# Guidance on Student Attendance Fields

During the 2020-2021 school year, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) undertook efforts to align its student information system to the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS). Additionally, efforts were made to align the attendance fields more closely to regulations in Chapter 32. These efforts resulted in minor modifications to the attendance data fields in the NJSLEDS Student Management data collection. The five attendance fields now in use are described below and appear in the updated Student Management Data Handbook.

## Attendance Fields Used to Calculate Chronic Absenteeism

The NJDOE uses the following two fields to calculate chronic absenteeism: **NumberOfDaysPresent** and **NumberOfDaysAbsent**. Each student's absentee rate is calculated based on these two variables: **NumberOfDaysAbsent** is divided by the sum of **NumberOfDaysPresent** and **NumberOfDaysAbsent**.

$$Student\ Abstentee\ Rate = \frac{NumberOfDaysAbsent}{NumberOfDaysPresent + NumberOfDaysAbsent}$$

**Note:** To align the attendance fields more closely to regulations in Chapter 32, the NJDOE added an additional field, **NumberOfStateExcusedAbsences**, to capture the number of days students are absent for a state-excused reason. As the equation above indicates, state-excused absences continue to be excluded from the student absentee rate calculation.

Some reminders when reporting **NumberOfDaysPresent, NumberOfDaysAbsent,** and **NumberOfStateExcusedAbsences:**

- A day present is identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.4(c) as a day that a student participates in instruction or instruction-related activities for at least half day in session, whether the student is physically on school grounds, at an approved off-grounds location, or in a virtual/remote instruction setting pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-13.
- A day absent is a day that a student participates in instruction or instruction-related activities for less than half a day in session, per N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.4(d). Whether a student is absent due to illness, disciplinary action, or other reason, the student may not be considered present if they are not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities for less than half of the day in session.
- These fields must include all days that students are recorded as present or absent, regardless of student learning environment.

## NumberOfDaysPresent

- Represents the number of school days in session from July 1 through June 30 that a student is recorded as present, under the guidance and direction of a teacher in the teaching process. (Summer school days in session should only be included if summer school attendance is required of all students.)

## NumberOfDaysAbsent

- Represents the number of days a student is absent during the annual reporting period from July 1 through June 30. While district boards of education may adopt policies that establish locally approved absences consistent with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6, an absence designated as excused by the district board of education must be recorded as an absence in NJSLEDS.
    - This field includes the days students were absent and scheduled to receive instruction in a remote learning environment.
    - This field does not include absences for a State-excused reason. A student who misses school due to illness may not be marked as present unless home instruction has been approved by the district board of education and is being provided to the student per N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.2.
- In accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1, a student temporarily removed from the classroom to in-school suspension is considered present, provided the student is afforded the opportunity to continue to:
    - Appropriately participate in the general education program; and
    - For students with disabilities, receive the services specified in their IEP, and participate with nondisabled students to the extent they would have in their current placement.
- A student on out-of-school suspension cannot be marked as present unless the student is receiving educational services per N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.2.

## NumberOfStateExcusedAbsences

- Represents the number of school days in session a student misses for a state-excused reason. The following are the seven allowable reasons for a state-excused absence:
    - Religious observances (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 another rule issued by the Commissioner;
    - Participation in observance of Veterans Day (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-13.2);
    - Participation in district board of election membership activities (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33);
    - The closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school; or
    - Attendance at a civic event, one day for students in grades 6 through 12.

- This can only be applied to an event sponsored by a government entity, a community-based organization, or a nonprofit. The civic event is required to incorporate an element of service learning and address a public issue or concern.

## Student Attendance in Remote Learning Environments

The NJDOE will continue to collect student attendance in remote learning environments. The two data fields used to collect student attendance in remote learning environments are **RemoteDaysPresent** and **RemoteDaysAbsent**. These fields must be used when virtual or remote instruction is provided to students because one or more schools in a school district are required to close for in-person instruction due to the reasons outlined in N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9.

**RemoteDaysPresent** and **RemoteDaysAbsent** must not be used when students are receiving home instruction due to temporary illness, discipline, or other reasons. Attendance during periods of home instruction should continue to be tracked in the **NumberOfDaysPresent** and **NumberOfDaysAbsent** data fields only.

Additionally, in the event that virtual or remote instruction is provided to students because one or more schools in a school district are required to close for in-person instruction due to the reasons outlined in N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, the **StudentLearningEnvironment** field should be updated to Hybrid (to reflect the fact that the student participated in school physically and for a time from a remote learning environment).

The **StudentInternetConnectivity, StudentDeviceOwner,** and **StudentDeviceType** fields that are related to device and connectivity should reflect what the district knows to be true about the student. These fields should reflect what the district provided to the student, or what the district learned from the student (and his/her/their family).