



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Guidance for Reporting Student Absences and Calculating Chronic Absenteeism



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Revisions

Date	Revision
October 2020	Information related to attendance during the declared state of emergency due to COVID-19 was collated and moved to the new section, “Attendance During the Public Health Emergency Due to COVID-19,” for ease of reference.
October 2020	The three data fields related to attendance that were added to NJ SMART in October 2020 are explained in the “Understanding the Data Fields Used to Calculate Chronic Absenteeism” section.
October 2020	The section, “Definitions,” was retitled “Understanding the Data Fields Used to Calculate Chronic Absenteeism” to clarify the importance of the information contained in that section.
October 2020	The first section was retitled “Background” to distinguish it from the title of the document.
October 2020	References to Time Present—Full Day and Time Present—Half Day were removed to reflect the current policy on attendance.
October 2020	A Table of Contents was added.
October 2020	The section, “What Is Important to Know When Implementing this Guidance?” was removed, as all of the information in this guidance is relevant, and its contents were distributed throughout the document.
October 2020	The section, “How to Submit Data for Students with Partial Attendance in a District?” was retitled, “Attendance for Mid-Year Transfer Students” to clarify the contents of that section.
October 2020	The description of school-sponsored education programs was removed as Executive Order (E.O.) No. 175 allows for days in which students are in remote learning environments to count towards the 180 day requirement.

Background

For students to learn and achieve their full potential, it is critical they are engaged in the learning process. Research shows that absences impact a student's ability to succeed in school. In addition, research shows that chronic absenteeism, or having missed 10 percent or more of the school year, is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of a student's risk of dropping out of school.¹

In its approved [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) State Plan](#), the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) identified chronic absenteeism as its indicator of school quality for federal school accountability. Chronic absenteeism is one of five indicators factored into the summative rating used to identify schools in need of Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement. Additionally, information on chronic absenteeism, including the number and percentage of students who were chronically absent schoolwide, across student groups and grade levels, is included in each school's annual School Performance Report, per *ESSA* Sec.1111.

This guidance clarifies policies and expectations for reporting student membership and attendance data in NJ SMART and sets forth the NJDOE's methodology for measuring chronic absenteeism. **Districts should review their locally-developed attendance data collection system or work with their Student Information System (SIS) vendors to make sure they are in compliance with the attendance reporting requirements outlined in this guidance.**

Accurate student attendance data allows schools and districts to better assess the root causes of chronic absenteeism and implement improvement strategies to address these issues. A list of various research-based strategies for reducing chronic absenteeism is available on the NJDOE's [Attendance, Truancy & Chronic Absenteeism](#) website.

Attendance During the Public Health Emergency Due to COVID-19

The guidance for recording daily attendance during the declared state of emergency due to COVID-19 has shifted from March 2020 to the present. The guidance provided in the spring should not be applied to attendance in school year 2020-2021. The current guidance is governed by [Executive Order \(E.O.\) No. 175](#). The remainder of this section provides a timeline and brief description of the factors influencing the state's guidance on attendance during the

¹ Balfanz, R. and Byrnes, V. (2012). [The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools](#). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

current public health emergency. It concludes with a summary of the guidance contained in E.O. No. 175.

A March 13, 2020 NJDOE Memo, [Supplemental Guidance Regarding Requirements for Public Health-Related School Closure](#), explained that districts could count days of remote instruction due to a declared state of emergency towards the 180-day requirement in accordance with *N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9* provided that the provision of remote instruction followed the requirements for the provision of home instruction outlined in *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1*. This flexibility, to allow days of remote instruction due to a declared public health emergency to count towards the 180-day requirement, was enacted into state law as [P.L. 2020 c. 27](#) on April 14, 2020.

The NJDOE's request to waive statewide assessment, accountability and reporting requirements for school year 2019-2020 was approved by the United States Department of Education (USED) on March 27, 2020. The waiver means that the NJDOE will not rely on school-level rates of chronic absenteeism to identify schools in need of Comprehensive or Targeted Support for school year 2019-2020, nor will rates of chronic absenteeism be reported in the 2019-2020 School Performance Reports. However, the NJDOE is still required to report school year 2019-2020 chronic absenteeism rates to USED through *EDFacts*.

As of publication of this guidance, the NJDOE has not requested to waive school year 2020-2021 statewide assessment, accountability and reporting requirements.

