NJ SMART Graduation Rate Appeals: User Guide

Please note: The 2019 Graduation Snapshot will be captured on Friday, August 30th as August 31st falls on a weekend.

Each year, districts are able to appeal their four-year and five-year high school graduation rate data in NJ SMART. Appeal requests are meant as a last-resort opportunity for districts to resolve issues found in their August 31st Snapshots. Since graduation data is available to districts year-round through District Reports, districts are expected to: profile their data prior to August 31st; fix any errors possible; and inactivate graduates in time for the August 2nd and August 31st deadlines.

Timeline

Early July	*Begin inactivating 2018-2019 graduates and transfers in State Identification (SID) Management*
Early August	*2018-2019 School Year Graduates – SID Management Inactivation Deadline*
End of August	*2018-2019 School Year and Summer Graduates – SID Management Inactivation Deadline on August 30, 2019*
Mid-September	*Preliminary August 31st Snapshot Available; Appeals Period Opens*
Early October	*Appeals Period Closes on October 4, 2019 at 5PM*
End of November	*Final August 31st Snapshot available; all approved appeals processed*

For more information, please review the NJ SMART Timeline for dates and deadlines.

Guidelines

- Districts are responsible for the submission and maintenance of their own data in the NJ SMART system. Data gathered from the August 31st Snapshot is used to calculate official high school graduation rates. Districts are able to make changes to data in the August 31st Snapshot by submitting a Graduation Rate Appeal. **Districts are expected to ensure that the changed data is reflected in their NJ SMART/SID Management submissions prior to filing an appeal** (e.g., if an appeal request indicates that a student's Exit Code should be "L" in the Graduation Report, then the student's current status in SID Management should be "L").
- In order to make an appeal request, please navigate to the Graduation Appeals page found on the Reporting tab in the NJ SMART portal.
- Appeal requests may only be made regarding official graduation rates generated that school year. For example, in 2019, only Cohort 2019's four-year graduation rate and Cohort 2018's five-year graduation rate are subject to appeal requests.

- All requests must be made at the individual student level with explanations for each student.
- If the NJDOE requires further information from your district on an appeal request, the appeal documentation can **now** be attached directly to the appeal via the Upload Attachment function located on the appeal form. If documentation is required, you will be unable to submit your appeal until you upload at least one attachment.
- All information must be submitted as required in the Appeals Request Form. Please note that incomplete appeal requests cannot be considered.
- The NJDOE evaluates each individual request that is submitted based on the information provided; all decisions are final.
- The NJ SMART Graduation Appeals process is specific to the NJ SMART data included in the August 31st Snapshot. This process is unrelated to the NJDOE's portfolio appeals process.
- If you have any appeal requests that are not relevant to the Appeal Request Form, please contact the NJ SMART Help Desk for assistance by calling (800) 254-0295 or e-mailing NJSMART@pcgus.com.

Types of Appeal Requests

Appeal requests are only considered for data items that are officially reported to the New Jersey Department of Education for the Graduation Report. Currently, data can be appealed based on the six following Reasons for Appeal:

A. **Cohort Status:** Student's status (active/inactive) or exit withdrawal code is incorrect (Not including Requested Exit Codes: T3; T8; T9; or TP). **Please note**: This type of appeal requires that the LEA has documentation to support this claim.

B. **Cohort Status:** Student transferred to a private school or out-of-state school (Only Includes Requested Exit Codes: T3; T8; T9; or TP) **Please note**: This type of appeal requires that the LEA has documentation to support this claim.

C. **Transfer Cases:** Student transferred to another NJ SMART-submitting LEA in New Jersey prior to August 31st (T4).

D. **County, District, School Codes:** Student is still within district but County District School (CDS) codes are incorrect (Attending; Receiving; Resident; or Accountable)

E. **Cohort Year:** Student's Cohort Year is incorrect

F. **Entering Values:** Student's Entering Values are incorrect (Race; Gender; Lunch Status; ELL Status; Special Education Classification; Migrant Status; or Homeless Status).

G. **Graduation Pathway Indicators:** Student was captured on the Graduation Snapshot with the incorrect value for the ELA Graduation Pathway Indicator or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator.

The NJ SMART SID Management Student Data Handbook contains more information about the School Exit Withdrawal Code data element and acceptable values (e.g. T3, T4, T8, T9, and TP).

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Please abide by the requirements below for each type of request.

