

# Graduation Data Quality Checklist

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) collects student graduation information from districts through the NJ SMART SID Management system. This data is used for federal reporting, school and district reporting in the School Performance Reports, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability, and the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC). It is important to ensure that this data is as accurate as possible.

This document provides ways to check the accuracy of district submitted graduation data. Districts should use the NJ SMART High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile to review their preliminary graduation data when it becomes available in September. Refer to the [User Guide to High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile](https://www.njsmart.org/njr/ks/High%20School%20Graduation/User%20Guide%20to%20High%20School%20Graduation%20Cohort%20Status%20Profile.pdf) for details on how to use the report. When reviewing graduation rates, make sure to review the four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates for both the district overall and each high school in the district.

Districts have an opportunity to correct graduation related data during the Graduation Appeals Process in NJ SMART from September 18 through October 6, 2023. The [NJ SMART Graduation Appeals User Guide](https://www.njsmart.org/njr/ks/High%20School%20Graduation/NJ%20SMART%20Graduation%20Appeals%20User%20Guide.pdf) provides details on how to submit appeals, the types of documentation required for each type of appeal, and how to fix the data errors.

## Reporting Students Who Graduate and Transfer Out

| **Description** | **Check (✓)** |
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| View the “State-Level” calculation of your district’s graduation rate and check that all students who graduated by August 31, 2023 are included in the “Graduated” category. |  |
| Review the students in the “On-Track Continuing” and “Off-Track Continuing” categories and confirm that all students are still enrolled in your district. |  |
| Review the students in the “Transfer Out — Unverified” category to see students inactivated by your district as transfers who were never re-activated by another district or state institution.* Determine if these students have the correct school exit withdrawal code.
	+ Check if any of the students in this category transferred to a nonpublic school, transferred to a school outside the state or country, or dropped out of high school.
* Reach out to the district where the student transferred.
	+ Check if the receiving district never uploaded the student or uploaded the student using a different SID.
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## Accurate Student and School Information

| **Description** | **Check (✓)** |
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| Check that all students included in the Adjusted Cohort for Cohort 2023 started 9th grade during the 2019-2020 school year.* Students who enroll in a NJ public school after 9th grade are assigned to a cohort based on when the student would have entered 9th grade (e.g., a new student reported in 10th grade during the 2020-21 school year would be assigned to Cohort 2023)
* If a student was initially reported in NJ SMART with an incorrect grade level, the student may be assigned to the wrong cohort, even if the student’s grade level was later corrected. Student cohorts can only be changed through appeals.
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| Using the “Accountable” perspective of the profile, check the full list of students in the Adjusted Cohort to ensure that they should all be assigned to your district for accountability. |  |
| Using the “Accountable” perspective, check if any students are assigned to a school labeled “Cannot be Determined”.* Students are typically assigned to this status if there is an issue with the county, district, and school codes reported and the accountable school cannot be determined.
* Review the [NJ SMART Reporting Responsibilities document](https://www.njsmart.org/njr/ks/SID%20Management/NJ%20SMART%20Reporting%20Responsibilities.pdf) to ensure that the appropriate attending, receiving, and resident codes were reported.
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| If any students who reside in your district attend specialized programs for students with disabilities or multilingual learners, alternative education programs or recovery high schools, or adult high schools within your district at a school that is not their resident school, view the “Accountable” perspective of the profile to check that students are assigned to their resident school, not the attending school, for accountability.* If students are not assigned to the resident school, check that the In-District Placement field in SID Management was reported accurately.
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| Check that students appear in the correct student groups.* For gender and race/ethnicity, students are assigned to the student group based on data entered when the student first entered the cohort. (“Entering” status)
* For all other student group categories, students are assigned based on whether the student was reported in each group at any point during high school. (“Overall” status)
* Use the QSAC page in SID Management to review previous snapshot data by clicking on the date of the snapshot and exporting the data out of the system.
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## Federal Graduation Rate and Students with Disabilities

| **Description** | **Check (✓)** |
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| Compare the graduation rates for the “State-Level” and “Federal-Level” calculations of your district and schools to see if they are different. |  |
| If the “Federal-Level” rate is lower than the “State-Level” rate, view the “Federal-Level” report for your district and review the students in the “Graduated (State Calculation Only)” category.* These are students with disabilities who graduated but were reported as not having met either graduation course, attendance, or assessment requirements because of a modification or exemption in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students are included in this category if at least one of the following is true:
	+ IEP EP Graduation Course Requirement = 1
	+ IEP Graduation Attendance = 1
	+ ELA or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator = M
		- The Graduation Pathway Indicator will only be used for students who graduated between 9/1/21 and 8/31/22 because there were no graduation assessment requirements for students graduating with the class of 2023.
* Review these students to confirm that the students did not meet the graduation requirements and that the IEP Graduation and Graduation Pathway Indicator fields are reported correctly.
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| Review the Cohort 2022 4-year and Cohort 2021 5-year federal graduation rates (prior year) because they will be used for accountability for the 2022-23 school year.* Use the following parameters on the graduation profile:
	+ CDS Perspective = Accountable
	+ Calculation Type = Federal Level Rate
	+ 4 Year Graduation Cohort = 2022 (four-year) or 2021 (five-year)
	+ Graduation Rate = 4-Year rate or 5-Year rate
	+ School Year = 2021-2022
	+ Snapshot Date = Aug 31, 2022
* If data needs to be appealed that would change the Cohort 2022 4-year or Cohort 2021 5-year graduation rates, submit your appeals as early as possible during the appeal window and contact gradappeals@doe.nj.gov to ensure that approved appeals are incorporated into the 2022-23 Accountability Profiles.
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## Checklist for Submitting Appeals

| **Description** | **Check (✓)** |
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| Ensure that the corrected data is reflected in NJ SMART SID Management prior to filing an appeal.* Review the “How to fix data errors” section by appeal reason in the Appeals User Guide.
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| Include a clear explanation with your appeal request with relevant information that may be needed to evaluate the appeal. |  |
| Upload the appropriate documentation.* Review the “Documentation Requirements” section for each appeal reason.
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| Submit appeals as soon as possible during the appeals window and check back often on the status of your appeals.* Appeals are reviewed on a rolling basis.
* If more information is needed to determine if an appeal can be approved, it will be flagged as “Declined (Open to Edits).
	+ Districts will be provided with a note from NJDOE and will need to resubmit the appeal with the necessary changes and/or documentation.
	+ Districts are responsible to provide additional information by the appeals deadline of 5 p.m. on October 6, 2023.
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Contact the NJ SMART help desk at (800) 254-0295 or njsmart@pcgus.com with any questions about NJ SMART reports or technical issues with the appeals process. Contact gradappeals@doe.nj.gov if you have questions about your district’s graduation data or the graduation appeals process.