After Governor Murphy announced that all New Jersey school buildings would remain closed for in-person instruction for the remainder of school year 2019-2020 on May 4, 2020, the NJDOE issued a memo, [Required Updates to District Public Health-Related School Closure Plans](#), that required districts to clarify their attendance policies, including how districts determine whether a student is present or absent, and how a student's attendance will factor into promotion, retention, graduation, discipline, and any other decisions that impact students.

The guidance for remote instruction in school year 2020-2021, including what constitutes a school day in session, was issued on August 13, 2020 through [E.O. No. 175](#). As stated in E.O. No. 175, a school day, whether in-person or remote, must consist of at least four (4) hours of active instruction, exclusive of recess periods or lunch periods, and which may include synchronous and/or asynchronous instruction to students by an appropriately certified teacher. One continuous session of two and one-half hours may be considered a full day in kindergarten, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3*, but a full school day of kindergarten must be at least four hours long in districts formerly designated as Abbott school districts. Districts must ensure the requirements set forth in *N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9* for a 180-day school year are met. Finally, per *N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.31* districts must provide a daily recess period of at least 20 minutes for students in grades kindergarten through 5.

Consistent with E.O. No. 175, when determining attendance policies for remote instruction, districts must consider both the number of instructional hours in a school day as well as student participation in instruction. Districts may employ multiple ways to determine whether a student in a remote learning environment is present or absent, including attending check-ins through internet or telephone, logging in to online learning platforms, or monitoring student submission of assignments. E.O. No. 175 requires district policies for attendance to accommodate opportunities for asynchronous instruction, which may necessitate that districts delay recording daily attendance for students in remote learning environments. Per *N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(i)*, a student must be recorded as present, absent or excused every day the school is in session and the student is enrolled.

District policies and procedures regarding attendance, whether for students on school premises or in remote learning environments, must comply with *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6*. Further, districts are obligated to provide for the early detection of missing and abused children per *N.J.S.A. 18A:36-25*.

How is Chronic Absenteeism Measured in New Jersey?

A student is considered chronically absent if she misses 10 percent or more of the school days in session for which she was enrolled (i.e., days in membership). A school's chronic absenteeism rate, as defined in New Jersey's ESSA State Plan, is the proportion of a school's students that were chronically absent.

Student-level Absentee Rate

Each student's absentee rate is calculated based on the fields of *Cumulative Days Present* and *Cumulative Days in Membership* collected in NJ SMART. *Cumulative Days Present* (P) is subtracted from the *Cumulative Days in Membership* (M), and this number is divided by the *Cumulative Days in Membership* (M).

$$\text{Student Absentee Rate} = \frac{M - P}{M}$$

If a student's absentee rate is equal to or greater than 10 percent, the student is considered chronically absent.

School-level Chronic Absenteeism

The school-level chronic absenteeism rate is calculated by dividing the total number of chronically absent students during the school year by the total number of students enrolled in the school during the school year.

Understanding the Attendance Data Fields in NJ SMART

This section explains the data fields used to calculate student-level absentee rates and school-level chronic absenteeism. It also reviews the two new data fields related to student attendance added to NJ SMART in October 2020. For a complete list of all data fields included in NJ SMART SID Management please see the [NJ SMART SID Management Student Data Handbook](#).

Cumulative Days in Membership

Cumulative Days in Membership is defined as the number of school days in session in which a student is enrolled during the annual reporting period from July 1 through June 30. The count commences on the first day the student is expected to start, even if he or she does not actually attend that day.

According to *N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(a) and (b)*, and E.O. No. 175, a school day in session is a day in which the school is open and students are under the guidance and direction of a teacher(s); and the day must be 4 hours or more to be considered a full day, or at least 2 and a half hours for kindergarten. In addition:

- School must be in session a minimum of 180 days to receive state aid payments per *N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9*;
- The number of school days in session does not include summer school;
- The extended school year is included in the calculation up to June 30 and **ONLY** when it is required for ALL students; and
- As stated in *N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.1(f)*, the number of possible days in session for a student on *home instruction* is the same as for other students in the program in which the student is enrolled.

Per New Jersey's approved ESSA State plan, a **state-excused absence** cannot be counted as a day in membership. Instead, districts must deduct state-excused absences from the number of cumulative days in membership before submitting final data to the NJDOE via NJ SMART SID Management. For example, if a kindergartener missed only one school day in session, for Take

Our Children to Work Day, out of 180 possible days of attendance, that kindergartener's cumulative days in membership must be submitted as 179 days with 179 cumulative days present.

