

Calculating the Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate Requirements and Business Rules

The calculation of the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is defined in Section 8101 [20 U.S.C. 7801] of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The following documentation provides the requirements as defined in ESSA and the business rules applied to implement and calculate the adjusted cohort graduation rate.

Calculating the Cohort

The number (numerator) of total students earning a regular high school diploma before, during or at the conclusion of the fourth year of high school or the summer session immediately following the fourth year, completed by the date published by the NCDPI, is divided by the total number (denominator) of students expected to graduate within four years.

According to the ESSA, the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate “shall not include any students awarded a recognized equivalent of a diploma such as a general equivalency diploma, certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or similar lesser credential.”

This document provides the information needed to calculate both the denominator and numerator.

Setting the Original Cohort

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is calculated by creating an initial cohort of students that are tracked upon entering the 9th grade and then are expected to graduate within four-years. As required by the ESSA, the denominator, or total number of students expected to graduate in the current year’s cohort, “consists of the number of students who form the original cohort of entering first-time students in grade 9.” Membership in the denominator is determined by a collection date defined by the NCDPI, which shall be “no later than the date by which student membership is collected annually for submission to the National Center for Education Statistics.” The denominator is adjusted by adding and removing students as permitted by Section 8101 [20 U.S.C. 7801].

Using PowerSchool, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) extracts student enrollment data on the twentieth (20) day of school for each school. This data collection sets the initial cohort for the school.

4-ACGR O1.0—Students are identified as part of the initial cohort using both current and historical enrollment data extracted from PowerSchool. Students who are found to have moved from a previous grade into 9th grade in consecutive years are set in the initial cohort. Discrepancies are reconciled with the school through the district or charter school testing coordinator.

4-ACGR O1.1—Students in grades 9–12 found in current enrollment data for the first time without historical enrollment data are included in the original cohort. (Rules A1.1 and A1.2 are used for these students.)

Adjusting the Cohort

The initial cohort is adjusted by adding students who joined the cohort after the original cohort was determined (transferred into the cohort) and by subtracting only those students who, during the years covered by the cohort, are confirmed and documented to have transferred out, emigrated to another country, transferred to a prison or juvenile facility, or are deceased.

Adding Students to the Cohort

Transferring into the cohort occurs when a student enrolls into a high school after the initial cohort has been set. Students are added to the cohort throughout the initial cohort year and each of the subsequent years, including the

fourth year. Students are added through PowerSchool enrollment data that is captured in scheduled data collections. These data collections are defined in the Accountability Services Data Collection Schedule. Newly enrolled students are placed into the appropriate four-year cohort using the following methods:

4-ACGR A1.0—Students who transfer into a high school are assigned to the cohort which the student started in ninth grade for the first time. (The NCDPI will apply students who transfer between schools within the state to the receiving school’s cohort in accordance to PowerSchool enrollments.) Repeating a grade or not acquiring sufficient course credit does not reset student membership in a cohort.

4-ACGR A1.1—If the cohort for a student cannot be determined using enrollment data, the NCDPI will use the grade 9 entry date field from PowerSchool to assign the student to the correct cohort. Discrepancies are reconciled with the school through the district or charter school testing coordinator.

4-ACGR A1.2—If the grade 9 entry date is blank in PowerSchool, NCDPI will determine the cohort using the current grade level and will note the assumed cohort in audit reporting. When this occurs, testing coordinators are informed that the student was placed in a cohort and the cohort must be validated.

Note: For rules A1.1 and A1.2, once the grade 9 entry date field is populated in PowerSchool and collected in an official accountability data collection, it cannot be changed in the accountability data without an official data correction request and appropriate documentation for the change. The grade 9 entry date is not locked in PowerSchool; therefore, it may be changed at any time. However, this date will not be changed for accountability purposes without the data correction request.

4-ACGR A2.0—Students who enroll in a North Carolina (NC) public high school that does not grant diplomas must be assigned to a diploma granting high school within the district where the student would earn a diploma at the time of their expected graduation. In these cases, students are added to the cohort of the NC public high school that grants the diplomas. In the case of students who transfer between NC public schools within the same LEA, see 4-ACGR T2.0.

