



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 13, 2025
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: School Business Administrators, Web User Administrators, Principals and School Leads
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services
Deadline: August 29, 2025, 5 p.m.

Action Required: Update and Review NJ SMART Data to Ensure Accurate Graduation Data for School Performance Reports and Accountability

The annual NJ SMART SID Management window to inactivate 2024-2025 graduates is currently open, and the deadline is August 29, 2025 at 5 p.m. SID Management is the management system that establishes students' unique identification numbers, compiles demographic data, and tracks graduation data and the pathways students use to meet the [graduation assessment requirements](#). The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will use the data submitted by the August 29, 2025 deadline to calculate 2025 school and district graduation rates, which include four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates. This data will be reported in the 2024-2025 School Performance Reports in early 2026.

Key actions

Before the August 29, 2025 deadline, LEAs should take the following steps to ensure accurate graduation rates for their schools and district:

1. Ensure all graduation data is reported correctly by making sure that:
 - All students who will graduate by August 29, 2025 are reported as graduating with the correct school exit withdrawal date;
 - All students who have transferred out of the district have the appropriate exit withdrawal code;
 - The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Graduation Course Requirement and IEP Graduation Attendance fields are coded correctly to reflect whether students with disabilities did not meet course and/or attendance requirements because of modification or exemptions in their IEPs; and
 - The English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Graduation Pathway Indicators accurately reflect how students met the graduation assessment requirements.
2. Use the NJ SMART High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile district report to review:
 - Cohort 2025 four-year, cohort 2024 five-year, and cohort 2023 six-year graduation rates;
 - Graduation rates and data for each school and the overall district;
 - Whether all students have the correct cohort, cohort status, and accountable school and district;

- State and federal versions of the graduation rates (see below); and
- Students in the Transfer Out – Unverified category to determine if they have the correct exit withdrawal code or if they were reported by another district using a different state identification number, which may require a SID merge.

Graduation Pathway Reporting

Students graduating with the class of 2025 (between September 1, 2024 and August 29, 2025) were required to meet the [Class of 2025 graduation assessment requirements](#). LEAs report how students met the graduation assessment requirements for ELA and mathematics using the ELA and Math Graduation Pathway Indicators in NJ SMART.

If students took and demonstrated proficiency on the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA), they should be reported with a value of S (first pathway). Students who took the NJGPA but did not demonstrate proficiency were able to access the second and third pathway options. These students should be reported with the appropriate pathway code that corresponds to the substitute competency test for which they met the designated cut score or a pathway code of N if the student submitted a student portfolio appeal to the NJDOE.

Under the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), the IEPs of students with disabilities address whether students must meet the passing score on the state assessment or demonstrate proficiency through an alternate pathway to graduate. Students with disabilities who did not meet the graduation assessment pathways through the first, second, or third pathway and instead met alternate requirements specified in their IEPs should be reported with a value of M (Alternate requirements specified in IEP).

Graduation Rate Reporting and Accountability

The NJDOE calculates and reports two versions of graduation rates:

- **State version:** Includes all students who earn a state-endorsed diploma as graduates (in the numerator) in the calculation.
- **Federal version:** Includes only students who earned a state-endorsed diploma and met the state course, local attendance, and, depending on the year of graduation, assessment graduation requirements; pursuant to federal rules, the federal version does not include students with disabilities who receive a state-endorsed diploma but instead met alternate requirements specified in their IEPs.

State regulations allow the IEP team of students with disabilities to exempt a student from graduation requirements or modify the requirements that a student must meet to graduate. ESSA does not allow students who have not met the state's graduation assessment, course, or attendance requirements because of a modification or exemption in the student's IEP to be included as graduates in the graduation rates used for federal reporting and accountability. As such, students with disabilities who earn a state-endorsed diploma but have not met all the graduation requirements because of modifications or exemptions in their IEPs are counted as graduates in the state version of the graduation rate but are not counted as graduates in the federal

version of the graduation rate. The adjusted cohort (denominator) is the same for both the state and federal versions of the graduation rate.

The NJDOE uses the IEP Graduation Course Requirement and IEP Graduation Attendance fields in SID Management to identify students with disabilities who did not meet the state course and/or local attendance requirements, respectively. The ELA and Math Graduation Pathway Indicator fields in SID Management are used to identify students with disabilities who did not meet the state graduation assessment requirements but instead met alternate requirements specified in their IEPs. LEAs should ensure that these fields are accurate and error-free by the August 29, 2025, deadline.

The NJ SMART High School Graduation Cohort Profile allows LEAs to view both the state and federal versions of the graduation rate side by side.

Graduation Resources

Several graduation resources are available to support LEAs in reporting graduation data, explaining how graduation rates are calculated, answering frequently asked questions, and describing how to use the associated district reports. These resources include:

- [Introduction to the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate Calculation in New Jersey](#)
- [User Guide to High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile](#)
- [NJ SMART Graduation FAQs](#)
- [Understanding Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates](#)
- [School Exit Withdrawal Codes and Graduation Cohort Status Overview](#)

[Additional resources and trainings](#) for NJ SMART submissions are available under Documents for Download and eLearning Videos & Webinars.

Transition from NJ SMART to NJSLEDS

Graduation data for 2024-2025 will be the last data collected in NJ SMART. Starting September 2, all data submissions will fully transition to the New Jersey Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (NJSLEDS). This means the review of preliminary graduation rates, based on the August 29, 2025, snapshot, and the graduation appeals process will occur in the NJSLEDS system in the fall. More details will be shared about the NJSLEDS graduation reports and appeals process in the coming weeks.

Required Graduation Reporting Reminder

New Jersey regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.2(f)) require LEAs to report graduation results annually to their district boards of education or charter school boards of trustees at a public meeting no later than September 30, 2025. LEAs are required to report:

1. The total number of students graduating in the prior school year;
2. The number of graduates who met the graduation assessment requirements by:
 - a. Passing a substitute competency test;
 - b. The portfolio appeals process; and
 - c. Meeting alternate requirements specified in their IEPs; and

3. The number of 12th grade students who were denied graduation and how many of those students were denied solely due to failure to meet the graduation assessment requirements.

The information that LEAs report should align with the data that was submitted in NJ SMART SID Management by the August 29, 2025, deadline. If an LEA has submitted graduation appeals that are not yet approved and impact these measures, they may report the information that they have appealed with a note that it is pending approval by the NJDOE.

It is not required for LEAs to report on graduation rates at this time, however if they choose to report on the preliminary adjusted cohort graduation rates that can be found in the NJ SMART High School Graduation Cohort Status Profiles to their local school boards, they should notify the public that the rates are preliminary and may be different from the final graduation rates that will appear in the 2024-2025 School Performance Reports. Final adjusted cohort graduation rates are expected to be available by December, after the Graduation Appeals process is complete.

Contact Information

Contact the NJ SMART help desk at (800) 254-0295 or njsmart@pcgus.com with any questions about NJ SMART submissions. Contact reportcard@doe.nj.gov with any questions about how graduation rates are calculated, reported, or used for accountability purposes.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group