The following are the five allowable reasons for a state-excused absence:

- [Religious observance](#) (*N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(h)*);
- A college visit (up to 3 days per school year for students in grades 11 and 12);
- "Take Our Children to Work Day" or other rule issued by the Commissioner;
- Participation in observance of Veterans Day (*N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-13.2*) or district board of election membership activities (*N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-33*); or
- The closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school.

Cumulative Days Present

Cumulative Days Present is an element in NJ SMART defined as the number of school days a student is present (not absent) when the school is in session during the annual reporting period (July 1 through June 30) and the student is recorded as under the guidance and direction of a teacher in the teaching process (*N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3*). Whether a student absence is due to illness, disciplinary action, or other reason, the student may not be considered present at school unless home instruction is received. (For further clarification, see sections below on whether students can be recorded as present during school-sponsored programs and suspensions.) A student with an "excused" absence per district board of education policy can never be considered as present.

Home Instruction

A student receiving home instruction is considered present and in membership under the following circumstances:

- A student with *a temporary or chronic health condition* receives home instruction by a certified teacher for the number of days and length of time sufficient to continue the student's academic progress. A student with a disability must receive home instruction consistent with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) (*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1*).
- A general education student, *for reasons other than a temporary or chronic health condition*, receives 10 or more hours of home instruction per week by a certified teacher on at least three separate days and no fewer than 10 hours per week additional guided-learning experiences (*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.2*).

- A student, *when placed on home instruction through an IEP*, receives 10 or more hours of instruction per week on at least three separate days by an appropriately certified teacher or teachers (*N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.8*).
- **Note:** When instruction is provided for less than the minimum number of hours and/or days required per week, the student must not be recorded as present for more than four days when school was in session for a full five-day week. Districts are able to develop their own policy for determining the exact number of days to record the student present based on these circumstances.

In-school Suspensions

A student temporarily removed from his or her regular classroom to in-school suspension is considered present and in membership, provided the student is afforded the opportunity to continue to:

- Appropriately participate in the general curriculum; and
- For students with disabilities, receive the services specified in the child’s IEP, and participate with nondisabled children to the extent they would have in their current placement.

Out-of-school Suspensions

A student on out-of-school suspension is considered in membership and not present unless he or she receives home instruction as defined above. Students receiving short-term suspension must be provided with academic instruction that addresses the New Jersey Student Learning Standards within five days of the suspension (*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.2(a)5*). Students receiving long-term suspension must be provided with educational services (academic instruction and support services) within five days of the suspension (*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.3(a)9*).

Extended Non-illness Absences

School districts should develop a policy that determines when to record a student who is not in school for an extended period of time for reasons other than illness (e.g., travel with family) as a dropout. A student may be considered a transfer during the extended leave when the student is re-enrolled in and attending another school (in the U.S. or abroad).

The NJDOE recommends that each district board of education develop and implement policies and procedures regarding attendance that include the number of days a student must attend in order to be considered for promotion to the next grade or for graduation.

Note: Administrators should consider the potential implications of dis-enrolling a student for the purposes of reporting student attendance data with regard to its potential impact on other accountability measures and any possible financial consequences.

School-Level Chronic Absenteeism Rates

School-level chronic absenteeism rates will be calculated using student records as submitted to SID Management by **June 30, 2021**. **Districts will not have an opportunity to change their data after their final SID Management submission.** Questions regarding management of student records may be directed to NJSMART@pcgus.com.

Districts must submit attendance data fields in the end-of-year SID Management submission that includes attendance through the school's last day in session. Districts may not consider their attendance fields as final and the SID Management submission as "complete" if student attendance through the last school day is not part of the submission. (For example, if a school is open for 180 days and the last day of school is on June 22, the attendance data fields cannot be considered as complete until attendance for June 22 is logged and part of that EOY SID Management submission.)

Districts must verify that data related to attendance and student subgroup information fields in the final NJ SMART SID Management submission are accurate as these are the source variables used for all chronic absenteeism calculations. (Please note: NJ QSAC, Operations Indicator 1, verifies that districts certify and provide complete data to NJ SMART on schedule and with a low error rate.)

New Attendance-Related Data Fields in NJ SMART

To fulfill new reporting requirements, the NJDOE added several new data fields to the NJ SMART SID Management. This guidance document outlines the three new fields related to attendance.