4-ACGR A3.0—Students who are mid-year promoted to grade 9 are added to that year’s cohort with the same graduation expectation as those who were in the initial cohort of that year.

Removal from the Cohort

Removal from the cohort is limited to the specified circumstances defined under the ESSA (the student transferred out, emigrated to another country, transferred to a prison or juvenile facility, or is deceased). Each removal from the cohort requires that the school or LEA collect appropriate documentation or obtain documentation from the NCDPI to verify the removal. Examples of adequate supporting documentation can be found in appendix A. Students shall remain in the cohort when there is no supporting documentation or such documentation is deemed insufficient.

Transferred Out of a Cohort

Transferred out is defined as when a student, as confirmed by the high school or LEA, has transferred to:

- 1) another school from which the student is expected to receive a regular high school diploma; or
- 2) another educational program from which the student is expected to receive a regular high school diploma.

Transfers from one North Carolina (NC) public school to another NC public school are documented in the accountability data collections. When transfers are captured, in a data collection, the NCDPI moves the student from one school to another. The NCDPI affirms that information received from the authoritative source (PowerSchool enrollment) is the documentation necessary to make the transfer. No additional documentation is required at the local level.

4-ACGR T1.0— Transfers between NC public schools that are not captured through accountability data collections require schools to collect and maintain adequate supporting documentation and enter transfer coding through the CGR data collection process developed by the NCDPI.

4-ACGR T1.1—North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services supported schools are considered a transfer within the state not captured by an accountability data collection and require the same type of documentation to be removed from the cohort.

4-ACGR T2.0—Students who transfer from of one NC public school and to an NC public school that does not grant diplomas (i.e. alternative schools, special education schools, hospital schools), within the same LEA, are attributed to the cohort of the diploma granting school to which they would have been assigned.

Note: NCDPI collects the list of NC public schools that do not grant diplomas and requires LEAs to designate the appropriate diploma awarding high school to attribute the graduation result.

Students who transfer out of state to a diploma granting high school or educational program, transfer to a private school granting high school diplomas or transfer to a home school are removed from the cohort with the specified documentation for the transfer. Examples of acceptable supporting documents are found in appendix A.

4-ACGR T2.0—When a student transfers out of state, the school/LEA must collect and maintain supporting documentation indicating the out of state transfer. The transfer must be to a high school or educational program that grants high school diplomas.

4-ACGR T2.1—When a student transfers to a Department of Defense school it is considered an out of state transfer and requires the same supporting documentation as an out of state transfer would for the purposes of removing students from the cohort.

4-ACGR T3.0—When a student transfers to a NC private school, the school/LEA must collect and maintain supporting documentation indicating the transfer. The transfer must be to a school that grants high school diplomas.

4-ACGR T3.1—When students transfer to an accredited private online/correspondence school either physically or not physically located in NC, the school/LEA must collect and maintain supporting documentation indicating the transfer. The online/correspondence school must grant high school diplomas and be accredited by the approved list of accrediting agencies noted in appendix A.

4-ACGR T3.2—The NC School of the Arts and NC School of Math and Science are operated by the University of North Carolina General Administration and require the same supporting documentation for the purposes of transferring students out of the cohort.

4-ACGR T4.0—When a student transfers to a home school, the school/LEA must collect and maintain acceptable documentation consisting of evidence of enrollment at an approved home school registered with NC Department of Administration's Non-Public Education Division.

Emigrated to Another Country

Students are removed from the cohort when supporting documentation indicates the student has emigrated to another country. This requires a school/LEA to collect and maintain documentation in the form of written and signed confirmation from the parent that the student is leaving the country or a school administrator's documented and signed conversation with the parent at the time of withdrawal. In the event the student is deported, written documentation from the Immigration and Naturalization Services is required.

4-ACGR E1.0—Students identified as Foreign Exchange students sponsored by an exchange agency may be removed from the cohort after returning to their home country. This requires a school/LEA to collect and maintain documentation of the official exchange paperwork reflecting the year of participation on exchange agency letterhead.

