User Guide to the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile

Introduction

In 2011, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) began using the adjusted cohort formula to calculate graduation rates, in accordance with federal requirements. This method utilizes NJ SMART data to calculate rates for schools, districts, and the State.

Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, the NJDOE was required to make changes to the methodology used to calculate the adjusted cohort graduation rate for federal reporting and accountability purposes. The United States Department of Education (USED) determined that the NJDOE must only include students who receive a diploma that is fully aligned with the state's standards, meaning they have met the state course requirements, local attendance requirements, and, depending on the year of graduation, the state graduation assessment requirements. This means that students with disabilities who did not meet some or all graduation requirements because of a modification or exemption in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may not be counted as graduates in the calculation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate used for federal reporting and accountability purposes.

As a result of these changes, the NJDOE began calculating two versions of the adjusted cohort graduation rate starting with 2021 graduation rates. The "federal version" aligns with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements and USED guidance and is used for federal reporting and ESSA school accountability. The "state version" uses the same methodology used prior to 2021 and reflects all students who receive a state-endorsed diploma.

Students with disabilities who did not meet all the graduation requirements for their year of graduation because of modifications or exemptions in their IEPs will not be included in the graduates count (the numerator) when calculating the "federal version" of the adjusted cohort graduation rate, but they will still be included in the adjusted cohort (the denominator) for the calculation.

Districts can use the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile to view both the "federal" and "state" versions of the adjusted cohort graduation rate.

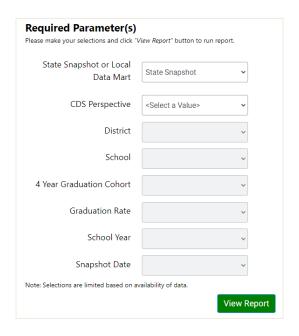## High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile

NJ SMART's High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile is available on the District Report tab. It enables districts to view their four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates as well as track cohort statuses of their high school students. Like all NJ SMART District Reports, the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile is designed to display a rich array of student information at a high level, making it easy to recognize patterns that may require further analysis. These profiles include multiple types of data that might otherwise exist in separate reports or data systems, allowing users to compare and analyze trends across various categories of information.

Profile Parameters

When running the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile, LEAs can customize their report by selecting specific parameters.

State Snapshot or Local Data Mart

- State Snapshot: shows data from either the October or End of Year SID Snapshots
- Local Data Mart: shows data for the current year once an LEA has uploaded a SID management file

CDS Perspective (Accountable or Attending)

- Accountable: shows students for which a school or LEA is accountable
    - The accountable version is what is used for reporting and accountability (ESSA and NJQSAC)
- Attending: only shows students currently attending your school or LEA based on attending CDS codes

District

- LEA users will only see data for their LEA

School

- Select a specific school or select "All" to see data for all schools in the LEA

4 Year Graduation Cohort

- Select which graduation cohort to view from 2011 through 2027
- Students are assigned to a graduation cohort when they enter grade 9 based on the expectation of graduation within four years. For example, students entering grade 9 in 2020-2021 would have been assigned to Cohort 2024.

Graduation Rate

- If "Local Data Mart" is selected in the first dropdown, this field will be grayed out.
- Selected Snapshot Rate: shows data as a selected snapshot
- 4-Year Rate, 5-Year Rate, or 6-Year Rate: shows the official four-year, five-year, or six-year graduation rate (only available for cohorts where the selected rate has been finalized)

School Year

- If "Local Data Mart" is selected in the first dropdown or "4-year", "5-year", or "6-year Rate" is selected for Graduation Rate, this field will be grayed out.
- Otherwise, select as of which school year to show data.

Snapshot Date

- If "Local Data Mart" is selected in the first dropdown or "4-year Rate", "5-year Rate", or "6-year Rate" is selected for Graduation Rate, this field will be grayed out.
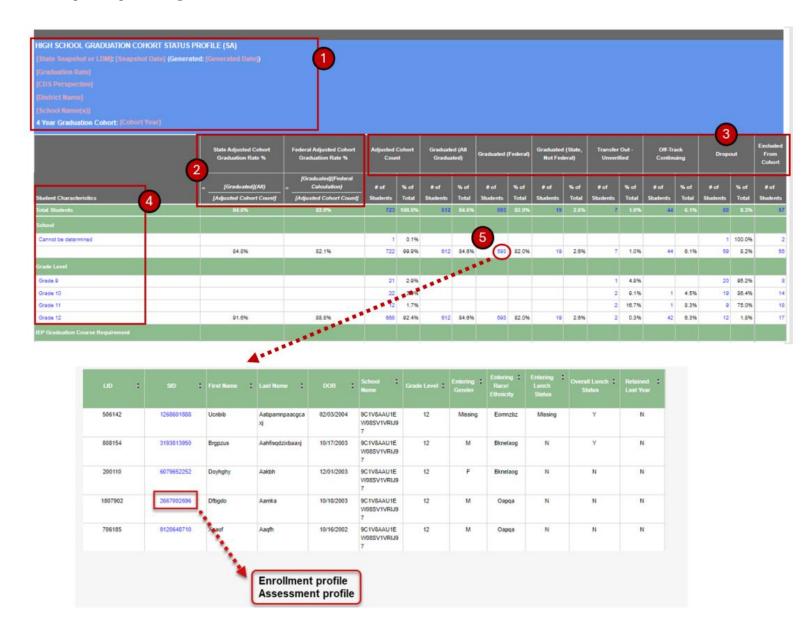- Otherwise, select as of which snapshot data to show data.

