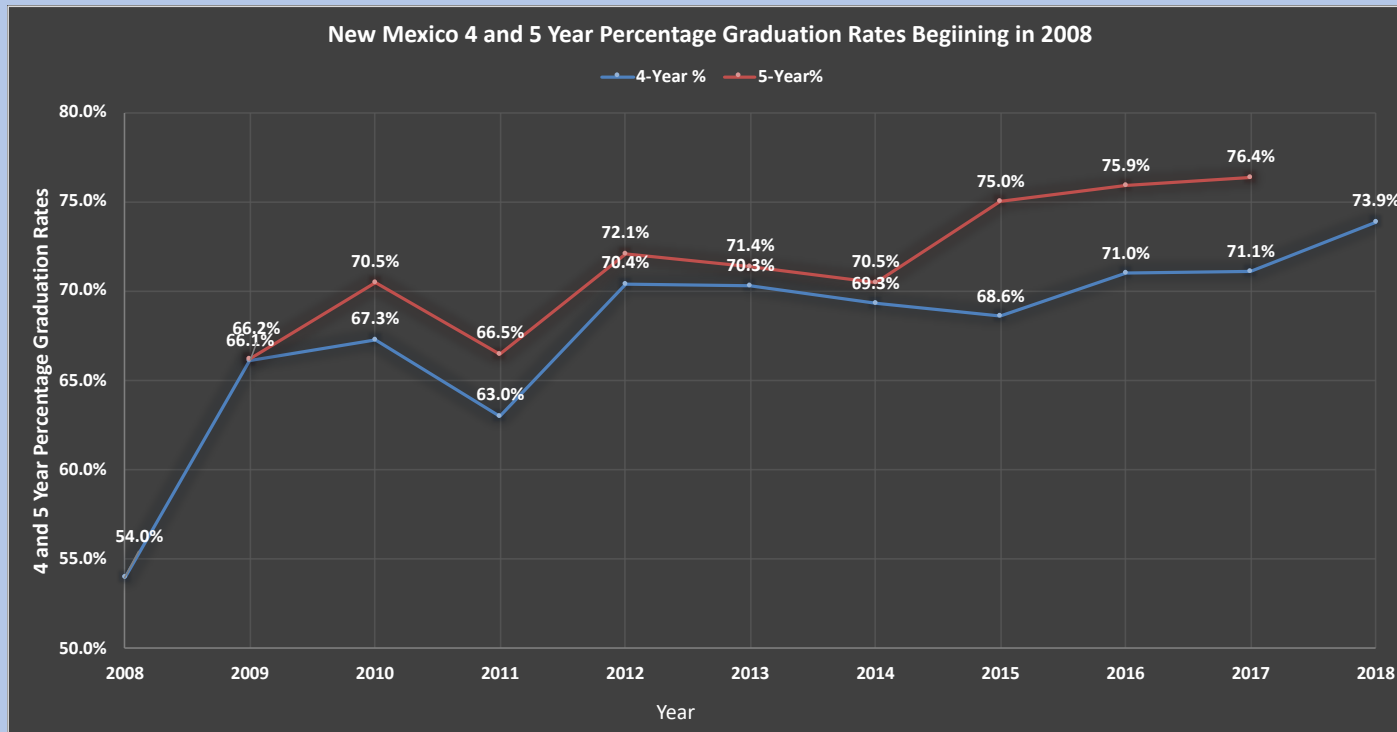
The Coalition for Excellence in Science and Math Education
(CESE) – cese.org

Contact:
M. Kim Johnson
kimber@comcast.net
505 239-7141 (Cell)
505 897-3364 (Home)

