SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Policies and Procedures for the Collection of School Dropout Data

Office of Student Support

2025-2026 Data Collection

July 2026

South Carolina Department of Education

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Section 1: Definitions of Terms

A. Dropout

The State Board of Education defines *dropout* as a student who leaves school for any reason, other than death, prior to graduation or completion of a course of studies and without transferring to another school or institution.

Although this document provides a listing of the various categories of "school leavers" in the next section, the following criteria clarify and expand the above definition by designating a dropout as an individual who

- was enrolled in school during the previous school year but did not reenroll at the beginning of the current school year.
- was enrolled in school during the previous school year and dropped out, reenrolled at the beginning of the current school year, but left prior to October 1; *
- leaves an elementary or secondary school and enrolls in adult education or a program preparing for the GED (General Educational Development) exam; ** or
- is not temporarily absent due to suspension, long-term illness, or other emergency.

  **If October 1 falls on a Saturday, report membership on September 30. If October 1 falls on a Sunday, report membership on October 2.
  **The exception is the case in which the public school system monitors the student's enrollment and reports the student as a dropout if he or she drops out of the program.

B. School Year

For the purposes of tabulating school dropouts, the term "school year" refers to the twelve-month period that begins October 1 and ends September 30. Thus, it includes the summer. Please note, however, that students who re-enroll in school after having dropped out during the previous school year and who leave prior to October 1 of the current school year will be counted in the twelve-month collection cycle. This means, for example, that a student who dropped out of school in March of 2026, then returned in August of 2026, but dropped out again on September 21, 2026, will be reported as a dropout in the 2025–26 count.

C. Grade Level

Dropout data should be reported for grade levels seven through twelve. Dropouts should be counted in the grade for which they fail to enroll in the fall. For example, a student who drops out without completing the ninth grade and does not return after the summer is a

ninth-grade dropout. A student who completes the ninth grade and is expected to enroll in the tenth grade but does not enroll after the summer ends is a tenth-grade dropout.

Ungraded students should be assigned a nominal grade level. To determine nominal grade level, subtract five from the student's age on October 1 of the current school year. For example, a fifteen-year-old's nominal grade level is grade ten. All ungraded students over the age of seventeen should be reported as being in the twelfth grade.

Twelfth-grade dropouts should be computed by totaling the number of students who have not graduated during the regular or summer school terms and have not reenrolled for the current school year.

D. Ethnicity/Race Categories

Ethnicity Category	Ethnicity Description
Hispanic/Latino:	a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
Race Categories	
White (not of Hispanic origin):	a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
Black or African American (not of Hispanic origin):	a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
Asian American:	a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or the Pacific Islands.
American Indian or Alaska Native:	a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Section 2: All "School Leavers"

A. Types of "School Leavers"

It is essential to distinguish between students who actually drop out of school and students who leave school for legitimate reasons. The following chart delineates the specific status of each type of "school leaver" and specifies whether such a student either should or should not be designated as a dropout.

The student who	Should this student be counted as a dropout?	PowerSchool Dropout Reason Code
1. graduates	NO	Not Applicable
2. enters an educational program that provides an alternative certification to a high school diploma such as adult education or a GED program that does not track students or report dropouts to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)	YES	23
3. leaves an elementary or secondary school and enrolls in an adult education or GED program during the 2023–24, 2024–25 or 2025–26 school year and has obtained a completion credential (i.e., a state high school diploma or a GED diploma) by October 1, 2026	NO	Not Applicable
4. leaves an elementary or secondary school and enrolls in an adult education or GED program during the 2025–26 school year and has not obtained a completion credential (i.e., a state high school diploma or a GED diploma) by October 1, 2026* *The exception is the case in which the public school system monitors the student's enrollment and reports the student as a dropout if he or she drops out of the program. (See instructions on pages 7 –8.)	YES	38
5. has a state high school certificate or a special education certificate or South Carolina High School Credential and is		