To view data that will be used for ESSA Accountability purposes for the 2023-2024 school year, you should review the official 4-year graduation rate for Cohort 2023 and the official 5-year graduation rate for Cohort 2022. Use the following parameters:

- **State Snapshot or Local Data Mart** = State Snapshot
- **CDS Perspective** = Accountable
- **4 Year Graduation Cohort** = 2023 (4-year) or 2022 (5-year)
- **Graduation Rate** = 4-Year Rate or 5-Year Rate
- School Year and Snapshot Date fields will automatically populate.

Under the School dropdown, one of the options may be "Cannot be Determined." If students cannot be assigned to an accountable school based on the data in NJ SMART SID Management, students will be assigned to the "Cannot be Determined" school category. LEAs should review the data for students in this category to make sure that the appropriate resident, receiving, and attending county, district, and school codes were reported. Students typically fall into this category if there are errors in these fields. Students in this category will be included in the graduation rates for the LEA, but not in individual school graduation rates.

Sample Report: High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile

**Enrollment profile
Assessment profile**

Profile Description

1 **Profile Header** displays the profile name, whether it is an Official Snapshot or Local Data Mart profile, chosen school year, date that the profile was generated, calculation type, accountable or attending perspective, district name, school name(s), and 4 Year Graduation Cohort year.

2 **Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates Columns:**
- The State Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate % shows the state version of the adjusted cohort graduation

rate. The state rate is calculated by dividing the total in the Graduated (All Graduated) column by the total in the Adjusted Cohort Count column.

• The Federal Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate % shows the federal version of the adjusted cohort graduation rate. The federal rate is calculated by dividing the total in the Graduated (Federal) column by the total in the Adjusted Cohort County column.

Cohort Statuses (Columns) show the number of students in each graduation cohort status. A cohort status will only appear in the report if students in the selected cohort are included in the status, so LEAs may see only a subset of the cohort status columns.

Adjusted Cohort Count refers to the number of students in the final cohort, as adjusted by the number of incoming and outgoing transfers. In the context of this profile, your adjusted cohort count is comprised of: Graduated (All Graduated), Transfer Out- Unverified, Transfer In, On-Track Continuing, Off-Track Continuing, Status Unknown, and Dropout students.

Graduated (All Graduated) refers to students in the cohort who have been exited from SID Management as graduates within the selected number of years (four years, five years, or six years).

- This category contains all students with a student exit withdrawal code of L.
- This category is used as the numerator when calculating the state version of the graduation rate.
- The Graduated (All Graduated) total will be equal to the sum of the Graduated (Federal) and the Graduated (State, Not Federal) columns.

Graduated (Federal) refers to students in the cohort who have been exited from SID Management as graduates within the selected number of years (four years, five years, or six years) and have met all graduation requirements (state course requirements, local attendance requirements, and state assessment requirements).

- This category contains all students with a student exit withdrawal code of L where all the following are true:
  o Student has met state course requirements (IEP Graduation Course Requirements <> 1)
  o Student has met local attendance requirements (IEP Graduation Attendance <> 1)
  o Student has met state graduation assessment requirements (ELA and Math Graduation Pathway Indicators <> "M"
    ▪ Students graduating with the class of 2021 and class of 2023 were not required to meet graduation assessment requirements to graduate, so students were not required to meet graduation assessment requirements to be included in the Graduated (Federal) category if they graduated between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021 or between September 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023.
- This category is used as the numerator when calculating the federal version of the graduation rate.

Graduated (State, Not Federal) refers to students with disabilities in the cohort who have been exited from SID Management as graduates within the selected number of years (four years, five years, or six years) who did not meet the state course requirements, local attendance requirements, or, depending on the year of graduation, the state assessment requirements for graduation because of an exemption or modification to their IEP. These students have graduated, but they only count as graduates in the state version of the graduation rate calculation.