1. Cohort Status

REASON FOR APPEAL = A or B

Topic	Details
Description:	A student's Cohort Status is defined by their Student Exit Withdrawal Code (for inactive students) or Grade Level (for active students). Districts can request to change a student's inactive status from one exit code to another, can request to inactivate an active student, or can request to activate an inactive student in the August 31st Snapshot.
Most frequent issue:	A district entered the incorrect Exit Code or uploaded the student as inactive after August 31st.
Where to look:	Beyond the Graduation Report, districts can view these students in SID Management (if they have kept inactive records in their file uploads). Student's Cohort Statuses are also viewable in their Enrollment Records, accessed by drilling down through the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Report.
How to fix data errors:	Districts have full control over their students' Cohort Statuses since SID Management is open all year round. To activate a student, districts must submit the student as Status = A to SID Management. To inactivate a student, districts must submit the student as Status = I, with Exit Code, Exit Date, and Cumulative Days information filled out. To change the exit code of an inactive student, **districts must first submit the student as Active** to SID Management and then inactivate them again with the new Exit Code. **(If you do not first activate the student, then the change to the Exit Code will not be recorded!)** Appeal requests for Cohort Status changes will require significant justification by districts regarding why they were unable to make these edits prior to August 31st. If a student's ELA Graduation Pathway Indicator and/or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator needs to be updated based on a change to the student's Cohort Status, please select G for Reason for Appeal (2).
Requirements:	Before making an appeal request to change a student's Cohort Status, the district user must first update the student's Status and/or Exit Code and Exit Date in SID Management with the desired status and

	exit code (or none). Before an appeal request will be approved for application to the August 31st Snapshot, **the NJDOE will verify the request against the student's current status in SID Management**. If the request does not match the student's current status, it will not be approved. (Please contact the Help Desk if you require assistance in making these updates.) Districts cannot request to change a student from one active Cohort Status to another (e.g., On-Track Continuing to Off-Track Continuing), as these active statuses hold equivalent meaning in the graduation rate calculations.
Documentation Requirements:	Requests to change a student's exit code to L, TA, T3, T6, T7, T8, T9, or TP will require **additional documentation** from the district. If you are requesting to change the exit code to L, you must submit the following: • A district diploma with graduation date and district transcript (or Portfolio appeal letter) with evidence that the student has met the ELA and Math high school graduation assessment requirements If you are requesting to change the exit code to TA, T3, T6, T7, T8, T9, or TP, you must submit one or more of the following: • A student records request form from the receiving district • A transfer card return receipt • Written confirmation from the receiving school of student's enrollment on official letterhead that a student has transferred to another school or to an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma • *Additional documentation option for T8 only*: Written documentation from Superintendent that they have received confirmation from the parent that the student was leaving the country If you are requesting to change the exit code to TP, you must submit the following: • A letter from parent saying that they will be providing appropriate educational services This documentation can **now** be attached directly to the appeal via the Upload Attachment function located on the appeal form.
Change implementation:	NJ SMART will change a student's Cohort Status in the August 30, 2019 submission. The appeals change **will not** persist beyond this snapshot. It is the district's responsibility to make the necessary changes within SID Management prior to requesting an appeal, in order to ensure the

	sustainability of this change. For example, if the district was unable to inactivate a student with an exit code of "L" by the August 31st deadline, they should first make this change in SID Management as soon as possible. Then, they can request an appeal from the NJDOE; if approved, NJ SMART will apply this Exit Code retroactively to the August 31st Snapshot.

Cohort Year Note: Districts are only able to appeal their 4-year Cohort for 2019 and 5-year Cohort for 2018. Based off a student's transcript and assessment record, a typical student would be expected to follow the below grade sequence:

School Year	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
4-year Cohort for 2019: Expected Grade Level	7	8	9	10	11	12
5-year Cohort for 2018: Expected Grade Level	8	9	10	11	12	

2. Transfer Cases

REASON FOR APPEAL = C

Topic	Details
Description:	Districts may claim that a Transfer Out-Unverified student actually did transfer to another public school district in New Jersey. In another case, districts may have errantly coded a student as "T4" (Transfer Out-Unverified) when "T3" or "T8" actually applied (Excluded from Cohort).
Most frequent issue:	The receiving district failed to upload the student in a timely fashion. In another case (e.g., requesting T3/T8), the district may have input the exit code incorrectly.
Where to look:	Districts can view their Transfer Out-Unverified students in the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Report and view CDS codes in the Enrollment Record.
How to fix data errors:	In cases where the receiving district failed to upload the student in a timely manner, districts should contact the other district and instruct them to upload the student. In the future, districts should work together to resolve these issues prior to the August 31st deadline so that an appeal does not need to be filed.

