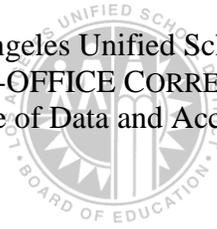Los Angeles Unified School District
INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE
Office of Data and Accountability

INFORMATIVE
November 12, 2015

TO: Members, Board of Education
           Ramon Cortines, Superintendent

FROM: Cynthia Lim, Executive Director
           Office of Data and Accountability

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY GRADUATION RATE FOR 2015

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This informative presents the preliminary 2014-15 Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate for the Los Angeles Unified School District as of November 2015. The finalized, official graduation rate from the California Department of Education (CDE) will not be available until spring of 2016.

As of November 2015, the District estimates that **74% of LAUSD students graduated within four years,** an increase of four percentage points from the official graduation rate of 70% in 2013-14. For **comprehensive high schools, 83% of students graduated in four years**, an increase of one percentage point from the official graduation rate of 82% in 2013-14. The preliminary 2014-15 graduation rate includes students in the Class of 2015 who met all course and credit requirements but did not pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). With the passage of emergency legislation (SB 725), these students were eligible to receive a diploma.

Subgroup data will not be available until Spring 2016 when the CDE publishes the final graduation rate. Districts across the state are still verifying and submitting enrollment and exit information to the state and have until February 2016 for final certification.

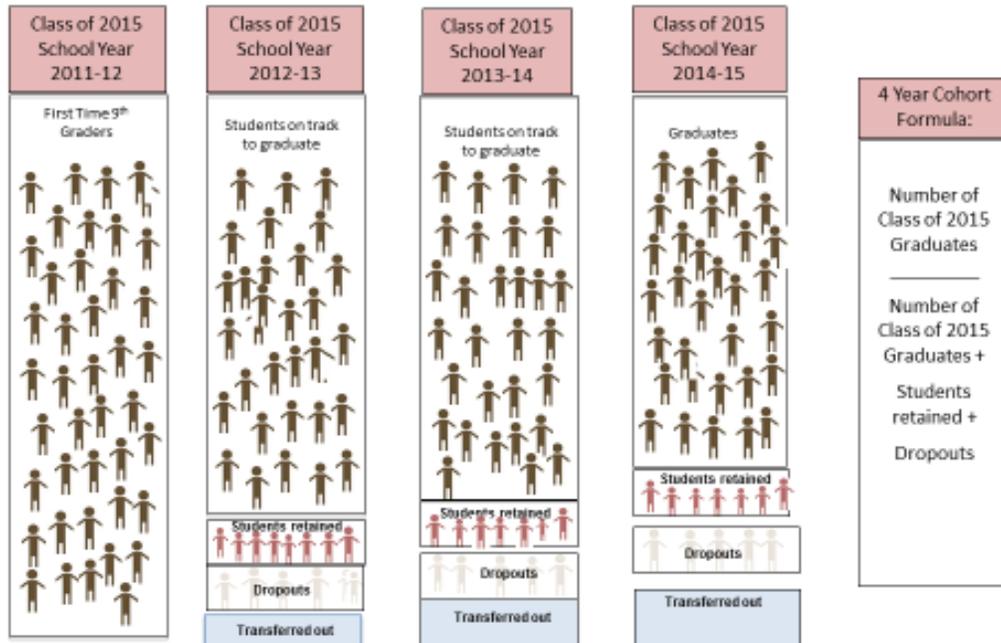### How are the Four Year Cohort and Graduation Rate calculated?

The CDE defines the cohort as 'the group of students that could potentially graduate during a 4-year time period (grade 9 through 12)', and it 'includes students who enter 9th grade for the first time in the initial year of the 4-years used for the cohort'. This cohort is then adjusted by:

- Adding students who later transfer into the cohort during grade nine (year 1), grade 10 (year 2), grade 11 (year 3) and grade 12 (year 4);
- Subtracting students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during the 4-year period.

The CDE uses a unique student identifier to determine which students are part of the cohort. At the end of four years, the graduation rate is determined by dividing the number of graduates in the cohort by the number of graduates plus students who have dropped out, received a certificate of completion and students who remain enrolled for a fifth year.