Student Learning Environment

The first new field is **Student Learning Environment**. For this field, district must explain, for each student, what the student's learning environment has been during his period of enrollment during the annual reporting period. For the fall submission, the response for each student should reflect her learning environment from the start of the school year, or first day in membership, to October 15th. There are four options for student learning environment:

- 1) Fulltime on school premises
- 2) Hybrid, meaning partially on school premises and partially remote
- 3) Fulltime remote due to the district offering only remote option
- 4) Fulltime remote due to parental/guardian choice

This field must be entered for each student by November 24, 2020 and again in the EOY submission. The NJDOE anticipates that this field will change for students from the first submission to the EOY submission. For example, students may begin the year full-time remote (for either reason), move to hybrid in the middle of the year and end the year full-time, in-person on school premises. In these cases, the EOY submission would be Hybrid, because the student spent some of the year in a remote learning environment and some of the year on school premises.

Remote Days in Membership and Remote Days Present

The second and third new fields covered here are **Remote Days In Membership** and **Remote Days Present**. These two fields are designed to capture each student’s attendance during the school days in session spent in a remote learning environment. Specifically, *Remote Days in Membership* represents the number of school days in session from July 1 to June 30 that the student was enrolled and scheduled to receive instruction from a remote learning environment. *Remote Days Present* is the number of *Remote Days in Membership* in which a student was marked as present during the annual reporting period. Districts are required to complete these fields for the EOY SID Management submission.

The *Remote Days Present* and *Remote Days In Membership* fields are separate from the existing attendance fields, *Cumulative Days Present* and *Cumulative Days in Membership*, and should have no impact on the numbers reported in latter fields.

If a district utilizes remote instruction at any point, for any length of time, over the course of the school year, the student learning environment, remote days in membership and remote days present fields must reflect that usage.

What About Truancy?

Truancy is defined as 10 or more cumulative unexcused absences (*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3*). All school districts are required to have a policy and procedure that include a definition of unexcused absences that count toward truancy; thus, how “excused” and “unexcused” absences are defined for purposes of expectations and consequences regarding truancy, student conduct, promotion, retention and award of credit is a local decision (*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6(a)3*). The NJ SMART *Cumulative Days Towards Truancy* field is not considered in the calculation of chronic absenteeism.

Attendance for Mid-Year Transfer Students

In NJ SMART's end of year (EOY) SID Management submission, attendance fields should be reported for all students who attended school in a district during the school year – from July 1 to June 30 – whether the student is enrolled with the district at the end of the school year (active student) or whether the student has transferred, dropped-out or is otherwise not a member of the district at the end of the school year (inactive student).

Procedurally, in the EOY SID submission, whenever a district records an exit date for a student in NJ SMART, the district must also indicate an exit withdrawal code along with reporting the student's attendance data fields (*Cumulative Days In Membership* and *Cumulative Days Present*) for the period coinciding with the exit date. For example, if a student is enrolled in District A from September to November before transferring to District B for the rest of the school year, District A must report this student in the SID Management submission even though the student is no longer active in the district. District A would submit the student record in the EOY SID Management submission along with the attendance data fields corresponding to their time in the district from September to November. Similarly, District B would report this student's record in SID Management along with their attendance data fields corresponding to their time in the district from December to June.

Attendance data for active and inactive students will be collected in SID Management. While the inclusion of attendance data for inactive students is required under ESSA, reporting these data can be a challenge. The NJDOE encourages all districts to work with their SIS vendors to ensure that attendance data is being submitted for ALL students who enroll in a district school during the current school year, even if a student is not a member of the district by the year's end.

How Does this Work in Practice?

Example 1

David is in 11th grade and his school has 181 days in session during the school year. He was absent 3 days due to college visits and 2 days due to illness; arrived to school 30 minutes late in the morning 2 times; and left an hour early for a soccer game on 5 occasions. Notes: The days that he was tardy or left school early would not be factored into the equation, as he attended school for at least one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon on those days; and his college visits would not be considered *days in membership* because he is in grade 11.

$$\text{David's absentee rate: } \frac{178-176}{178} = 1\%$$

David has 178 cumulative *days in membership* (181 school days in session minus 3 days for his college visits) and 176 *cumulative days present* (181 school days in session minus 5 days absent, including 2 days sick and 3 days college visit). **He would not be considered chronically absent.**

What if, *in addition to the days missed above*, David's family takes him on a two-week vacation during the school year?

$$\text{David's absentee rate: } \frac{178-166}{178} = 7\%$$

David's *cumulative days present* are now 166 (181 school days in session minus 15 days absent, including 2 days sick, 3 days college visit and 10 vacation days). **He would not be considered chronically absent.**