If the district inputs the incorrect Transfer Exit Code, they should follow the directions in the above *Cohort Status* section. |
| **Requirements:** | For any transfer request, the student must be uploaded to SID Management by the receiving district by the time the appeal request is |

Topic	Details
	made. **The NJDOE will verify the request against the student's current status in SID Management.** NJ SMART will not upload students to another district; however, NJ SMART will retroactively apply that change to the August 30, 2019 Snapshot. If there is any situation in which the receiving district is not cooperating, the district should contact NJ SMART for assistance. Be sure to input the correct CDS Codes for the student in the Appeal Request Form (Section 3), in addition to indicating the new Submitting District, so that Accountability is accurately calculated.
Change implementation:	NJ SMART will place a student in the transfer district for the August 31st Snapshot, but will not apply this change to other snapshots. The receiving district must have already activated this student in SID Management, before this appeal change will be applied.

3. County, District, School (CDS) Codes

REASON FOR APPEAL = D

Topic	Details
Description:	Users can request a change to a student's Attending, Receiving, or Resident CDS Codes. The Accountable CDS Codes for a student are derived by NJ SMART, based on these submitted codes, and are also subject to appeal.
Most frequent issue:	For the most part, appeal requests related to CDS Codes are due to data entry error and impact accountability.
Where to look:	Districts can view their students' Attending, Receiving, and Resident CDS Codes in SID Management and can view their Accountable students in the Graduation Report. Please refer to the High School Graduation Accountable Rules document on the NJ SMART Help tab for additional information.
How to fix data errors:	Districts can edit Attending, Receiving, and Resident CDS Codes in SID Management. Accountable Codes: If districts feel that the students' CDS Codes have been correctly inputted but still feel that the Accountability Codes have been derived incorrectly, the district cannot make this change. The district should contact the NJ SMART Help Desk.

Topic	Details
	Appeal requests for CDS Code changes will require significant justification by districts, as districts are able to edit these codes themselves (in most cases) through August 31st.
Requirements:	Students' CDS Codes should be updated in SID Management with the requested codes, prior to the district's appeal request. Before an appeal request will be approved for application to the August 31st Snapshot, the **NJDOE will verify the request against the student's current CDS Codes in SID Management.** If the request does not match the student's current codes, it will not be approved. (Please contact the Help Desk if you require assistance in making these updates.)
Change implementation:	NJ SMART will change a student's CDS Codes in the August 30, 2019 snapshot. The appeals change **will not** persist beyond this snapshot for Attending, Resident, and Receiving CDS Codes. It is the district's responsibility to make the necessary changes within SID Management prior to requesting an appeal, in order to ensure the sustainability of this change. As for Accountable CDS Code changes, these will be applied to official snapshots for four-year and five-year graduation rates.

4. Cohort Year

REASON FOR APPEAL = E

Topic	Details
Description:	Cohort Years are assigned to students by NJ SMART based on the first school year in which they are submitted with a high school grade level. Once a student is assigned a Cohort Year, they stay in that same Cohort Year for the remainder of their student career.
Most frequent issue:	The most frequent reason for this appeal is user error in initially assigning the student Grade Level = 9.
Where to look:	In order to figure out why a student was assigned to a given cohort, the district can examine (a) the student's Enrollment Record (which shows grade levels submitted in June submissions) or (b) submitted State data from the State Submission Release History page (which shows all October and June data submitted). **NOTE**: For the 2019 cohort, you need to look at your State Submission data released in the 2015-2016 school year. Tip: To assess whether the Cohort Year assigned is appropriate, check the student's Assessment Record to see what year they took their grade-level assessments. (e.g. NJ ASK 8th grade, PARCC ELA)

Topic	Details
How to fix data errors:	Districts cannot change a student's cohort year. They must appeal the record in the NJ SMART Appeals Period.
Requirements:	If you are requesting a Cohort Year prior to 2014, please contact the NJ SMART Help Desk at (800) 254-0295.
Change implementation:	If your request is approved, the student's Cohort Year will be permanently changed in NJ SMART affecting all other iterations of graduation reports.

