

Graduation Data Quality Checklist

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) collects student graduation information from local education agencies (LEAs) through the New Jersey Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (NJSLEDS). Graduation data through August 2025 was collected through NJ SMART SID Management, but this has transitioned to NJSLEDS starting in September 2025. The graduation data collected from LEAs 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 LEA submitted graduation data. LEAs should use the NJSLEDS Graduation Student Report and the Graduation Cohort Profile report to review their graduation data. Refer to the NJSLEDS Graduation Reports User Guide on the [NJSLEDS Graduation User Resources webpage](#) for details on how to use these reports. When reviewing graduation rates, make sure to review the four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates for the district overall, each high school in the district, and student group rates for the district and each school.

If issues are found in the preliminary graduation rates, LEAs have an opportunity to correct graduation related data during the Graduation Appeals Process. The Graduation Appeals User Guide on the [NJSLEDS Graduation User Resources webpage](#) provides details on how to submit appeals, the types of documentation required for each type of appeal, how to review and monitor their appeals, and how to fix data errors.

Reporting Students Who Graduate and Transfer Out

LEAs can use the NJSLEDS Graduation Cohort Profile report to see the number and percentage of students in each cohort category. They can use the NJSLEDS Graduation Student Report to see the individual students in each cohort category. The Graduation Student Report has a filter for cohort category, so you can easily filter the report for a particular cohort category.

What to Check	✓
Check that all students who graduated by the end of August have Cohort Category = Graduated.	
Review students with a Cohort Category of “On Track Continuing” and “Off-Track Continuing” to confirm that they are still actively enrolled in your district.	
Review students with a Cohort Category of “Transfer Out - Unverified” to see students who were reported as transfers but were never reported by another LEA or state agency. Determine if these students have the correct school exit withdrawal code.	

What to Check	✓
○ If any of the students in this category transferred to a non-public school, transferred to a school outside of the state or country, or dropped out of high school, they may need an updated school exit withdrawal code. ● Reach out to the LEA where the student transferred. ○ If the new LEA never reported the student, then the receiving district should upload the student to NJSLEDS as soon as possible. ○ If the new LEA uploaded the student using a different SID, you should request a SID merge to link the SID your district used to the new SID.	
Review students with a Cohort Category of “Active Student – Status Unknown” to see students who were reported as active in a previous snapshot but did not appear in the most recent snapshot. ● If these students transferred out of your district or graduated, make sure to upload a record with the appropriate status, exit date, and school exit withdrawal code. ● If these students are still enrolled in your district, make sure to upload an active record for these students in NJSLEDS.	

Accurate Student and School Information

LEAs can use the Graduation Cohort Profile to see the number of students in the adjusted cohort for the district and each school. LEAs can use the Graduation Student Report to see the full list of students in each graduation cohort. The report currently allows you to view students in cohorts 2018 through 2028. The Graduation Student Level report shows a student’s accountable school information, their most recent in-district placement data, and their student group information, along with other data relevant to the calculation of graduation rates.

Please note that the Graduation Student Level report only shows students who were submitted by your district. The data in the Graduation Cohort Profile shows all students who were accountable to your district for graduation purposes. In general, the submitting district is also the accountable district, but there are a few scenarios where they are not aligned. This means that there may be some students who are included in the Graduation Cohort Profile totals but will not appear in your Graduation Student report. Please contact the Office of Performance Management (performancemanagement@doe.nj.gov) if this is the case with your LEA and if you have questions.

What to Check	✓
Check that all students who are included in Cohort 2025 started 9th grade during the 2021-2022 school year and check if there are any students missing from the cohort. ● Students who enrolled in a NJ public school after grade 9 are assigned to a cohort based on when the student would have entered grade 9 (e.g., a new student reported in grade 10 during the 2022-23 school year would have been assigned to Cohort 2025). ● If a student was initially reported with an incorrect grade level, the student may have been assigned to the wrong cohort, even if the student’s grade level was later corrected. Student cohorts can only be changed through appeals.	

What to Check	✓
Use the Graduation Student Report with School Type = Accountable to check the full list of students in Cohort 2025 to ensure that they should all be assigned to your district for accountability.	
Use the Graduation Student Cohort with School Type = Accountable to see if any students are assigned to a school labeled “Cannot be Determined”. - Students are typically assigned to this category if there is an issue with the reported county, district, and school codes, and the accountable school could not be determined. - Review the NJSLEDS Student Reporting Responsibilities document to ensure that the appropriate attending, receiving, and resident codes were reported.	
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, you can use the Graduation Cohort Profile report to check that the most recent In-District Placement field is correct and whether the students have their resident school, not their attending school, listed as their accountable school. If students are not assigned to their resident school, check that the In-District Placement field was reported correctly.	
Check that students appear in the correct student groups using the Graduation Student Report. - For gender and race/ethnicity, students are assigned to the student group based on their most recently reported student group status. Note that this is a change for 2024-2025. In prior years, this was based on their student group status when they entered the cohort, so if student was not reported in the August 2025 graduation snapshot, their gender and race/ethnicity may still reflect their entering values. - 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”).	

Federal Graduation Rates and Students with Disabilities

LEAs can use the Graduation Cohort profile to review both the state and federal versions of the adjusted cohort graduation rates. The adjusted cohort total (denominator) is the same for both rates, but the report shows the number of graduates and the graduation rate for both versions. Using the Graduation Student Report, LEAs can see a student’s Graduation Status. This status indicates whether the student was a “State and Federal Graduate” or a “State Graduate Only”. The Graduation Student Report also includes the ELA and Math Graduation Pathway indicators and the IEP Graduation Course and Graduation Attendance fields, which are used to determine whether a student will be included as a graduate in the federal graduation rate.

