



Cohort Progression Maintenance Manual

Information Technology

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South Carolina Department of Education

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Version History

9/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated for accessibility; all URLs converted to human-readable hyperlinks; headers properly bookmarked.• Updated URL for schools and accreditation search, now DAPIP• Corrected typo in block quote in Appendix D• Included steps in Appendix C for finding list of private schools on SCDE website.• Added link to SISDEM for the description of PIP in Table 6.• Corrected tables to remove first column headers
5/2025	Formatting change to align with agency manual template; Updated field names
2/2025	Updated background on exclusionary reasons appendix (removed “According to Federal Regulations, there are only three acceptable reasons that a student may be removed from his or her graduation cohort in your school: death, emigration to another country, or transfer to a diploma-granting entity.”)
1/2025	Combined this document with “July_19_Cohort_Maintenance_Worksheet_in_PowerSchool”; changed file name to “Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate – Cohort File Reference Manual.”

PowerSchool Coding for Cohort Inclusion/Exclusion

As of school year 2025-2026, only PowerSchool data entry determines whether a high school student is included in or excluded from a particular accountability cohort (definition of “cohort” found later in this document).

- Students are coded for cohort inclusion through using the field labeled **Student Should Remain in Cohort?** (also known as the Denominator) on the **Cohort Maintenance Worksheet** page in PowerSchool.
 - Selecting the **YES** value for this field indicates a student meets the criteria to be included in a cohort.
 - Selecting the **NO** value for this field indicates a student meets the criteria to be excluded from all cohorts;
 - If a value is not selected, a **(blank)** value will be published for the student.
 - Values of **YES** or **(blank)** in this field indicate cohort inclusion.
- A student’s cohort is determined by the value in PowerSchool for the field labeled **Ninth Grade Code** on the **South Carolina Student Information** page.
- The values for these fields as published on the final day of each year’s data collection (i.e. 180th Day Data Collection) will determine students’ cohort status for accountability calculations.

Rather than waiting until the end of the school year, utilize the **Cohort Maintenance Worksheet** page in PowerSchool throughout the year to identify students who should be excluded from a cohort. (cohort exclusion reasons are specified later in this document)

- For students coded for removal from a cohort, keep the documentation verifying the reason for the removal for at least four years following the assigned cohort’s graduation date. Review of documentation may be necessary should there be a Title 1 audit.
- Digitized documents are acceptable and their availability may be maintained in PowerSchool.

For questions about the appropriate documentation of students for inclusion in a cohort, email gradrate@ed.sc.gov

For questions about the process for identifying students in PowerSchool to be included in a cohort, email powerschool@ed.sc.gov

Identifying Students Included in High School Cohort

The 9GR (ninth grade code) identifies the cohort to which a student is assigned. The student remains in the same cohort as they progress through their high school years. Students in their first, second, or third year of high school are included in the denominators of the high school student success measures and students in their fourth year of high school are included in the denominator of the four-year cohort graduation rate. Students from the four-year cohort graduation rate of the previous year are included in the denominator of the Five-Year Student Success Rate (5YSSR). When a student is enrolled in ninth grade for the first time, the 9GR must be assigned by the 45th day of that school year.

Assigning a 9GR for students enrolled on a school's 45th day:

- In PowerSchool, on the **South Carolina Student Information** page (separate from the **Cohort Maintenance Worksheet** page), locate the **Ninth Grade Code** field.
- Ensure a value corresponding to the two digits representing the spring of the school year in which the student was first enrolled in 9th grade is selected, e.g., enter a value of **26** for school year 2025-2026.

Assigning a 9GR for students transferring in after a school's 45th day:

- Transfers from public schools in SC:
 - If the student was in 9th grade prior to the transfer, continue using the 9GR previously assigned by the sending school.
 - If the student was in 8th grade prior to the transfer, use the subsequent year's 9GR value.
- Transfers from private schools, homeschool entities, or other non-SC schools:
 - Determine the student's original entry into 9th grade after reviewing the student's transcript, then assign the appropriate 9GR value.
 - Where no transcript is available you may use the Reconstructed Secondary Coursework Form-Example from the SCDE memo for [Student Enrollment, Age-Appropriate Placement, Ninth Grade Cohort, and International Transcript Guidance](#) to construct a transcript and assign a 9GR value.
- Transfers from schools outside of the US:
 - Determine the first year the student entered a US high school and apply the most permissive 9GR value, per international student guidelines on the SCDE memo for [Student Enrollment, Age-Appropriate Placement, Ninth Grade Cohort, and International Transcript Guidance](#).

The on-time graduation cohort for a given school year consists of students who received their 9GR values three school years before (for example, for school year 2025-2026, the on-time 9GR cohort would be 23, representing the students first in enrolled in 9th grade during the 2022-2023 school year).