5. Entering Values

REASON FOR APPEAL = F

Topic	Details
Description:	LEAs can submit appeal requests to change a student's value for one of the officially reported subgroup variables: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Special Education Classification, Lunch Status, Homeless Status, Migrant Status, and EL Status. In the Graduation Report, Entering Values for subgroup categories are reported; thus, the subgroup categories will reflect the values submitted for the student when they were first assigned a Cohort Year (usually in Grade 9).
Most frequent issue:	The most frequent reasons for this type of appeal are (1) user data entry error in the submission in which the student entered the Cohort Year or (2) district users not understanding the difference between Entering Values and what was most recently submitted for the student.
Where to look:	Besides your High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Report, districts can view this information in: Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Free and Reduced Rate Lunch Status, and ELL Status (SID Management) – Districts can look at past SID Management Snapshot data on the SID Management QSAC page. Districts should examine subgroup data from the Snapshot in which the student was first assigned a Cohort Year. Homeless Status* and Migrant Status (State Submission) – Districts can look at past State Submission data on the State Submission Release History page. Districts should examine subgroup data from the submission in which the student was first assigned a Cohort Year.

Topic	Details
	*Note: Homeless Status was first collected in June 2011, so for any student who entered a cohort prior to that time, their Homeless Entering Value is taken from the June 30, 2011 State Submission. Special Education Classification (Special Education Submission) – Districts should look to the October 15th Special Education Submission of the same year in which the student entered the cohort. For example, if the student entered in October 15th State Submission, check the October 15th Special Education Submission. If the student entered in the June 30th State Submission, check the subsequent October 15th Special Education Submission.** **Note: Special Education data is collected once per year, while State Submission data is collected twice per year.
How to fix data errors:	Districts cannot change a student's Entering Value. They must appeal the record in the NJ SMART Appeals Period.
Requirements:	Districts can only request to change the student's Entering Value to their most recently submitted ("Most Recent") value (from the prior June 30th Snapshot). For all fields except Special Education Classification, the Most Recent Values would come from the prior June 30th Snapshot; for Special Education Classification, the Most Recent Value would come from the prior October 15th Snapshot. Please note that values are only changed under extenuating circumstances.
Change implementation:	If your request is approved, the student's subgroup value will be changed in the August 31st Snapshot.

6. Graduation Pathway Indicators

REASON FOR APPEAL = G

Topic	Details
Description:	LEAs can submit appeal requests to change or add a student's ELA Graduation Pathway Indicator and/or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator
Most frequent issue:	The most frequent reason for this appeal is a data entry error.
Where to look:	Besides your High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Report, districts can view this information in SID Management for the ELA

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Topic	Details
	Graduation Pathway Indicator and Math Graduation Pathway Indicator data elements.
How to fix data errors:	In cases where the submitting district failed to report a value to the data elements or misreported data, the district should update the student's data in SID Management and must submit an appeal to have the correct graduation pathway data appear on the NJDOE graduation report. In the future, districts should ensure this data is reported accurately prior to the August 31st deadline so that an appeal does not need to be filed.
Requirements:	Before making an appeal request to change a student's ELA and/or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator, the district user must first update the student's ELA and/or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator fields in SID Management with the desired value. Before an appeal request will be approved for application to the August 31st Snapshot, **the NJDOE will verify the request against the student's current status in SID Management**. If the request does not match the student's current value, it will not be approved. (Please contact the Help Desk if you require assistance in making these updates.) **If you are submitting an appeal for a student who was reported as Active on the Graduation Snapshot and you requesting to change the ELA and/or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator to indicate that the student graduated, please also appeal to change the student's status.**
Change implementation:	NJ SMART will change a student's ELA and/or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator in the August 30, 2019 submission. The appeals change **will not** persist beyond this snapshot. It is the district's responsibility to make the necessary changes within SID Management prior to requesting an appeal, in order to ensure the sustainability of this change.

Frequently Asked Questions

How is accountability determined?

Accountability CDS Codes are derived according to business rules supplied by the NJDOE per the H.S. Graduation Accountable Rules User Guide.

Does the NJDOE monitor districts' Excluded from Cohort counts?

Yes, the NJDOE regularly monitors districts' *Excluded from Cohort* counts. As the Exit Codes associated with the *Excluded from Cohort* status should not occur regularly, the NJDOE will contact any districts that have unusually high counts to investigate these students further.

