



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

From: Willa Spicer
Acting Commissioner

Subject: Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

In 2004, the state of New Jersey signed the compact of the National Governor's Association (NGA) to produce a cohort graduation rate by the year 2010. The NGA wanted to have all states use the same formula to calculate accurate, comparable graduation rates. In 2008, the federal government adopted the major components of the NGA's cohort rate and introduced it as the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate. The December 2008 federal guidance <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf> mandates states to produce a cohort rate for the graduates of 2011. Attached are the relevant excerpts from this guidance related to the district's requirements for the tracking of transfer students and drop outs.

New Jersey's current graduation rate computation is based on the aggregate data supplied to the department in the annual fall report card collection. The current graduation rate computation will be in effect through this fall and will be reported for the graduates of 2010 in the NJ School Report Card next February.

Starting with the school year 2010-2011, the new Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate will be in effect, and the data will be aggregated from the NJ SMART database for the cohort of students who were entering freshmen in September 2007 and graduates in 2011. The first Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate will be published in the 2011 NJ School Report Card that is issued in February 2012. The rate will be disaggregated by subgroup for the first time. Once the adjusted rate is fully implemented, it will replace the dropout rate as the secondary measure for high schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP).

One of the measures in the federal guidance that is intended to increase the accuracy of the student dropout data and the percentage of student graduates is the requirement for districts to be able to document a transfer. Undocumented transfers will count as dropouts and will influence the graduation rate for the school and each of the subgroups. Students who transfer from one public school district to another must have documentation of a transfer once the student ID (SID) is accepted by the receiving district. Other types of transfers will require a

parent/guardian's signature and other specific documentation on file to verify the transfer, if applicable. Without the proper verification, the transfer must be classified as a dropout.

It is important for districts to acquaint themselves with the federal guidance and take great care to provide accurate data on transfers, dropouts, and graduates in NJ SMART. To assist districts with the documentation process, the department has attached a student transfer form that must be completed and filed for each student transfer. The district should begin to use the form for all transfers in school year 2010-2011 and implement it as an ongoing verification process. The forms that are on file in your district's schools are subject to an audit.

As more details about the graduation rate emerge, districts will be informed accordingly. Accurate data for our graduates and dropouts are essential federal elements. For questions and/or comments, please contact the NJDOE by calling 609-943-4283 or by e-mail at titleone@doe.state.nj.us.

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Attachments

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