



# Explaining ADVISER Cohort Graduation Rate Calculations

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# What is a cohort?

- A cohort is any grouping of students
- The ***graduation cohort*** is a group of students who are grouped based on the school year that they entered high school, which also leads to an expected school year for their on-time graduation
- NDE is required to have graduation cohort metrics and rules by the federal department of Ed/ESEA
  - Note: our document defining this process has not been updated since the NSSRS years, but it is in on our list to be updated soon...

# What is a high school student?

- Any student who has ever been reported to NDE in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade level
  - Via an ADVISER enrollment record, a.k.a. a Student School Association
  - Not technically dependent on which school building they are at, though if you do report a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at an elementary school etc. we will give you an ADVISER Validation error, and statewide assessment may send you an email
- Be careful about students who are moving from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, especially if you need to report a summer exit for them before school
  - Recommend you avoid marking them as 9<sup>th</sup> graders if possible

# Cohort Graduation Calculation System

- Since the early days of NSSRS, NDE has had a system that does graduation cohort calculations nightly based on data submitted by districts
- The system for this has remained largely unchanged even as we transitioned into ADVISER
- The system looks at data submitted in the current year (2025-2026 as of Dec 2025) as well as final locked data from the previous 6 school years (2019-2020 onwards, as of 2025-2026)
  - This allows for calculating everything relevant for 25-26's 4<sup>th</sup> year, 5<sup>th</sup> year, 6<sup>th</sup> year, and 7<sup>th</sup> year cohorts (22-23 expected grads)
  - There is only one "Current year" at a time, i.e. the 2024-2025 cohort data is not being recalculated now – this data was already reported out in the NEP

# Step 1: Identify students who have entered a cohort

- Starting with the oldest school years, look for enrolment records (student school associations) where a student is reported in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Identify the earliest such record by looking for the oldest Entry Date – this is the district who is setting the cohort for the student
  - What happens if one student has two records on this date? Hopefully they do not disagree
- We don't only look for 9<sup>th</sup> grade records – if a student has transferred into NE from out of state in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, *that* is their earliest record

# Step 2: Set the cohort year

- Once a student has been identified as a high schooler and we know which district is setting the cohort (from step 1), look for that district's matching Expected Graduation Year field to decide the student's cohort year
  - Note: Cohort Year sounds like it can have multiple meanings, but is synonymous with the expected graduation year used here (as opposed to the year they entered high school – we don't always know when their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year was!)
  - Example: a student entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2025-2026 will typically graduate in 2028-2029, 2029 is their cohort year aka 4<sup>th</sup> year cohort

# Step 2: Set the cohort year

- Submitted as part of the demographics record (Student Education Organization Association) – one per district per year per student
- Note: NDE looks at the expected graduation year submitted by the district at that time – we do **not** assume what it should be
  - There is a validation error that will flag it if it looks wrong however

# Step 2: Set the cohort year

## EXPECTED GRADUATION YEAR (GRADUATION COHORT YEAR)

Use: 

|   |                 |  |      |
|---|-----------------|--|------|
| X | State Reporting |  | CRDC |
|---|-----------------|--|------|

*Resource: /StudentEducationOrganizationAssociation/CohortYears/SchoolYear*

**Definition:** This field should typically be reported as four years from the Fall the student entered ninth grade for the first time. All students who enroll in a district in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 (including Foreign Exchange Students) must be assigned an Expected Graduation Year. Once a student's cohort year has been set through this field, any changes to the expected graduation year in subsequent school years will not affect the official cohort year. Students are expected to participate in the "11<sup>th</sup> grade" NSCAS statewide assessment one year before their assigned cohort year.

**Example:** If the student is a first time 9<sup>th</sup> grader in 2017-2018, the student's cohort is 2021 (2017 + 4). When the school year is 2020-2021 and it is determined the student will not graduate until 2022, if the district changes the Expected Graduation Year to 2022 the cohort year will remain 2021.

# Step 3: Determine where the student has enrolled since then

- NDE looks at all enrollment records for the student starting with the oldest one identified in step 1 up until the current school year

Any enrollment we see at a high school during this timeframe puts the student into your cohort (aka the denominator for your cohort grad rate), and **they only come out of that school's cohort if we see an appropriate Exit Withdraw code**

# Step 4: Remove exited students from cohort

- The part that districts are surprised about the most is that **only seeing certain exit codes removes a student from your cohort**, the presence of enrollment records later on in other districts or schools **does not remove them**
- Codes that remove a student from your school/district's cohort:
  - 201 – transfer out (former code no longer used in ADVISER)
  - 206 – deceased
  - 213-217 – all of the new transfer out codes
- Codes that remove a student from a school's cohort (in a multi-school district) but not the district's cohort
  - 200 – intra-district transfer
  - We expect to see another high school in your district pick them up after this 200 code, however

# Step 4: Remove exited students from cohort

- Codes that do NOT remove a student from your cohort:
  - 202 Dropout
  - 205 Not Enrolled, Eligible to Return
  - 208 Maximum Age
  - 209 Withdrawal From Mandatory Attendance
  - 211 Completer With Alt/Modified Diploma (no longer used)
  - 212 Completer No Diploma (federal rules do not allow us to count this as a graduate)
  - 299 End of School Year

# Step 5: Prepare data for graduation cohort calculation

- NDE records relevant demographic data from the districts & school year seen in step 3 for subgroup calculations (gender, race/ethnicity, EL, FRL, SPED)
- Mark which students still in the cohort after step 4 are graduates, **only these codes count:**
  - 210 Completer with Diploma
  - 218 Completer with State Diploma (coming in 26-27)