INTRODUCTION

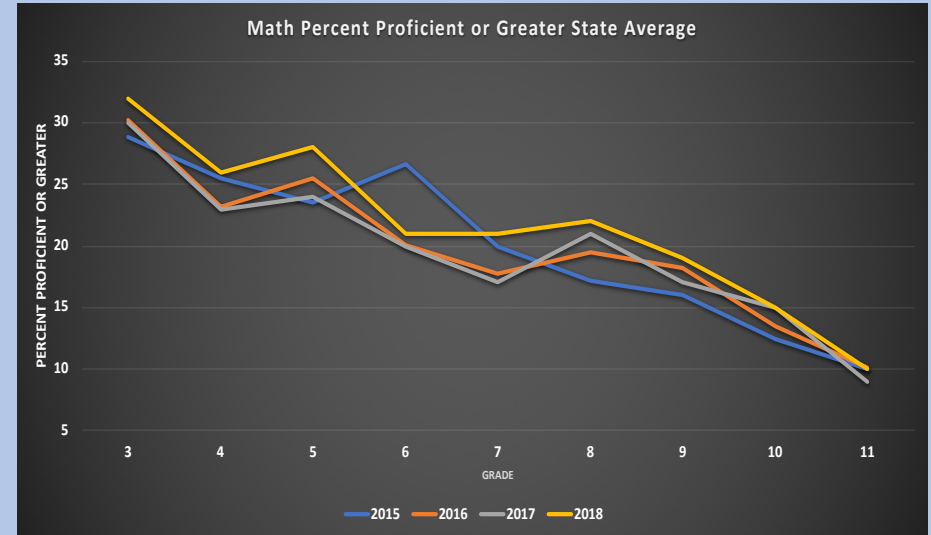
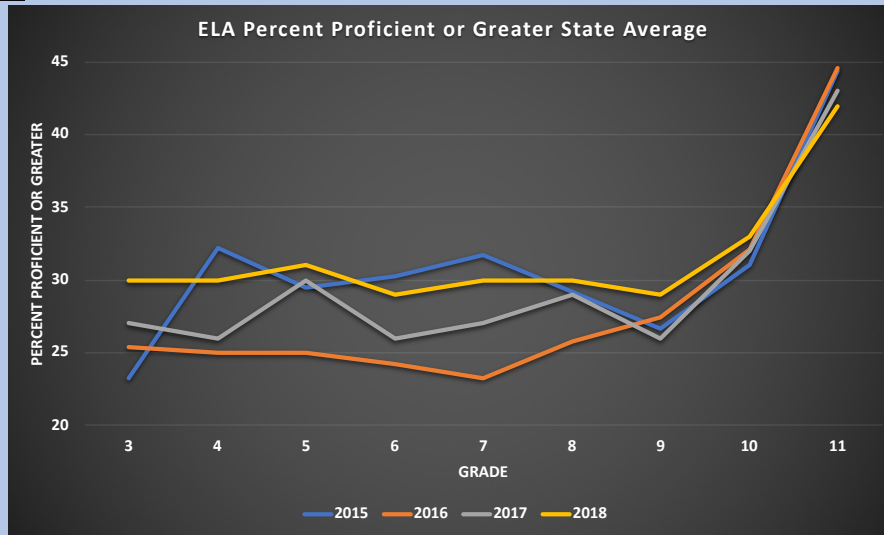
- ✓ **The graduation rate in New Mexico has been increasing at a rate of about 0.6% per year since 2010. This rate leads to a more appropriate statement of graduation increase than comparison with the 2011 rate, which was a low anomaly**
- ✓ **The data available on the Public Education Department (PED) website show that the increase from 2017 to 2018 was probably caused by educators/students taking advantage of the Alternate Demonstrations of Competency (ADCs) offered by the state or school districts rather than an increase in standardized test performance**

STATE GRADUATION PERFORMANCE YEAR OVER YEAR



Four-year rates have increased over the last 9 years at about a 0.6% per year rate. The 2011 rate appears to be an anomaly but is often used as a baseline showing a higher rate of progress than warranted. The reason(s) for the anomaly are unknown but may have been procedural, errors in data compilation, etc. Any of these may have happened, remembering that there was a new administration in charge that year, with the attendant learning curve. Graduation data tracking had been in a state of flux as to reporting accuracy and requirements prior to 2011. Apparently, no one has publicly addressed the anomaly. (Reference data from the Public Education Department at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/graduation/>)

RECENT STATE PARCC DATA



There was not a general increase in the state’s 11th grade PARCC proficiency percentages, on average, from 2017 to 2018. ELA proficiency or higher rates decreased one point while math increased one point. This would generally be considered well within the test’s precision/accuracy. (One can see the test proficiencies climbing in high school for ELA, perhaps indicating increased motivation to score high to pass the primary requirement for graduation—level, or bin, 3—approaching proficient. Math does not fare well, indicating there is a lot more work to do in this subject area.

The key takeaway here is that the statewide PARCC scores do not correlate well with either the trending graduation scores or the requirement to pass PARCC as the primary gate to graduation. Adding more specific graduation detail, **only 59% of state students in high schools passed the 3rd level for ELA and 50% passed the level for math, excluding 12th grade retesting (PED Webfile data).** It is highly unlikely that the state’s 11th and 12 graders used standardized test performance to increase graduation rates, remembering as previously stated that the 11th grade results for level 3 and above (approaching proficient used for graduation) are the primary test for graduation qualification. Though these percentages include 9th and 10th graders, this indicates, along with the low math 11th grade proficient or better scores, that students are probably taking advantage of either state or district approved ADCs as the secondary path to graduation. This is probable, but not definitively based on the data shown, since the breakout of 11th and 12th grade (retake) for PARCC graduation cut percentage data are not available publicly for more precise calculations. (Reference Public Education Department data at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/achievement-data/>)

CONCLUSIONS

- The graduation rate does not appear to be based on higher performance of 11th graders
- This is a not definitive conclusion, since passing for graduation is based on students passing the 3rd bin (approaching proficient) instead of the 2nd bin (proficient) and does not include 12th grade PARCC retakes.
- However, considering the large number of students involved, one would expect to see at least some increase in the percentage proficient or better rates for 11th graders, which is essentially absent
- Note the very low rate for math. It would be very sporting to conclude that with such a very low proficient or better rate, 10%, that the next level down, level 3, is equal to the 63.9% that would be needed to meet graduation requirements and the rate logged by the PED. The sanity check says this does not compute. Performance on the PARCC test does not explain the increase in graduation for 2018 using the data available.
- The most reasonable conclusion is that students increased their rates of using the Alternative Demonstrations of Competency (ADCs) to meet graduation requirements
- ADCs are not generally as rigorous as the PARCC test in showing subject proficiency. **We see no reason to conclude that the higher graduation rate reflects higher student performance, rather, there are probably more educators/students taking advantage of the ADCs. (Students really can be smart, when they apply themselves.)**