What if, *in addition to the days missed above*, David skips school for 4 days and the next month receives a 2-day out-of-school suspension for repeatedly using a cell phone in class against school policy? Note, when suspended, David was *not* present in school or able to participate in the general curriculum for that day.

$$\text{David's absentee rate: } \frac{178-160}{178} = 10\%$$

David's *cumulative days present* are now 160 (181 school days in session minus 21 days absent, including 2 days sick, 3 days college visit, 10 vacation days, 4 days skipped, and 2 days suspended). **David would be considered chronically absent with a rate of 10%.**

Example 2

Sarah is in 12th grade and her school has 181 days in session during the school year. Sarah is the nighttime assistant manager at a fast-food restaurant to help support her family and the restaurant scheduled her to cover a day shift 11 times.

$$\text{Sarah's absentee rate: } \frac{181-170}{181} = 6\%$$

Sarah would not be considered chronically absent.

What if, *in addition to the days missed above*, Sarah is absent for two weeks due to illness, but receives home instruction during the *second* week, by a certified teacher, sufficient to continue academic progress based upon her ability to participate? Note: Sarah is considered absent for only 5 of those 10 days since she received home instruction in accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1* during one of the two weeks.

$$\text{Sarah's absentee rate: } \frac{181-165}{181} = 9\%$$

Sarah would not be considered chronically absent.

General Considerations Regarding Chronic Absenteeism

Which school is responsible for the student's attendance?

The school a student attends is always responsible for properly documenting a student's daily attendance and following this guidance. It is the accountable school district's responsibility to submit the final student attendance data from the attending school into the *days in membership* and *days present* fields in NJ SMART. In about 95% of cases, a student's accountable school and attending school are identical, but there are rare instances where the accountable school may not be the attending school. For example, a student attending an approved private school for students with disabilities will have his or her attendance reported by the public school he or she would otherwise attend.

Districts should pay careful attention to entering the proper CDS (county, district, school) codes for a student's resident, receiving and attending school in NJ SMART so that the student is assigned the proper accountable school.

Are schools accountable for a student’s attendance if the student exits the school in a short time?

The New Jersey ESSA State Plan indicates that a student must have attended a school at least 45 days for that student’s attendance data to be factored into the chronic absenteeism calculations. Hence, students with fewer than 45 days in membership at a school are not included as part of any accountability calculations nor are they factored into any attendance items in the New Jersey School Performance Report. The NJDOE is required to report attendance data to the USED through ED*Facts* reporting which does include students with 10 or more days in membership. Please note however that all students who have been in membership with the district for any amount of time during the current school year should have their attendance reported in NJ SMART, regardless of how many days the student was in membership or actually attended.

Are preschool students included in the calculations for chronic absenteeism?

This guidance should be followed in the recording of attendance for all preschool students enrolled in New Jersey public schools. However, preschool students are not included in the calculation of school and district accountability scores for chronic absenteeism. Preschool chronic absenteeism rates will be displayed in the school performance reports but they will not factor into any accountability measure.

If a district excuses an absence for a reason that is not one of the five allowable reasons defined above, does that absence count in the calculation of the school’s chronic absenteeism rate?

A student who is absent for a full day with an excused absence pursuant to the school district’s definition of “excused” (see [What about Truancy?](#)) must be recorded as having a day in membership and day absent for that day. An “excused” absence that is not one of the five allowable reasons above, does count as an absence in the determination of whether the student was chronically absent for the year.

Can schools continue to record “excused” absences for local purposes?

It is important to note that schools can determine how “excused” and “unexcused” absences are defined for the purposes of expectations and consequences regarding truancy, student conduct, promotion, retention, and the award of course credit, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6*. School districts can take any and all action authorized by their policies and procedures when categorizing these absences.

However, a school must report student attendance to the NJDOE in accordance with the guidelines in this document. For State reporting purposes, a student can only be recorded as present or absent. Therefore, a student with an “excused” absence per local decision must be marked absent when reported to NJDOE. The only exception is that a school may have a day in session that would not be counted as a day in membership for a particular student based on the five allowable reasons defined above.

If a student registered with my school at the beginning of the year but never attended, will that impact the school’s chronic absenteeism rate?

