

High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Frequently Asked Questions

The following are frequently asked questions and answers related to the NJ SMART High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile.

Cohort Assignment

- 1. Question: What happens if a student is in ninth grade in 2012 (graduation cohort of 2016) and fails, leading them to repeat the grade? Do those students remain in 2016 cohort, or do they move to 2017 cohort?**

Answer: In that case, the students remain in the 2016 Cohort. Once assigned a cohort, students remain in that cohort until they graduate.

- 2. Question: If students are assigned a Cohort Year in ninth grade, then what happens if students transfer into tenth grade from out-of-state? Will they be included in a cohort?**

Answer: Yes, those students will be assigned to whatever cohort they would have joined in 9th grade. For example, if a student enters the NJ SMART system as a 10th grader in October of 2013, that student would be assigned to the 2016 Cohort.

- 3. Question: What happens when students are retained in a different district (and become Off-Track Continuing for the 4-year graduation rate) and then transfer into our school. Will they count against our graduation rate even though they were not in our district when they went off track?**

Answer: Yes, they will count as off-track in your district. Graduation cohort statuses are based on a four-year expected timeline of graduation for each student, and are updated based on student progress through grade levels. On-Track / Off-Track Continuing statuses are not affected by transferring to a new school.

Cohort Statuses

- 4. Question: My district inactivated a student as a dropout but then the student was activated in another district. Will this student still count as a "Dropout" for my district in graduation rate calculations?**

Answer: No, NJ SMART will recognize the student as active in a new district and they will no longer be considered a dropout in graduation calculations.

- 5. Question: What if students transfer out of state? There will be no other district to re-activate their SID. Will the student be considered a Transfer Out – Unverified and count against our graduation rate?**

Answer: A transfer to an out-of-state school will count as "Excluded from Cohort" and the student will be subtracted from your school's cohort count. (i.e., your district is no longer responsible for the student with respect to this calculation). The NJDOE has implemented an audit process to verify these transfers.

6. Question: What about students who graduate early (three years instead of four)? How are they accounted for?

Answer: As long as you exit students with a School Exit Withdrawal Code of "L", they will be counted as graduates for their cohort (i.e., the cohort they were assigned in 9th grade).

7. Question: Is a "Status Unknown" student included in the Graduation Rate calculation?

Answer: Yes, if you have active students with "Cohort Status Unknown" statuses at the time that the graduation rate is calculated, they will be included in your Adjusted Cohort Count (i.e., in the denominator of the graduation rate calculation).

8. Question: How do we account for students who are staying for post-graduate work?

Answer: In the case that students fulfill their requirement to graduate within four years but will remain in high school to continue their studies, these students should be exited as graduates ("L") at the appropriate time and then re-uploaded to SID Management in the subsequent school year as an Active student. During the next State Submission, these students would be assigned a Grade Level of "PG" (postgraduate). (Please note that students who are continuing as postgraduates are not publicly funded.)

9. Question: What should I do if a student is in my 2016 Cohort as Transfer-Out Unverified and they were assigned a new SID by the other district?

Answer: You will need to contact the district that received the student and obtain the SID number that they submitted the student with. You should email the NJ SMART Help Desk with both SID numbers and ask that they be merged. Once the SIDs are merged the student will be removed from your Transfer-Out Unverified bucket.

NJ SMART Submissions

10. Question: How will errors or sync records submitted to the Official State Submission affect our graduation rate?

Answer: The cohort statuses of active students will be updated based on the records that you successfully submit to state submission. If you "Release with Errors", those records in error/sync will be updated to "Cohort Status Unknown" since there will be no grade level

submitted for those records. The cohort statuses of inactive students are updated based on School Exit Withdrawal Codes in SID Management and are not affected by State Submission.

