



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: April 16, 2025
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: School Business Administrators, Web User Administrators, Principals and School Leads
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services

NJ SMART Attendance Data Collection for the 2024-2025 School Year

The annual NJ SMART end of year SID Management snapshot will be taken on June 30, 2025. This is a change from the past few years when the snapshot was taken in August. Local education agencies (LEAs) report student attendance data through NJ SMART SID Management, which is then used by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to calculate the chronic absenteeism rates used for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability system, the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC), and the School Performance Reports. To ensure that the data used in these accountability systems and reports are accurate, it is important for LEAs to make sure that student attendance data is reported in NJ SMART for all students, and the data is complete and error-free.

Key actions

The NJDOE strongly encourages LEAs to keep their attendance data regularly updated in NJ SMART SID Management from now until the end of the school year. There is a much shorter window between the last day of school and the snapshot this year, so having LEAs update their data regularly in May and June will allow the NJDOE to monitor and review the data and flag potential issues and areas for review prior to the June 30 snapshot.

Starting the last week of May and through the end of June, the NJDOE plans to send out outreach reports to LEAs through the county offices flagging potential issues and areas for review in their attendance data. The NJDOE requests that LEAs update attendance information in NJ SMART SID Management with current attendance information by May 23 to ensure the outreach reports are based on current information. LEAs are also encouraged to use the Attendance Report in NJ SMART to monitor their reported attendance data. The NJDOE will be looking at the following information starting at the end of May:

1. Total Days in Membership
 - a. The total days in membership is equal to the sum of the number of days present, number of days absent, and number of state-excused absences.
 - b. LEAs may be flagged if:
 - i. A high percentage of students do not have the expected number of days in membership;
 - ii. The average total days in membership is lower than expected; or
 - iii. Students are reported with 180 days or more in membership prior to the end of the school year.
2. Number of Days Absent
 - a. This field should be the total number of days that students were absent during the school year, which includes locally excused absences, but should not include state-excused absences.
 - b. LEAs may be flagged if the average percentage of days absent for students is very high or very low, or a high percentage of students have 0 reported days absent.
3. State-Excused Absences

- a. This field should reflect the number of days that students were absent for a state-excused reason. The seven allowable types of state-excused absences are listed in the [SID Management handbook](#).
 - b. LEAs may be flagged if students have a very high number of state-excused absences.
- 4. Missing attendance data
 - a. LEAs are required to report attendance for all students in grades PK-12 who attended the school during the school year, which includes both students who attend outside of the LEA and students who are not active at the end of the school year but were enrolled for at least one day during the school year.
 - b. LEAs may be flagged if there are students with no reported attendance data.
- 5. Estimated Chronic Absenteeism Rates
 - a. The NJDOE will calculate estimated chronic absenteeism rates for the students reported by the LEA.
 - b. LEAs may be flagged if estimated chronic absenteeism rates are very high, very low, or significantly different from rates from the 2023-2024 school year.

The flags that will be included in the outreach are different from the errors in NJ SMART, which are record level errors and look for whether the data submitted for each student is valid. These flags are based on aggregate level data and are meant to flag areas for review or potential issues that are not currently flagged in NJ SMART. This means that an LEA may have no errors in NJ SMART but still be flagged in this outreach. These flags do not mean that the data is necessarily wrong, it just means that the data is above or below certain thresholds that the NJDOE has identified to prompt a review of the data.

Student Information System Defaults

The NJDOE requests that LEAs review the default settings in their student information systems (SIS) to ensure that the attendance data submitted in NJ SMART SID Management is reflective of the time between the first day of school and the last day that attendance has been recorded in the SIS. A key issue that the NJDOE has seen over the last few years is when the reported total days in membership is higher than expected, given the submission date. For example, if you are exporting attendance data through the end of January and your school year started at the beginning of September, students should have a maximum total days in membership of approximately 100 days. There should be no students reported with 180 total days in membership before the end of the school year. If your SIS defaults to reporting attendance data through the end of the school year or defaults to 180 days present, your attendance data will not be representative of your students' attendance at the time of submission. This is an issue because it does not allow attendance data to be accurately reviewed throughout the school year. It also means that if absences are not entered or updated for a student, it can result in students having 100% attendance rates by default.

Out-of-District Student Attendance

LEAs are responsible for reporting attendance data for all students they report in NJ SMART, which includes students who attend schools outside of the LEA. This may include students who attend an approved private school for students with disabilities (APSSDs), a special services district, an educational services commission, or other types of programs in other districts. While attendance is likely tracked by the attending LEA, the reporting LEA is responsible for submitting the attendance data of their out-of-district students in NJ SMART.

If there is not a current process in place for receiving attendance data for students attending outside the LEA, the NJDOE recommends LEAs work with the other LEAs where students attend now to make sure there is a plan to receive the data prior to June 30 so it can be included in the June 30 snapshot. The NJDOE realizes that in most cases this data may not be updated until after the end of the school year. If your LEA is not able to obtain attendance data for out-of-district students, please make sure that the reported days present and days absent are both 0 rather than defaulting to 180 days present, as noted above. However, LEAs should make all possible efforts

to obtain attendance data for all out-of-district students, and the NJDOE will be flagging LEAs with students with missing attendance data during the outreach period.

Attendance Data for Inactive Student Records

LEAs are required to report attendance for all students in grades PK-12 who attended the LEA during the school year. Students who are not active at the end of the school year but were enrolled for at least one day during the 2024-2025 school year must be included in the end of year SID Management submission, even if they were already submitted in the fall snapshot. Students who were enrolled for zero days during the 2024-2025 school year should not be included in the end of year SID Management submission. All inactive student records should have a SchoolExitDate in SID Management, and the attendance data in the records should be reflective of the time they were enrolled at the school for the current school year.

Resources

The NJDOE [Reporting Student Attendance and Determining Chronic Absenteeism Rates](#) document explains the fields in NJ SMART and how they should be reported. [Additional resources and trainings](#) for NJ SMART submissions are available under Documents for Download and eLearning Videos & Webinars.

Contact Information

Contact the Office of Performance Management at performancemanagement@doe.nj.gov for questions about the outreach or how the data in NJ SMART is used for accountability and reporting. Contact the NJ SMART help desk at (800) 254-0295 or njsmart@pcgus.com with any questions about submitting data in NJ SMART. Contact attendance@doe.nj.gov for questions about attendance policy.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group