What to Check	✓
Compare the state and federal graduation rates. If the federal rate is lower than the state rate, review the students with a Graduation Status of “State Graduate Only” in the Graduation Student Report.	

What to Check	✓
- Students in this category are students with disabilities who graduated but were reported as not having met either state course requirements, local attendance requirements, or state assessment requirements because of a modification or exemption in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Students are included in this category if at least one of the following is true: - IEP Graduation Course Requirement = 1 - IEP Graduation Attendance = 1 - ELA or Math Graduation Pathway Indicator = M - The Graduation Student Report will show the data reported for the IEP Graduation Course Requirement, IEP Graduation Attendance, ELA Graduation Pathway, and Math Graduation Pathway fields. Check that the data is accurate and that the students did not meet at least one of the graduation requirements.	
Review the Cohort 2024 4-year, Cohort 2023 5-year, and Cohort 2022 6-year federal graduation rates (prior year) because they are being used for the 2024-2025 ESSA accountability process. To view the rates that align with the rates used for 2024-2025 accountability, make sure School Type = Accountable and apply the following filters: 4-Year Rate: Cohort = 2024, Rate/Snapshot = Rate, Rate/Snapshot Options = Official 4-Year 5-Year Rate: Cohort = 2023, Rate/Snapshot = Rate, Rate/Snapshot Options = Official 5-Year 6-Year Rate: Cohort = 2022, Rate/Snapshot = Rate, Rate/Snapshot Options = Official 6-Year - If data needs to be appealed that would change these rates, contact performancemanagement@doe.nj.gov. The ESSA profile review period will be happening at the same time as the graduation appeals period for 2024-2025, so you will need to submit an ESSA Profile appeal to update your 2024-2025 accountability graduation rates to reflect any approved appeals that impact your Cohort 2024 4-year, Cohort 2023 5-year, or Cohort 2022 6-year graduation rates.	

Checklist for Submitting Appeals

Review the Graduation Appeals User Guide on the [NJSLEDS High School Graduation User Resources page](#) for specific details on how to submit each type of graduation appeal and whether documentation is required.

What to Check	✓
If there is data that needs to be corrected, update the data, where possible, in NJSLEDS Student Management prior to filing an appeal. - The appeal requirements tables for each type of appeal indicate whether LEAs need to update data in NJSLEDS. - After appeals have been uploaded, LEAs can review the Student Appeals Detail page for each student to compare the value in the current graduation snapshot, what they requested through the appeal, and the current NJSLEDS Student Management value for each of the graduation appeals to make sure that what they are requesting matches what is currently in NJSLEDS Student Management.	

What to Check	✓
The NJDOE will review that data has been updated when evaluating appeals and may not approve an appeal until data has been updated in NJSLEDS Student Management.	
Make sure that all errors are resolved after uploading the Graduation Appeals Submission file. Use the Error report on the Graduation Appeals Submission Records page to review the types of errors. Review the “Common Errors and How to Resolve Them” section of the Graduation Appeals User Guide for help in resolving your errors. Appeal records that were in Error will not appear on your Current Graduation Appeals page and will not be seen by NJDOE until the errors are resolved.	
Upload the appropriate documentation in NJSLEDS. Review the “Documentation Requirements” section for each type of appeal to determine if and what type of documentation is required. Documentation must be uploaded before you submit the records (Record Status = “Not Submitted”).	
After documentation is uploaded, you must submit your records on the Graduation Appeals page. Once records are submitted, they will have Record Status = “Submitted”. The NJDOE will not see any appeal records until they have a record status of “Submitted”.	
Include a clear and concise explanation in your Graduation Appeals Submission upload that includes relevant information that may be needed to evaluate the appeal. Make sure to provide contact information for someone who will be available during the appeals period to answer questions or provide additional information.	
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. The appeals screen in NJSLEDS will show the appeal status for all appeals that have been submitted. - LEAs will receive an email if a student’s appeal status is set to “Declined” or “Edits Needed”. They will not receive emails each time an appeal status is set to “Approved”. - If more information is needed to determine if an appeal can be approved, it will be flagged as “Edits Needed.” - LEAs should review the Decision Notes section of the Student Appeals Detail screen to see what edits are needed. - If they need to modify their appeal, upload a modified appeal record to the Graduation Appeals Submission. - If they need to provide additional documentation, once the appeal has a status of “Edits Needed”, the upload feature on the Student Appeals Detail page will be activated. - LEAs are responsible for providing additional information by the appeals deadline, otherwise their appeal may be Declined.	

Support

Contact the NJSLEDS help desk at 609-376-3970 or helpdesk-sleds@doe.nj.gov with any questions about NJSLEDS reports or technical issues with the appeals process. Contact gradappeals@doe.nj.gov if you have questions about your LEA’s graduation data or the graduation appeals process.

The [NJSLEDS Graduation User Resources webpage](#) has multiple resources to help LEAs understand how adjusted cohort graduation rates are calculated, how accountable schools are assigned, how to use the Graduation Reports in NJSLEDS, how the exit withdrawal codes in NJSLEDS impact graduation status, and frequently asked questions about graduation rates and reporting.