- PowerSchool values coded in the **Diploma Earned** (value of 'F' or 'Z') and **Graduation Date** (for students coded 'F') or **Adult Education Graduation Date** (for students coded 'Z') fields and published to Ed-Fi, identify students who graduate.

The graduation cohort is adjusted by subtracting students who are coded with a value of **NO** in the field labeled **Student Should Remain in Cohort (denominator)?** on the **Cohort Maintenance Worksheet** page in PowerSchool; values of **YES** or **(blank)** in that field indicate cohort inclusion.

Note on students receiving special education services: high school students receiving special education services and who's educational program is housed outside of a high school will be included only in the *district's* four-year cohort graduation rate calculation. These students' records will not be associated with a specific school's graduation rate calculation.

Notes on students in adult education:

- Students who enroll in Adult Education programs, regardless of the location of the program, remain in the cohort at their previous school (i.e., remain in their original school's cohort).
- If the student earns a high school diploma (*not* a GED or "high school equivalency diploma") from the Adult Education program by the expected on-time graduation date of their original school's cohort, the student is counted positively in their previous school's graduation rate.
- The 5th year cohort metric includes students who earn either a high school diploma, Employability Credential, or GED (or "high school equivalency diploma") from Adult Education programs with their original school's cohort.
- The Office of Adult Education will provide quarterly files of students receiving their high school diploma or GED through an Adult Education program. These quarterly files are shared to the Accountability Coordinator folder in the Advanced Data Transfer (ADT) portal. The information from these files must be entered into the Diploma Earned, Adult Education Graduation Date, or GED Earned fields in PowerSchool. Contact Erica Gray at elgray@ed.sc.gov for questions/concerns.
- Information about the diploma or GED earned through Adult Education may be entered into PowerSchool when received and will be used when the cohort reaches the fourth or fifth year.

Note on homeschooled students: All student withdrawals to homeschool must follow the documentation requirements on the [SCDE Home Schooling page](#). Contact homeschooling@ed.sc.gov for further support.

Graduation Rate Definition

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (or 'four-year graduation rate') is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma by the number of students in the adjusted graduation cohort. The adjustment excludes students marked as **NO** in the **Student Should Remain in Cohort?** field on the **Cohort Maintenance Worksheet** page in PowerSchool.

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate Formula

***NUMERATOR:** The number of 9GR cohort members who receive a regular high school diploma by the end of their expected graduation year (4 years after starting 9th grade).*

***DENOMINATOR:** Number of students in the 9GR cohort, excluding those marked as NO in the "Student Should Remain in Cohort?" field on the Cohort Maintenance Worksheet in PowerSchool.*

For example, in 2026, the Numerator would include students with a 9GR of 23 who earned a regular high school diploma by the end of the regular 25-26 school year. The Denominator would consist of students with a 9GR of 23 who have a value of YES or blank in the "Student Should Remain in Cohort?" field on the Cohort Maintenance Worksheet in PowerSchool.

Pre-Accountability Dashboards

As of the 25-26 school year, the SCDE will not supply the files previously known as HISTORY, COHORT, and/or BASE files. Instead, districts can find live data in the Pre-Accountability dashboards in Administrator Navigator (formerly known as Podium).

These dashboards will identify students for whom schools and districts will be held responsible in graduation and on-track cohorts for specific school years.

Appendix A

PowerSchool Coding

Coding Denominator Value

PowerSchool breadcrumbs: Start Page > [Student Selection] > Compliance > Cohort Maintenance Worksheet

*Note: The only required data entry field on the **Cohort Maintenance Worksheet** page is “**Student Should Remain in Cohort (denominator)?**”. Other fields on the page may be used as needed but are not required nor collected by SCDE for Accountability reports. The fields in the Cohort Maintenance Worksheet are useful for ensuring that appropriate documentation is available for audit but are not required by the SCDE beyond the denominator field.*

For clarification on the terms and fields found on the Cohort Maintenance Worksheet, see Tables 1-6 below.

Assigning 9GR

PowerSchool breadcrumbs: Start Page > [Student Selection] > Compliance > South Carolina Student Information

In PowerSchool, on the **South Carolina Student Information** page (separate from the Cohort Maintenance Worksheet page), locate the **Ninth Grade Code** field. Ensure a value corresponding to the year in which the student was first enrolled in 9th grade is selected.

Note: 9GR is assigned to first-time 9th grade students on the 45th day of their first entry into 9th grade.

Appendix A

Documentation Required for Exclusion from a Cohort

A student's accountability cohort plays a key role in several metrics of the state and federal report card. The tables on the following pages depict the reasons for excluding students from the cohort. Written documentation must be maintained for verification and audit purposes.