11. Question: *What do I need to submit to NJ SMART for my graduation rate report?*

Answer: There is no separate Graduation data collection in NJ SMART. Students' cohort statuses are updated based on information that districts already submit to NJ SMART in SID Management and State Submission. The most important thing to remember is to be timely in the inactivation of your high school students in NJ SMART. Students completing the school year in your district should remain "Active" in the system until End-of-Year June 30th (the SID Management Snapshot deadline). After that Snapshot is taken, districts can begin inactivating their students (as appropriate) during the summer, from the first week of July through August. The deadline for inactivating regular school-year students is the beginning of August and the deadline for summer school students is August 31st. On August 31st, another snapshot is taken of SID Management, in order to calculate 4-Year and 5-Year graduation rates.

12. Question: *I accidentally inactivated one of my students with the wrong School Exit Withdrawal Code; can I change it?*

Answer: Yes, you can edit a student's School Exit Withdrawal Code in SID Management. First, you need to submit the student to SID Management with a Status = Active and no errors. Only after the student record has been re-activated, can you inactivate it with a new School Exit Withdrawal Code. Please note that if you simply try to edit an inactivate record by changing the Exit Code, without first re-activating the student, the system will not register the change.

Special Education Students

13. Question: *Are special education students who do not graduate until they age out of the system at age 21 included in my graduation cohort?*

Answer: Like any other high school student, students receiving Special Education services will be assigned to a graduation cohort and figure into graduation rate calculations- including those who continue until they age out of the system. As is the case for any student continuing beyond the Cohort's expected graduation year, they will count as a 'non-graduate' in the 4-year graduation rate calculation. The NJDOE is provided with subgroup information such that they will be able to see what percentages of your continuing students are Special Education classified. Please note that this reflects the Federal policy:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf>

14. Question: *How are students that are parentally placed in nonpublic schools (in order to receive special education services) considered in the graduation rate calculation?*

Answer: If student have been submitted to the most recent State Submission with the element NonPublic having a value of "REC" or "NREC," then they will be categorized as "Excluded from Cohort". If the students are active, then their cohort statuses will display as

“NonPublic”; if the students are inactive (School Exit Withdrawal Code of “PPE”), then their cohort statuses will display as “PPE”.

Accountable High Schools

15. Question: Why is my district accountable for this student?

Answer: If you are unsure about why your district is accountable for a given student, please refer to the *H.S. Graduation Accountable Rules User Guide* on the Help tab and the corresponding list of New Jersey’s *Accountable High Schools*. The Accountable CDS Perspective is derived based on students’ CDS Codes as submitted by districts; please refer to NJ SMART’s *Reporting Responsibilities* document to ensure that students’ Attending, Receiving, and Resident CDS Codes are being reported correctly.

16. Question: Who determines which high schools are accountable for graduation rates?

Answer: The NJDOE provides NJ SMART with the list of Accountable High Schools each Spring. The list of *Accountable High Schools* can be found on the NJ SMART Help tab and on the NJDOE website. If you believe that there is an error on this list, please contact the NJ SMART Help desk.

Graduation Appeal Requests

17. Question: The data in my August 31st High School Graduation profile based off of the Official Snapshot is incorrect; can I fix it?

Answer: Districts are encouraged to monitor and maintain their graduation data throughout the school year by using Official Snapshot and LDM High School Graduation Cohort Status Profiles. However, after each release of the August 31st Snapshot Profile (in early September), a graduation appeals period opens for that year’s “4-Year” and “5-Year” graduation rates. District users can submit appeal requests to the NJDOE for individual student records; each request is evaluated by an NJDOE official and decided upon. Any approved requests are incorporated into the Official Snapshot graduation data.

18. Question: Where do I go to appeal any graduation data?

Answer: Users should navigate to the “Graduation Appeals” page in the NJ SMART portal to make an appeal request. This page can be found under the Reporting menu tab, and is available to any user with “District Reports” access (to request this access, please contact your district’s WUA). On this page, you will be able to view a list of your “Cohort Students”. If you click on an individual student’s LID, you will drill down to a Student Details page, through which you can submit an appeal request. In addition, you will be able to view a list of your “Appeal Requests” to track and monitor submitted requests.