



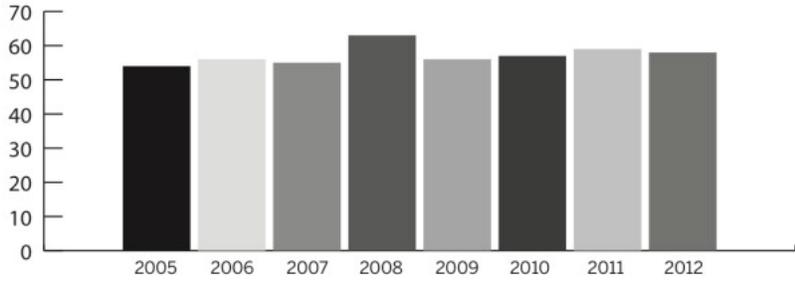
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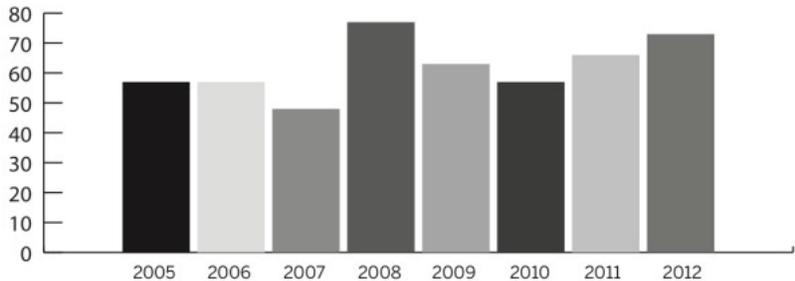
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College matriculation, graduation rates still low

GRAPH PERCENT OF NEW HAVEN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLED IN COLLEGE IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



GRAPH PERCENT OF HILL REGIONAL CAREER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLED IN COLLEGE IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



BY MATTHEW LLOYD-THOMAS
 STAFF REPORTER
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Just over one month after Mayor John DeStefano Jr., in his State of the City address, cited increasing college attendance and graduation rates as one of the main goals of his last year in office, a November report released Tuesday shows that New Haven public schools continue to face difficulties in working toward these objectives.

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Compiled by the non-profit National Student Clearinghouse, which New Haven Public Schools hired to collect the data, the report shows that many graduates of the city's schools either never matriculate to college or drop out before graduation. Although the city received the report in November, the information was only made public Tuesday after the New Haven Independent filed a records request with the city. The new data comes in the third year of DeStefano's School Change Initiative and amidst significant progress toward lowering the city's college dropout rate.

The report examined data from the high school graduating classes of 2005 through 2012, although data on college graduation rates were only available for the classes of 2005 and 2006. Over the past seven years, the

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percentage of New Haven Public School graduates attending college in the year after leaving high school has remained relatively flat, moving from 59 percent in 2005 to 64 percent in 2012.

Perhaps more challenging for the city, however, is the so-called “persistence rate,” or the percentage of students who not only enroll in college but actually continue to graduation. Although 59 percent of the class of 2006 began college in the year after their high school graduation, only 22.8 of NHPS high school graduates completed college within six years.

NHPS spokeswoman Abbe Smith, noting that School Change is a long-term project, said that the district is focused on emphasizing college preparedness for all of the system’s students.

“We’re trying to build up, from kindergarten, college culture and college persistence,” Smith said.

The report has had significant consequences for high schools across the city. It served as the basis for this year’s “tiering” of all city schools in January, in which the city graded each school and classified it as a top-ranked Tier I, middle-ranked Tier II or bottom-ranked Tier III school.

Hill Regional Career High School — where an average of 76 percent of graduates from the classes of 2005 through 2012 went to college immediately after graduating — was one of the top performers in the city and was upgraded from from a Tier II to a Tier I school. On the other hand, Sound School, the interdistrict magnet school where 58 percent of students went on to college immediately after graduating, was downgraded from Tier I to Tier II.

The use of the report has drawn criticism from some New Haven principals, who have emphasized that tertiary education is not the best choice for all students and that different schools face different challenges in preparing their students for college.

Sound School principal Rebecca Gratz told the New Haven Independent that her school focuses on vocational skills and many students “are not kids who want to go on to higher education in a traditional way.”

Hillhouse High School principal Kermit Carolina echoed a similar sentiment, emphasizing to the New Haven Independent that Hillhouse has a relatively large number of students unprepared for high school and unable to afford college. At Hillhouse, 55 percent of students enroll in college immediately after graduating and 18 percent of the class of 2005 graduated from college within six years.

New Haven Public Schools Assistant Superintendent Garth Harries ’95 said that regardless of the differences between high schools, the district should have the same college goals for all of its students.

“We should have the same hope and expectation for post high school education for all of our students, regardless of which high school they go to,” Harries said. He added that the district compares a variety of metrics — such as the graduation rate, on track rate and college persistence rate — to the academic levels of students when they arrived in high school to account for differences across schools.

According to the report, the most common college destination for New Haven Public School students is Gateway Community College, followed distantly by Southern Connecticut State University and the University of Connecticut.