# Calculate Rates

- Each year in preparation for the NEP release, NDE locks in this year's 4, 5, 6, and 7 year cohort grad rates
  - The denominator was finalized in step 4, and the numerator (graduates) set in step 5
  - FYI the 4 and 7 year rates that go into the NEP this year will be used for next year's AQuESTT data

# Graduation Cohort Analysis Tool

- This report in ADVISER Validation can show you the exact counts we have for the numerator and denominator, and has subreports listing who is currently counted, and who transferred out, and more
  - This report does change depending on which active year you have selected in the ADVISER Validation app

# Graduation Cohort Change Requests

- Note that since we load data from prior years' locked data – only NDE can make updates to that old data
  - For example, you cannot set a new expected grad year for a student in later years
- We have the system (currently in the legacy CDC collection) to ask NDE to change your locked data
  - Ideally only used to change exit codes or the initial cohort setting, but we will discuss anything submitted

# Validation Errors

|     |   |          |  |
|-----|---|----------|--|
| 438 | Intra-District Transfer Without a Following Entry Enrollment Record                                   | ERROR    | A student with an intra-district transfer does not have a subsequent school enrollment entry record. To fix, 1) a School Enrollment record needs to be added with an entry enrollment code in the appropriate school within the district or 2) the student's existing School Enrollment record needs to be updated with the appropriate transfer out exit code. This validation is in the Cohort Analysis Tool. Please note any updates for these students may not be seen until the next day.       |
| 440 | Invalid Expected Graduation Year for a Student in 9th Grade   | ERROR    | The Expected Graduation Year for a student in grade nine is greater than the calculation based on the cohort four-year graduation rate. To fix, update the student's 9th Grade Student record expected graduation date. Please note any updating completed for these students may not occur until the next day.  |
| 443 | Student enrolled in high school has a blank value in the Expected Graduation Year field               | ERROR    | Students enrolled in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 have a blank value in the Expected Graduation Year   |
| 447 | Expected Graduation Year Less Than Cohort Four-Year Graduation Calculation For a Student in 9th Grade | WARNING  | The Expected Graduation Year value is less than the calculation based on the Cohort Four-Year Graduation rate. If the Expected Graduation Year needs to be corrected, the expected graduation needs to be updated.   |
| 439 | No Current School Enrollment Record for a High School Student Enrolled In the Previous Year           | CRITICAL | A student in high school was enrolled in the previous year but does not have a current enrollment record according to the Graduation Cohort process that is run nightly. To fix, publish a current school enrollment record for this student showing the appropriate exit code or entry code, or if a correction needs to be made to the previous school year please submit a CDC Graduation Cohort Resolution Request. After a change is made, please wait until the next day to review this error. |

# Validation Errors

|     |  |          |   |
|-----|--|----------|---|
| 526 | Student in Grades 9-12 Reported as "Completer: Graduated with a Regular or Advanced Diploma" in More Than One School During the Same School Year | ERROR    | Student in grades 9-12 was reported with an Exit Type of "Completer: Graduated with a Regular or Advanced Diploma" at more than one school during the same school Year.   |
| 537 | Foreign Exchange Student With Exit Code Other Than "Transfer Out" or "Completer: Diploma"  | CRITICAL | Foreign Exchange students should only have an Exit Withdraw Type of 217 "Transfer Out to Another State / Country" or 210 "Completer: Graduated with a Regular or Advanced Diploma."   |
| 538 | No Completers for School With 12th Grade Students  | ERROR    | A school that has 12th grade students has not reported any records with the "Completer: Graduated with a Regular or Advanced Diploma" Exit Withdraw Type.   |
| 572 | Graduation Year in student record Changed from Graduation Cohort Year  | WARNING  | The Expected Graduation Year in a student record is different from the Graduation Cohort Year per NDE's records. To fix the Expected Graduation Year, the student's record needs to be updated in the SIS. Graduation Cohort Year is assigned to a student based on when the student was a first time 9th grader, changing the Expected Graduation year WILL NOT change the Graduation Cohort Year. |
| 731 | Grade 12 Student With No Exit Date   | WARNING  | Warning: a 12th grade student has not been reported as a graduate and has not been exited from your district. This may be correct as-is, but if the student did graduate please exit the student with the appropriate exit date and reason.   |
| 785 | More Than One Graduation Exit Code For a Student   | ERROR    | More than one graduation exit code for a student with different dates. Graduation exit date must be the same on both exit records.  |

# Future changes to the system

- NDE has started to think of what changes we would like to see in this system, though no date is set on when this will happen yet
  - All feedback is welcome [max.reiner@nebraska.gov](mailto:max.reiner@nebraska.gov)
- Internal goal: Improved tech and coding, more complete audit data
  - We don't have an easily accessed list of every single cohort move a student made over their high school years
- Should NDE remove students from a cohort even if we don't see the transfer out record?
  - We are trending towards saying no to this, districts should assert a transfer out. We may be able to use the better audit data mentioned above to generate more reports to get the problem students visible to districts sooner though

# Future changes to the system

- The problem with late summer graduates between 7/1 and first day of school
  - Almost all data in ADVISER is locked into the timeframe between 7/1 and 6/30
  - Example: SPED exit data – if it happens before 7/1 it is reported into the prior year, if it happens on 7/1 or later it is reported in the new year
  - Exception – per state statute, anyone who graduates before the first day of school can still be counted toward the prior year's grad rate
  - Currently this is causing districts to submit weird looking data in some situations to work out this difference
  - Goal: districts report that data in the school year in which the actual graduation date happens no exceptions, and our cohort system is smart enough to figure it out

# Resources

Thank You!

- [Max.reiner@nebraska.gov](mailto:Max.reiner@nebraska.gov)
- [NDE.ServiceDesk@nebraska.gov](mailto:NDE.ServiceDesk@nebraska.gov)
- [ADVISER Resources – Nebraska Department of Education](#)