



Steve Barnette
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 22, 2021

PCSD 2021 Graduation Rate Continues To Exceed State Average

Following a year of academic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, including a balance of virtual and in-person instruction across the district, the Paulding County School District's four-year graduation rate not surprisingly showed a mild decline to 89.3 percent in 2021, from 90.8 percent in 2020. The 1.5 percentage point drop reflected academic challenges statewide as Georgia's average graduation rate also declined, according to data released today by the Georgia Department of Education.

While the statewide average four-year graduation rate declined less, the Paulding County's School District's graduation rate maintained a healthy 5.6 percent advantage over the state. The state measures both a four-year and a five-year graduation rate as part of each school district's CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) calculation. PCSD's five-year graduation rate in 2021 is 91.9 percent.

Also of note, of the 17 school districts in Georgia with more than 2,000 graduates, the Paulding County School District's graduation rate ranked 6th highest. Of the 23 school districts in Georgia with more than 1,000 graduates, the Paulding County School District's graduation rate ranked 8th highest. These rankings are a remarkable achievement for a low-wealth school district ranking 13th in revenue per pupil.

For the 2020-2021 school year, nationwide many aspects of instructional delivery were challenged as student health and safety became the primary focus. To meet this challenge the Paulding County School District offered families a choice of in-person or virtual instruction at all grade levels. "With all of the challenges our community has faced in the last year, the extent of the pandemic's impact on academics is still unclear," said Interim Superintendent Steve Barnette. "We were anticipating a decline in graduation rate and challenges comparing our performance against statewide measures. What is important now is how we respond to mitigate these effects and return our schools to a pre-pandemic level of academic excellence. We have been working very hard on those interventions this school year."

Mr. Barnette also noted that the most important aspect of a student graduating is the quality of education that student received. "More important than the number of graduates we have is what a diploma actually means to the student who earns one. We need to continue to ensure that a PCSD diploma means that a student is directly prepared for future success."

While the data released by the state indicates four of PCSD's five high schools showed modest drops in their four-year graduation rates, Hiram High School improved its graduation rate to 89.5 percent in 2021 from 87.8 percent in 2020.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented worldwide disruption, the Paulding County School District's graduation rate had been experiencing a steady climb for six consecutive years. In 2020, the district's four-year average graduation rate reached 90.8 percent, the first time it had ever topped 90 percent, according to county records. This remarkable growth could be attributed to the implementation of consistent block schedules at all high schools, as well as the recent implementation of comprehensive literacy initiatives in the district's 33 schools that are having a measurable effect on student achievement.