Transferred to a Prison or Juvenile Facility

Students are removed from the cohort when supporting documentation indicates the student has been adjudicated and sent to a NC Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice facility or another federal or state prison. In North Carolina, these facilities include adult prisons and Youth Development Centers. This requires a school/LEA to collect and maintain documentation indicating the adjudication and placement of the student in one of these facilities.

4-ACGR J1.0—In the case of students in North Carolina Juvenile Detention Centers, only those students that have been adjudicated and are awaiting final placement may be removed from the cohort. Students housed in Juvenile Detention Centers that have not been adjudicated remain in the cohort.

4-ACGR J2.0—Students who are placed into county or other municipality detention facilities are not removed from the cohort.

Deceased

Students are removed from the cohort when acceptable documentation indicates the student is deceased. This requires a school/LEA to collect and maintain documentation.

Additional Rules

Small Schools Calculation Rule

4-ACGR S1.0—Schools with an average enrollment over a four-year period of less than 100 students, are given a cohort rate calculated using three years of data for the purposes of school accountability, long-term goals and identification of Comprehensive Support and Improvement—Low Graduation Rate.

Cooperative Innovative High Schools Rule

4-ACGR I1.0—Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS), approved to operate a five-year program, use a five-year adjusted cohort rate as the four-year adjusted cohort rate. These schools are identified annually by the NCDPI.

4-ACGR I1.1—Students who move from an approved five-year CIHS, in the student's fifth year, to a school using a four-year rate are expected to graduate in five years and are included in the four-year cohort graduation rate of the school in which they are enrolled, at the end of the student's fifth year.

4-ACGR I1.2—Students who move from an approved five-year CIHS, prior to the student’s fifth year, to a school using a four-year rate are expected to graduate in four years and are included in the cohort graduation rate of the school in which they are enrolled at the end of the student’s fourth year.

Community College Adult High School Program Rule

4-ACGR C1.0—Students who enroll in a Community College Adult High School Program (CAHSP) diploma program through a North Carolina Community College and earn a high school diploma within the time of the cohort are included in the cohort as a graduate.

4-ACGR C1.1—For the CAHSP to be approved, the local school district granting the diploma must have an agreement with the community college where the CAHS was earned and the student must have graduated within the time of the cohort.

4-ACGR C1.2—Students must be coded accurately in PowerSchool, which involves the withdrawal of the student for the school. Local staff must verify each semester that the student is continuing their education through this program. At the time the student earns the diploma, LEAs must complete all processes needed in PowerSchool to count the student as graduating in their cohort.

Appendix A–Cohort Graduation Exit Code Guidance

Exit Code	Description	Cohort Action	Examples of Acceptable Supporting Documentation
0	Has not left this school	Included in school’s cohort	School enrollment in PowerSchool is captured in an official data collection. No additional supporting documentation is necessary.
1	Transferred to another school in the same local education agency (LEA)	Removed from school’s cohort	Receiving school enrollment must be entered in PowerSchool and captured in an official data collection. No additional supporting documentation is necessary.
2	Transferred to another LEA or charter school	Removed from school’s cohort	Receiving school enrollment must be entered in PowerSchool and captured in an official data collection. No additional supporting documentation is necessary.
3	Relocated outside the state of North Carolina, out of the country, or to a Department of Defense (DOD) School	Removed from school’s cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Provide one of the following supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Request for Student Record is required from receiving out-of-state public or private school. • Written acknowledgement on official letterhead, email or enrollment letter from an administrator at the out-of-state or DOD receiving school confirming enrollment. • Transfer record form or screen shot from receiving out-of-state school with signature. • If a student has moved out of the country, obtain a written confirmation from the parent or a school administrator’s documented conversation with the parent at the time of withdrawal. • Written document from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency that the student is detained or was deported.
4	Dropped out	Included in school’s cohort	Schools may use this code to track students in the auditing process. Code does not remove a student from the cohort and does not apply to any other metrics, like the dropout rate.
5	Temporarily withdrawn due to suspension or school approved illness (does not exempt the student)	Included in school’s cohort	Schools may use this code to track students in the auditing process. Code does not remove a student from the cohort. Written acknowledgement on official letterhead from an administrator at the school confirming suspension or school approved illness.
6	Student is deceased	Removed from school’s cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Supporting documentation includes an obituary, death certificate, newspaper article or funeral program.
7	Other situation that does not exempt the student from the cohort	Included in school’s cohort	Schools may use this code to track students in the auditing process. Code does not remove a student from the cohort.

