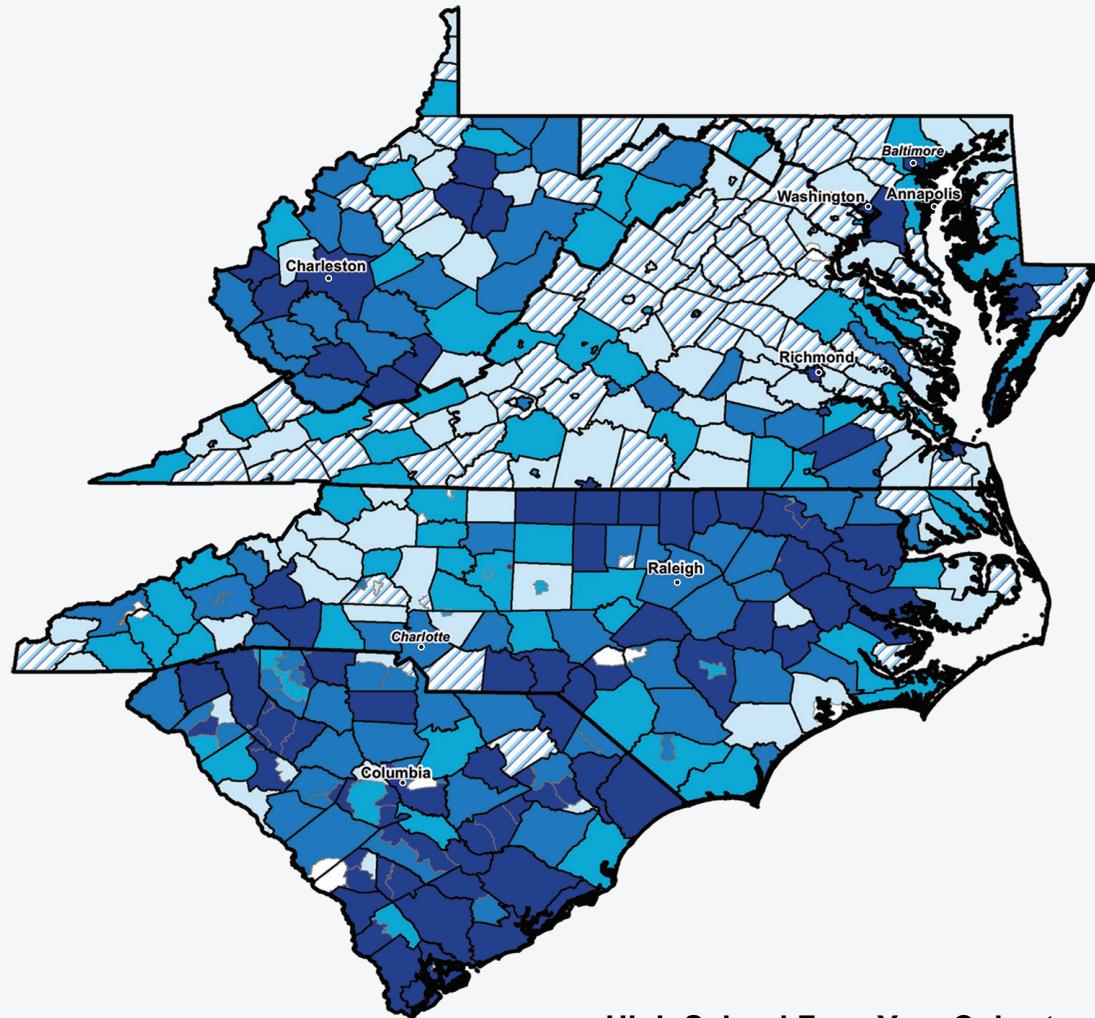


High School Graduation Rates in the Fifth District

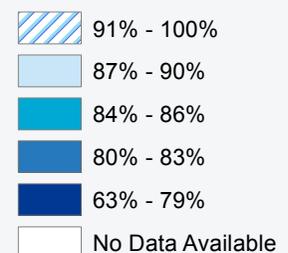
This issue of *5th District Footprint* discusses four-year cohort high school graduation rates for the class of 2013. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education issued regulations that sought more uniformity and transparency in the reporting of high school graduation rates across states. As a result, the uniform four-year adjusted cohort high school graduation rate was created. This rate is calculated by taking the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school four years earlier, after accounting for students who transferred in and out of the school during the time period. All states began reporting under the new methodology for the 2010-11 school year. The new rate is also an attempt to hold schools more accountable for drop-outs as well as non-regular high school diplomas.

Within the Fifth District, the class of 2013's state-level adjusted four-year cohort graduation rates range from a low of 77.5 percent (South Carolina) to a high of 89.1 percent (Virginia).¹ For the District of Columbia, 64 percent of fall 2009 first-time ninth graders graduated in four years.² Highland County School District in Highland County, Va. had the highest school district-level graduation rate (100 percent) within the Fifth District.³ The lowest rate (63.3 percent) belonged to Orangeburg School District 5 in Orangeburg County, S.C.⁴

School enrollment size and poverty may affect graduation rates. For example, the graduating cohort in Highland (1 high school) was composed of 17 students and in Orangeburg (3 high schools), it was 463 students. In 2012, the proportion of school-age children (ages 5-17) living in families in poverty was 18 percent in Highland and 37 percent in Orangeburg.⁵ Nationally, the proportion was 21 percent.⁶



High School Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate, 2012-13 by School District



Note: Cohort is defined as students who entered high school in the fall of 2009 for the first-time and graduated four years later with a high school diploma.

Source: District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Maryland State Department of Education, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, South Carolina Department of Education, Virginia Department of Education and West Virginia Department of Education.

Completing high school with a degree has implications for an individual's labor market outcomes. In 2012, the highest unemployment rate (12.4 percent) was among those with less than a high school diploma.⁷ Further, a high school diploma may lead to at least \$200 more in median weekly earnings compared to those without a diploma.⁸ The high school diploma is a key gateway to entering college where completion of a bachelor's degree adds roughly another \$400 to the median weekly earnings. While college may not be the right choice for everyone, a high school diploma or its equivalent is typically required for certain career paths including electrician (2012 median pay of \$49,840), police officer (2012 median pay of \$56,980), and automotive service technician (2012 median pay of \$36,610).⁹

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¹South Carolina Department of Education, *High School Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate, 2012-13 School Year*; Virginia Department of Education, *Class of 2013, State-Level Cohort Report, Four-Year Rate*.

²District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, *2012-2013 Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate*.

³Virginia Department of Education, *Class of 2013, School Division Four-Year Cohort Report*.

⁴South Carolina Department of Education, *2013 State Report Card, District Performance Data*.

⁵U.S. Census Bureau, *Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates*.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*.