Figure 1 illustrates the Four-Year Cohort Rate, which follows the same group of students over time, beginning with first time 9th graders in 2011-12.

Figure 1: Calculation of Graduation Rate

Why are there different graduation rates between LAUSD and CDE?

There has been considerable confusion about graduation rates calculated by LAUSD and the official rate calculated by the California Department of Education (CDE). While both LAUSD and CDE use the same formula as illustrated above, the rates differ due to timing and the availability of datasets to track the movement of students.

LAUSD began publishing a four-year graduation rate for comprehensive high schools since 2006-07 in a push for greater transparency on how many students enter 9th grade and graduate four years later. With input from community advocates and stakeholder groups, LAUSD developed the methodology for tracking the progress of students over four years using its internal student information system. This calculation was not possible at the state level because there was not a statewide, student-level data base to track students over time. Additionally, LAUSD could only track the progress of students that were contained in LAUSD's student information system.

In 2007-08, LAUSD published the first School Report Card, using the internally calculated four year cohort graduation rate and has been publishing it every year since. The rate was calculated for comprehensive high schools only and excluded options schools and special education centers.

In October 2008, the U.S. Department of Education issued regulations that required all states to use the same four year cohort formula for calculating graduation rates so that a uniform and accurate measure of graduation could be compared across states. States were required to report graduation rates using the new formula in the 2010-11 school year.

At the same time, the California Department of Education (CDE) implemented the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), a statewide, student-level database of all public school students. CDE began using four year cohort graduation rates for accountability purposes with the 2009-10 school year. During the first years of implementation of CALPADS, CDE graduation rates differed widely from LAUSD graduation rates for several reasons:

1. *Mis-matched Statewide Student Identifier numbers in CALPADS* – All students in the state of California were assigned unique identifiers, however, there were instances of duplicate student IDs or changes in student IDs that needed correction. This remains an issue in the current school year.
2. *Inaccurate enrollment and leave code information in CALPADS* – Students had overlapping enrollments or the initial enrollment dates could not be determined.
3. *Inaccurate flagging of first time 9th graders in CALPADS* – Due to errors in enrollment and leave code information, CDE's determination of who should be included in a cohort often differed from LAUSD internal records.
4. *Ability to match records across the state in CALPADS* — CDE is able to match enrollment and leave records across the state whereas LAUSD can only track students in LAUSD data systems. If a student was reported as a dropout in LAUSD but re-enrolled in another California district, the CDE removes that student from the four year cohort. The CDE calculation yields more accurate data as they are able to match records statewide. In LAUSD, we can only match records using datasets readily available internally.

While many of the data issues remain, as the CALPADS system matures, LAUSD is able to leverage files available from the state and calculate graduation rates that are more closely matched to the CDE.

Why do we have two graduation rates?

The CDE graduation rate is typically released late, approximately one year after the end of the school year, e.g., data for the 2014-15 school year will be available in spring of 2016. The CDE is able to match student records across the state to determine dropouts and students who have re-enrolled. Districts have until February 2016 to submit final data before the CDE conducts a final match of student records.

To determine graduation rates in a timely manner, LAUSD calculates preliminary graduation rates earlier than the timeline used by CDE. LAUSD has improved its ability to verify if students have re-enrolled at other public schools using data collected from independent charter schools and from the California Department of Education's longitudinal student level data system (CALPADS), reducing the number of students previously counted as dropouts.

For the 2014-15 school year and subsequent years, LAUSD's preliminary calculated graduation rate will be used on the School Report Card and the District's Local Control Accountability Plan. The rate will include all schools and not just comprehensive high schools.

Table 2 provides the graduation rates calculated by LAUSD and the CDE since 2006-07.

Table 2: Four Year Cohort Graduation Rates

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
LAUSD Calculation (comprehensive high schools only)	45	48	52	55	62	65	66	77	83
LAUSD Calculation (All Schools)							58	67	74
Final CDE Calculation - (All Schools)				62	65	67	68	70	not avail.

School by school results are listed in Attachment A. For additional information regarding the preliminary graduation data, please contact me at (213) 241-2460.

c: Michelle King
Ruth Perez
Local District Superintendents