Does the NJDOE monitor districts' Graduate counts?

Yes, the NJDOE monitors districts' *Graduate* counts evaluating adherence to the August 2nd deadline for regular school-year students and will reach out to district superintendents if it appears that their district missed the deadline. As with last year, the NJDOE will also monitor compliance with the August 30th deadline.

How to Submit an Appeal

In order to request a graduation appeal, district users must navigate to the *Graduation Appeals* page, which can be found under the *Reporting* tab in the NJ SMART portal (see Figure A). In order to view the *Graduation Appeals* page, users must have District Reports access; to obtain this access, users should contact their district's Homeroom Administrator. On the *Graduation Appeals* page, users will find two subpages: *Cohort Students* and *District Appeals*.

Figure A: How to Navigate to the Graduation Appeals Page
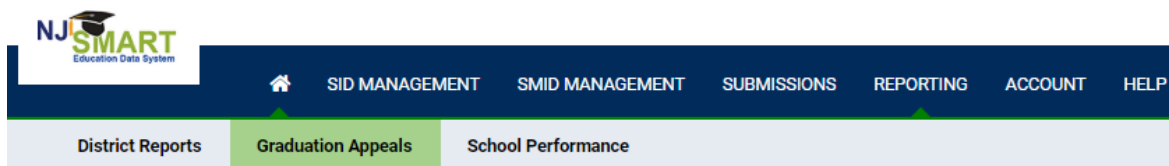
Cohort Students Page

This page lists all students that have been **submitted** by your district who are currently assigned to a Cohort Year. Use filtering, sorting, and exporting options to explore this data.

- If you click on the student's Local Identification Number (LID), you will be taken to the *Cohort Student Details* page.
- From this page, you can click the *Create Appeal* button to open the record's *Appeal Request Form.*

District Appeals Page

This page lists all student records appealed by your district and indicates their NJDOE Decision Status.

- If you click on the student's LID, you will see the appeals request form submitted for that record as well as notes from the NJDOE once a decision is made.
- The possible Decision Statuses are:
  - Submitted: The default status upon submitting a request.
  - Pending: The NJDOE has reviewed the request but not yet made a decision.
  - Declined: The NJDOE has declined the request.
  - Declined (Open to Edits): The NJDOE has declined the request but is willing to reconsider if the appeal is revised. Appeal must be resubmitted with the necessary changes and/or documentation to be reviewed again prior to the appeals deadline.
  - Approved: The NJDOE has approved the request.

Appeal Request Form

For the 2019 appeals period, the appeals form has been updated to only display relevant fields based on the reason for appeal selected. Select the appropriate reason for appeal from the drop down menu and the form will update itself to show the required fields. Users must fill in all highlighted fields. Please ensure that the information that you submit is accurate as each student can only be appealed once.

Appeals Request

Cancel   Submit Appeal

Please refer to the NJ SMART Graduation Appeals User Guide for full instructions on how to fill out this form. All users are expected to have read this guide prior to submitting any graduation appeals.
Note: Items highlighted in yellow are required fields.

Reason for Appeal (1)
Please choose the scenario that best describes your reason for appealing this student's graduation data.

Reason for Appeal (2)
If applicable, please choose the second scenario that describes your reason for appealing this student's graduation data, if more than one situation exists.

All Appeals

Explanation of Request
Please explain your scenario in 500 characters or less. An explanation is required for each selected Reason for Appeal; without an explanation, the request will not be considered.

Explanation of Missing the 8/31 Deadline
IF YOUR REASON FOR APPEAL = A, B, C, OR D, please explain why you were unable to edit this student information prior to the August 31st deadline in 500 characters or less.

Drop files here to upload

Requesting District's Contact Information

Please fill in the contact information of the person in your district who is responsible for monitoring this appeal.

| Contact First Name: | | Contact Last Name: | |
| Contact Phone Number: | | Contact Email Address: | |

By clicking the SUBMIT APPEAL button, you will submit your appeal request to the NJDOE. In doing so, you are verifying that the information that you have included above is correct. By clicking the CANCEL button, you will cancel this request.

Cancel   Submit Appeal

Appeal Documentation

To view/delete newly uploaded files, please update the record.

File Information

Communications Log

Communications Log				
DATE	STATUS	USER NAME	DOE COMMENT	LEA COMMENT
			No data	