- This category contains all students with a student exit withdrawal code of L and where at least one of the

following is true:
- o Student has **not met** the state course requirements (IEP Graduation Course Requirements = 1)
- o Student has **not met** the local attendance requirements (IEP Graduation Attendance = 1)
- o Student has **not met** the ELA and/or math graduation assessment requirements (ELA or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator = M)
  - Students graduating with the class of 2021 and class of 2023 were not required to meet graduation assessment requirements to graduate, so the ELA and Math Graduation Pathway Indicator fields were not used to determine cohort status for students graduating between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021 or between September 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023.
- o Students in this category are included in the numerator when calculating the state version of the graduation rate but not included in the numerator when calculating the federal version of the graduation rate.

Transfer Out – Unverified refers to students who an LEA inactivated as Transfers but were never re-activated by another district or state institution. Thus, the student remains in the original district's cohort and is considered a "non-graduate" in the graduation rate calculation. (A "Transfer Out" is considered verified when another district/institution activates the student's SID, thereby adding the student to its cohort)

- This category contains all students with the following Student Exit Withdrawal Codes: T4, T6, T7, TC, TR, TD, TA

Transfer In refers to *active* cohort students who transferred into your district and have been added to your adjusted cohort count. Students will have a temporary "Transfer In" status until the first snapshot after their transfer. At that time, the cohort status will be updated based on their submitted grade level.

On-Track Continuing refers to *active* cohort students who are considered on-track to graduating in four years. After each SID Management snapshot, active students' cohort statuses are updated based on their submitted grade levels. If students progress as expected through grade levels, they will remain "On-Track Continuing" until they exit as graduates.

Off-Track Continuing refers to *active* cohort students who are not progressing through grade levels on time and are considered off-track to graduating in four years.

Active Students – Status Unknown refers to *active* cohort students who were not submitted in the district's most recent SID Management snapshot, and therefore their status is unknown.

Dropout refers to students who have dropped out of school for various reasons.

- This category contains all students with the following Student Exit Withdrawal Codes: D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, D7, D8, D11

Excluded from Cohort Status refers to students who have been excluded from the adjusted cohort for specific reasons. USED has very strict guidelines on which students can be excluded from an adjusted cohort, so LEAs must maintain written documentation for students in this category. The status of the students in this category is subject to audit by the NJDOE.

- This category contains all students with the following Student Exit Withdrawal Codes: D9, T3, T8, T9, TP, PPE
- Students in this category are not included in the denominator (adjusted cohort) when calculating the

4 **Student Group Variables (Rows)** can be clicked on to filter the population to the row category selected. This filter will allow the user to drill down to further examine each student group by clicking on the variable name within the profile. The available student group variables are:

- School
- Grade Level
- IEP Graduation Fields
    - IEP Graduation Course Requirement, IEP Graduation Attendance
- Graduation Pathway Fields
    - ELA Graduation Pathway, Math Graduation Pathway
- Entering Student Group Status
    - Gender, Race/Ethnicity
- Overall Student Group Status
    - Lunch (Economically Disadvantaged Students), Special Education (Students with Disabilities), ELL (Multilingual Learners), Migrant, Homeless, Foster, Military
- Time in District
- Students Retained Last Year
- SAT Score Data
- Number of Days Not Present

Since the 2020-2021 school year, the Economically Disadvantaged (Lunch Status), Students with Disabilities (Special Education Status), Multilingual Learner (ELL Status), Migrant, Homeless, Foster, and Military-Connected student groups have been based on overall status, meaning that the students have been identified in these student groups if they were ever reported in the student group since entering the cohort. Prior to the 2020-2021 school year, these student groups were based on entering cohort status. The Gender and Race/Ethnicity student groups continue to be based on entering status.

5 **Profile Features:** The High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile is a starting point for further data analysis, and it gives LEAs the ability to:

- View aggregate student counts from NJ SMART snapshot data across multiple years and submissions, disaggregated across multiple categories.
- Drill down from aggregate counts to detailed Student Lists that summarize key data for students.
- Drill down from Student Lists to detailed student enrollment and assessment records that provide history and in-depth information from across various submissions for individual students.
- Export all profiles into Excel for further analysis and printing.

Resources

Online training resources designed to assist LEAs in using the profiles are available on the Help and Support tab of the NJ SMART portal. Resources include an introduction video, instructions on how to access and read the profiles, FAQs, and a guided data analysis protocol.

In addition, NJ SMART hosts a series of webinars and on-demand eLearning videos to provide further assistance, including High School Graduation and District Reports. For the current webinar schedule and to review other eLearning videos, please visit the eLearning Videos and Webinars section of the Resources & Trainings page.

The NJDOE's Graduation & Postsecondary website has additional graduation rate resources.

For further information or assistance from NJ SMART, contact the Help Desk at 1-800-254-0295 or njsmart@pcgus.com.