In 2017, the United States Department of Education (USED) issued guidance on the maintenance of the four-year graduation cohort, including documentation requirements for exclusions from a cohort. See [ESSA High School Graduation Rate Non-Regulatory Guidance](#). SCDE uses this guidance as the foundation for maintaining cohorts related to Graduation Rate, College and Career Readiness, On-Track to Graduation, and Five-Year Student Success metrics.

Associated Procedure(s)

For purposes of tracking students' cohort status, the **Student Should Remain in Cohort? (denominator)** field on the **Cohort Maintenance Worksheet** page in PowerSchool is used.

This field must be populated for all students with a ninth-grade code (9GR).

Students who remain in the cohort should have **Y-Yes** or **(blank)** selected for the field (stored value is Y), and students with reason to be removed from the cohort should have **N-No** displayed for the field (stored value is N).

Associated Documentation and Resources

(Exit Codes have been added to the descriptions below for ease of identification but are not required for documenting a student's withdrawal status.)

[Every Student Succeeds Act](#)

Scenario 1: Student Death

Code Description	Documentation Needed
Student Death Exit Code = W35	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Signed letter from school principal stating that student has died, including date of death OR <ul style="list-style-type: none">Death Certificate OR <ul style="list-style-type: none">Obituary notice in a newspaper or on a funeral home site

Scenario 2: Student Emigration

Code Description	Documentation Needed
<p>Student Émigré (include here students from active or reserve military families transferring without a records request received by time of accountability calculation and foreign exchange students returning to home country prior to graduation)</p> <p>Exit Code = W43 or W22</p>	<p>For students transferring out of the United States, a letter from a school official (e.g., a school administrator, guidance counselor, MLP/ML staff person, social worker, etc.) with personal knowledge of the family’s situation can be used to confirm the transfer; this can be documentation of a conversation with the family regarding the move. <i>This letter must be signed by the school official and dated.</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: In 25-26 school year or later, use of W43 Exit Code indicates “Out of Country.” The ESSA definition of the United States is “each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, any other territory or possession of the United States.” (20 USC 7943: Definitions)</i></p> <p><i>Please note that students moving to any of the territories listed above would not be considered eligible for the W43 code.</i></p>

Scenario 3: Student Transfers

Code Description	Documentation Needed
<p>Student transferring to another public school, within South Carolina.</p> <p>Exit Code = W22 or W34</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for Transcript from the school with entrance date. Alternatively, if the transcript request has been lost, school staff may access the SCDE Report Portal and use the Student Locator BI report to document in which public school the student enrolled.
<p>Student transferring to private school within South Carolina</p> <p>Exit Code = W22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for Transcript from the school with entrance date. If a foster child, document from the SC Department of Social Services or other agency having custody of the foster child.
<p>Student entering home schooling.</p> <p>Exit Code = W25</p>	<p>For students withdrawing to homeschools <i>after</i> December 13, 2022, state law requires the following. Documentation must be available for audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A copy of the district board of trustee’s written approval of the home schooling program; this must be from the same district in which the students reside. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A document from the South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools that the student was in membership. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A document from an association for home schools which has no fewer than fifty members and meets SC homeschooling requirements that the student was in membership. <p>For a foster child, document from the SC Department of Social Services or other agency having custody of the foster child.</p>

<p>Student has been adjudicated and transferred to <i>diploma</i> program at the SC Department of Juvenile Justice (DHH) or SC Department of Corrections (DOC).</p> <p>The student must be serving their sentence at the facility, not awaiting adjudication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official transcript/records request from DJJ or DOC which includes verification of enrollment in diploma granting program and date of enrollment. Date on records request may be used as enrollment date. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter/email from correctional facility administrator confirming that student enrolled in a diploma granting program in the correctional facility and the date enrolled.
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Appendix B

Identifying Student Categories

Students identified for inclusion only in district report card calculations

Students remain in the cohort, but are excluded from school report cards and included in district report cards.

Student Category	How Category is Identified
Local district provides education services to students in a group home. Students do not attend a public school	Location: Special Programs table in PowerSchool. GHO-3FD-Full-time at Facility-District Provides Ed Svc Student is served in a group home or other group care facility and is receiving all educational services at the facility with public school district providing.
Local district provides education services to students in a residential treatment facility. Students do not attend a public school.	Location: Special Programs table in PowerSchool RTF-3FD Full Time at Facility - District Provides Educational Services. Student is served in a residential treatment facility and is receiving all educational services at the facility with public school district providing educational services.
Students are awaiting adjudication and a district is providing educational services to those students in a local detention center.	Location: Special Programs table in PowerSchool. LAD-Served in Local Adult Detention Cntr or LJD- Served in Local Juvnl Detention Cntr

Appendix C

Identifying a Legitimate School

As defined by the US Department of Education (US ED) in the 2010 edition of the Digest of Educational Statistics, a school is “a division of the school system consisting of students in one or more grades or other identifiable groups and organized to give instruction of a defined type. One school may share a building with another school, or one school may be housed in several buildings.”