No. As of the 10th consecutive day of non-attendance, assuming district/school investigations have been performed (pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6*) and the results are conclusive, the appropriate withdrawal code can be recorded. As per NJ SMART rules, the School Exit date is to be recorded as: "The year, month, and day of the first day after the date of a student's last attendance in a school." For students who were enrolled at the beginning of a school year but never attended the school during the year, the exit date is the first day of the school year, regardless of the actual date the district determines the student is no longer in the district. Consequently, the days the student was not at school before being dropped should not be considered *days in membership* and students who were enrolled but never attended should be recorded as having 0 days in membership and 0 days present.

If a school is advised by a family that a student is going to be taking a lengthy time off for vacation, should the school dis-enroll the student and then re-enroll her when she returns?

Schools should review “[extended non-illness absences](#)” above. Given that one student’s absence should not significantly impact your chronic absence rate, schools should consider the possible implications of dis-enrolling a student for the purposes of reporting student attendance data with regard to its potential impact on other accountability measures as well as any possible financial consequences.

How should attendance be reported for shared-time vocational students?

Shared-time students are those who attend two different schools in one day for a half day each. For example, students who spend a half school day in an academic high school and a half day in a county vocational school are enrolled in the high school and also in the appropriate county vocational school. For shared-time students, each day is counted as a *½ day in membership* for each school. Shared-time students are either counted each day as *½ day present* or *½ day absent* at each school. (A shared-time student must attend at least one hour to be counted

present.) Therefore, if a school has 180 days in session for the school year, a shared-time student would have 90 *days in membership* at his or her academic high school and 90 *days in membership* at the county vocational school. The academic high school is responsible for submitting shared-time student attendance data to the SID submission based on half day attendance at the academic school. The vocational school must submit shared-time student attendance data separately in the CTE submission based on half day attendance at the vocational school.

Can a district have a policy that allows students to “make up” attendance time in various after-school or Saturday sessions?

While districts can create such policies, they can **only** be used for local district purposes and not for the purpose of reporting chronic absenteeism (or for reporting to the School Register). The only valid membership days for chronic absenteeism are the days in which the school is in session for *all* students and student attendance must be tracked on those days. So, while districts can create policies that permit students to make up attendance time for local purposes – i.e., graduation, promotion, etc, these alternatives cannot change what is reported in NJ SMART (or the School Register) for student attendance on a valid school day in session.

Can a student’s schedule be modified? If a schedule is modified, how should attendance be reported?

The definitions for *Cumulative Days in Membership*, day in session, and *Cumulative Days Present* are provided in the subsection, Understanding the Attendance Data Fields in NJ SMART, of this document.

For students with disabilities, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.1(c)*, the length of the school day and the academic year of programs must be at least as long as that established for nondisabled students. However, the IEP team may, in its discretion, in rare cases, alter the length of the school day based on the needs of the student. The IEP team may also make a decision, based on the individual needs of the student, that the student is unable to attend school and should receive special education and related services in a different setting or manner, such as through home instruction, all or part of the time. If the IEP team makes this decision, and the information is included in the student’s IEP, then for attendance purposes, the student should be marked as “present” in your SIS when he or she is educated in the educational placement(s) set forth in his or her IEP.

For general education students, apart from those circumstances described above, a student’s schedule may not be modified.

What Funds Can Be Used to Support Student Attendance Initiatives?

Under *ESSA*, when chronic absenteeism is identified and documented as an issue through a comprehensive needs assessment, funding for initiatives to improve student attendance may come from Title I, Part A and Title IV, Part A. Likewise, local education agencies (LEAs) may use Title II funds to provide training for school personnel to address issues related to school conditions for student learning, including chronic absenteeism. Additionally, if the attendance issue relates to English language learners, Title III funds may be used. (Schoolwide programs may use funds from any Title.) Additional information on the use of CARES funds to support student learning is available on the [NJDOE's COVID website](#).

Resources for Implementing Guidance and Using Data to Improve Attendance

- Review [New Jersey School Register](#)
- Review [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7](#) and [N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8](#)
- Review [NJ SMART SID Management Student Handbook](#)
- Review [Supplemental Guidance: NJ SMART SID Management FAQs](#)
- Review a list of various resources to improve student attendance on the Department's [Attendance, Truancy & Chronic Absenteeism](#) website
- Contact the Office of Student Support Services at attendance@doe.nj.gov
- Questions about NJ SMART can be directed to the NJ SMART Help Desk by calling (800) 254-0295 or e-mailing NJSMART@pcgus.com.
- Guidance regarding attendance during COVID-19 is available on the Department's COVID-19 website (<https://www.nj.gov/education/covid19/>).