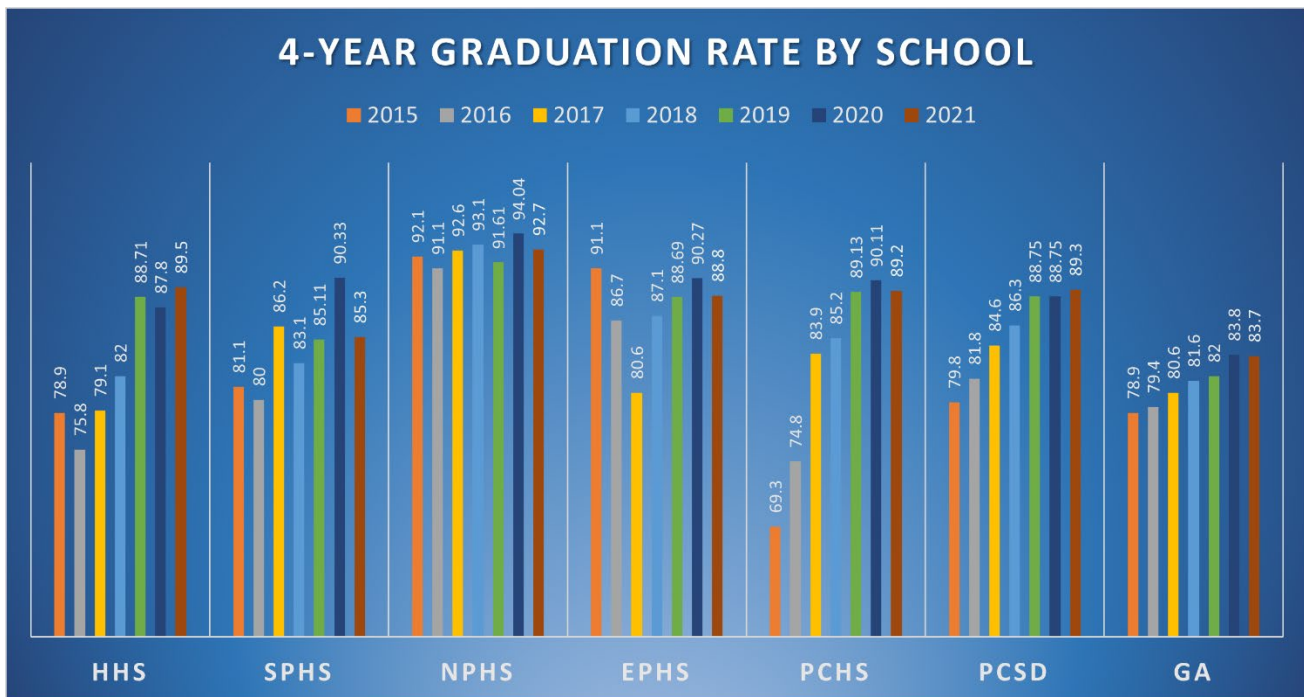
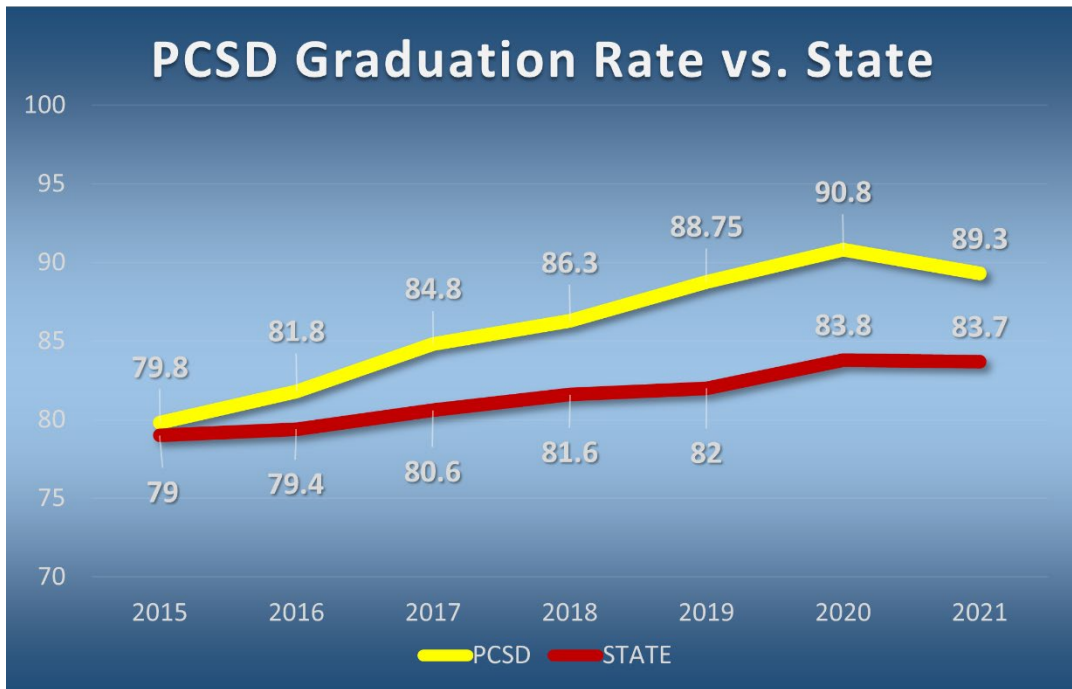
Georgia calculates the graduation rate using a formula known as the adjusted cohort rate which is required by the U.S. Department of Education. The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate defines the cohort based on when a student first becomes a freshman; it is calculated using the number of students who graduate within four years and includes adjustments for student transfers.

The Paulding County School District graduation rate has topped the state average for the past 11 years. Since 2012, the district's graduation rate has increased more than 14 percentage points.

The GA Department of Education statewide press release with links to data tables can be found here:

<https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=904>

(The charts on next page summarize PCSD data)



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
HIRAM HS	78.9	75.8	79.1	82.0	88.7	87.8	89.5
SOUTH PAULDING HS	81.1	80.0	86.2	83.1	85.1	90.3	85.3
NORTH PAULDING HS	92.1	91.1	92.6	93.1	91.6	94.0	92.7
EAST PAULDING HS	91.1	86.7	80.6	87.1	88.7	90.3	88.8
PAULDING COUNTY HS	69.3	74.8	83.9	85.2	89.1	90.1	89.2
PCSD	79.8	81.8	84.6	86.3	88.8	88.8	89.3
GA	78.9	79.4	80.6	81.6	82.0	83.8	83.7