The key point in this definition is “to give instruction of a defined type.” There must be instruction; it can be online or in a classroom. Merely administering a test and awarding credit based on that test score is *not* giving instruction. Also, a school awarding a diploma solely on the basis of “life experience” or a test score would not fit the US ED definition.

When a school appears to be a “real” school, but you are still unsure, determine a school’s legitimacy by verifying that the school is accredited by an accrediting entity accepted by higher education.

The U.S. Secretary of Education (Secretary) is required by statute to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that the Secretary determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of education or training provided by the institutions of higher education and the higher education programs they accredit.

Search for schools and accreditation agencies in the [Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs \(DAPIP\)](#).

Although this federal list is for postsecondary accreditation, most agencies (such as Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/Cognia which accredits public schools in South Carolina) also accredit high schools and we think that use of this list to ascertain the validity of a high school will meet Federal standards.

When reviewing school information to determine its legitimacy, care must be taken to closely examine the name of any listed accreditation agency. Unscrupulous “schools” may list the name of an accreditation agency with the same acronym as a legitimate association, but the actual agency name differs from the “real” accreditation agency.

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) provides information on private school accreditation and links to recognized state accrediting agencies and accredited schools.

Private Schools in South Carolina

A directory export of private schools is available on the [SCDE website's School Directory](#) page. On the **School Directory** page, click on the **Private Schools** tab. Click the link for **Private Schools Listing** to download the file. Keep in mind that not every private school responds to the survey.

Appendix D

State and Local Detention Facilities

Juveniles Held in County, Municipal, and Regionally Operated Detention Facilities

Per [S.C. Code § 63-19-360\(5\)](#),

County, municipal, and regionally operated facilities shall provide these services to all preadjudicatory juveniles under the jurisdiction of the family court and all pretrial juveniles awaiting general sessions court who are detained locally for more than forty-eight hours, excluding weekends and state holidays, by contracting with the Department of Juvenile Justice or by arranging the services through the local school district in which the facility is located. It shall be the responsibility of the school district where a local detention center which has been approved to detain juveniles is located to provide adequate teaching staff and to ensure compliance with the educational requirements of this State. Students housed in approved local detention centers are to be included in the average daily membership count of students for that district and reimbursement by the Department of Education shall be made accordingly. Services which are arranged locally must be approved by the Department of Juvenile Justice as meeting all criteria developed under the authority of Section 63-19-380. Special needs students who are detained locally shall have all services required by federal and state laws and regulations;

Municipalities can arrange with local school districts to educate students in detention centers awaiting trial. These students count towards that district's membership for funding and appear in PowerSchool, receiving all educational services through the district at the facility. **The codes LJD and LAD identify these students.**

Students awaiting trial are included in the four-year cohort graduation rate file of their last attended school.

Students Housed in the Department of Juvenile Justice (SC DJJ)

(Revised from 2025 cohort progression manual.)

The Federal guideline that a student awaiting trial remains in the cohort file at the last school attended has been difficult for schools to meet due to privacy laws limiting the information that can be released about juveniles.

In lieu of attempting to obtain that information, you may use the DJJ facility in which the student resides to identify students awaiting trial. If you receive a “Request for Records” from Camp Aspen, Beaufort Marine Institute (BMI), Georgetown Marine Institute (GMI), Gateways, Camp Bennettsville, Piedmont Wilderness Institute, Camp Sandhills, Camp White Pines or BRRC long term (Broad River Road Complex) you may remove that student as a transfer out of the cohort.

With a “Request for Records” from any other DJJ school/facility, a student can be considered as awaiting trial. For students receiving a regular high school diploma while awaiting trial, code the diploma earned and the date diploma awarded data elements in PowerSchool. Student transcripts may be requested by contacting transcripts@djj.sc.gov

Current DJJ Facilities:

The Juvenile Detention Center Complex and Upstate Evaluation Center serve males who are being evaluated or serving short-term commitments, Coastal Evaluation Center serves females for both evaluation and commitment. BRRC (Broad River Road Complex) serves males who are being evaluated (BRRC eval) or with long-term commitments (BRRC long term). Due to privacy laws, individual student status of evaluation or commitment is not available from DJJ.

There are also eight alternative placement facilities where students serve their commitment. Camp Aspen, Beaufort Marine Institute (BMI), Georgetown Marine Institute (GMI), Gateways, Camp Bennettsville, Piedmont Wilderness Institute, Camp Sandhills, and Camp White Pines.

Please note that three centers have recently been renamed. Revised names are Upstate Evaluation and Development Center for the Upstate Evaluation Center, Coastal Evaluation and Development Center for the Coastal Evaluation Center, and Midlands Evaluation and Development Center for the Broad River Road Complex.