Note: Unacceptable supporting documentation includes but is not limited to; yearbook pictures, a commencement program, Facebook page postings, PowerSchool screen shots, in-house communication/form such as email from the sending school’s counselor, or text message conversations.

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8	Visiting student (Should not have been in the cohort)	Removed from school’s cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Provide one of the following supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written acknowledgement on official letterhead from an administrator at the school confirming the student is a non-content (not included in ADM) visiting student with supporting documentation from PowerSchool. • For foreign exchange students, a copy of the official exchange program paperwork reflecting the year of participation on exchange agency letterhead.
9	Graduated (Listed on the official list of graduates)	Included in school’s cohort	Graduation status (diploma) is entered in Graduation Data Verification (GDV) in PowerSchool and captured in an official data collection. No additional supporting documentation is necessary.
A	Transferred to a private school or facility within the state (Includes NC School of Math and Science and NC School of the Arts) or legitimate private online/correspondence school	Removed from school’s cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Provide one of the following supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Request for Student Records is required from receiving private school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The private school must be listed on the Non-public School Directory for the year the student transferred. • Copy of Notice of Intent to Operate a Private School Form submitted to NC Department of Administration (NCDOA). This form can be found for reference at https://ncadmin.nc.gov/citizens/private-school/notice-intent-operate-private-school. • Official Request for Student Records is received from NC School of Math and Science or NC School of the Arts. • Written acknowledgement on official letterhead from private online/correspondence school not physically located in North Carolina. Must be accredited by one of the following agencies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) 2. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) 3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) 4. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) 5. Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) 6. Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS)

Note: Unacceptable supporting documentation includes but is not limited to; yearbook pictures, a commencement program, Facebook page postings, PowerSchool screen shots, in-house communication/form such as email from the sending school’s counselor, or text message conversations.

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B	Transferred to home school within the state	Removed from school's cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Provide one of the following documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Official Non-Public School Registration Record signed by the parent or guardian. • Letter signed by parent indicating the school name, county and official home school code given by NCDOA of school attended by the student.
C	Transferred to a community college within the state	Included in school's cohort	Schools may use this code to track students in the auditing process. Code does not remove a student from the cohort.
D	Certificate recipient	Included in school's cohort	Graduation status (certificate) is entered in Graduation Data Verification (GDV) in PowerSchool. No additional supporting documentation is necessary. Code does not remove student from cohort.
E	Documented transfer within district not indicated by DPI enrollment data.	Removed from school's cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Provide one of the following supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Request for Student Record is required from receiving public school/facility • Written acknowledgement on official letterhead, email or enrollment letter from an administrator at the receiving school/facility confirming enrollment • Transfer record form or screen shot from receiving school/facility with signature
F	Documented to be in a juvenile detention facility or prison (Includes Youth Development Centers or adult prisons under the NC Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice, federal prison or another state's adult prison.)	Removed from school's cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Provide one of the following supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Request for Student Record is required from receiving public or private school/facility • Written acknowledgement on official letterhead, email or enrollment letter from an administrator at the receiving school/facility confirming enrollment • Transfer record form or screen shot from an official site receiving school/facility with signature • Written copy of the court order or judgment decision should be kept on file with the district

Note: Unacceptable supporting documentation includes but is not limited to; yearbook pictures, a commencement program, Facebook page postings, PowerSchool screen shots, in-house communication/form such as email from the sending school's counselor, or text message conversations.

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G	Documented transfer within state not indicated by DPI enrollment data (includes Department of Health and Human Services Schools (DHHS))	Removed from school's cohort only if adequate documentation is provided	Provide one of the following supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Request for Student Record is required from receiving public school/facility • Written acknowledgement on official letterhead, email or enrollment letter from an administrator at the receiving school/facility confirming enrollment

Note: Unacceptable supporting documentation includes but is not limited to; yearbook pictures, a commencement program, Facebook page postings, PowerSchool screen shots, in-house communication/form such as email from the sending school's counselor, or text message conversations.