The student who	Should this student be counted as a dropout?	PowerSchool Dropout Reason Code
• a student with a disability who has completed the requirements of an IEP (individualized education program),	NO	Not Applicable
• a severely disabled student who has reached the age of twenty-one, or	NO	Not Applicable
• a severely disabled student who has entered a residential or day care facility	NO	Not Applicable
6. was in membership only during the summer term following the prior school year (i.e., was not in membership during the prior regular school year)	NO	Not Applicable
7. has reached the age of twenty-one without having graduated from high school or completed an approved program	YES	38
8. has been emancipated by the courts but has not graduated from high school and is not currently enrolled	YES	41
9. is deceased	NO	Not Applicable
10. has not reenrolled for the current school year and whose educational status was unknown as of October 1 of the current school year	YES	20
11. has moved out of district or the state to another district or state and is not known to have enrolled in another school	YES	20
12. has moved out of the United States and whose enrollment status is unknown	NO	Not Applicable
13. transfers to and has membership in		
• another public school, in or out of state, or	NO	Not Applicable
• a private school, in or out of state	NO	Not Applicable

The student who	Should this student be counted as a dropout?	PowerSchool Dropout Reason Code
14. transfers to an institution that does not offer an educational program leading to a high school diploma or alternative certification (i.e., military service, proprietary or trade schools, hospitals, rehabilitative facilities, adult correctional facilities) **Note:** Palmetto Unified School District is not one of these institutions.	YES	27, 30, 32, or 43
15. is residing in the district but is not attending school because of temporary or long-term illness	NO	Not Applicable
16. is residing in the district but is not attending school because of disciplinary action:	NO	Not Applicable
• he or she has been suspended or expelled and given the option to return but the disciplinary period is still in effect or		
• he or she was suspended and given the option to return but has not returned even though the disciplinary period has ended	YES	42
17. is residing in the district but is not attending school because of disciplinary action:		
• he or she was suspended or expelled and has transferred to another district or	NO	Not Applicable
• he or she has been expelled with no option to return	YES	33
18. has transferred to an institution that does provide a state- or district-approved educational program leading to a high school diploma or alternative certification (e.g., youth correctional institutions, technical colleges, special state schools or districts, homebound instruction, homeschooling)	NO	Not Applicable

The student who	Should this student be counted as a dropout?	PowerSchool Dropout Reason Code
19. has enrolled in a full-time higher education program without having been awarded a high school diploma	NO	Not Applicable
20. has not reenrolled in school but is expected to return late because of extenuating circumstances (e.g., seasonal, or migratory work)	NO	Not Applicable

B. Updating Records

The status of the "leaver" may change over time. For example, a dropout might reenter school during the school year, or a school might receive a transcript request from another school or institution. It is important to update your records as soon as a student's status changes.

C. Collection Cycle/Data Collection Timeline

Every district must submit all completed dropout data from POWERSCHOOL during the SCDE's first quarterly data-collection upload period.

Date	Actions
September 4–23, 2026 at 9:00 am	Early Dropout Data Validation
October 1– November 6, 2026, at 9:00 am **Your school district's 45th day**	Deadline for Dropout Data Submission
November 16–25, 2026, at 5:00 pm	Early Validation Correction and Review period for PowerSchool/Adult Education Dropout Data
December 1, 2026–December 15, 2026, at 9:00 am	Deadline for Final Submission of PowerSchool/Adult Education Dropout Data
December 18, 2026	Deadline for Dropout Data Verification Form Submission

Section 3: Procedures for Verifying Student Status

A. Verification through Formal Notice

- Request a transcript or other written documentation from the receiving school to verify that a student has transferred. The date your school receives the documentation should be recorded, along with the address of the school to which the student has transferred.
- It is not necessary for you to verify that the student is attending the new school after you receive a transcript or other written documentation.
- A student is a transfer only if he or she is moving to a public or private school or a state- or district-approved educational program—including home school— that leads to a high school diploma or alternative certification.
- Procedures such as exit interviews would also constitute verification of student status.

B. Verification by a Responsible Adult

- Any notification from a responsible adult will verify a student's status. "Responsible adults" include parents or guardians, school officials, and any other adult with responsibility for the student (e.g., attendance supervisor, social worker, medical doctor, corrections official).
- If an inappropriate adult or student reports that a student has dropped out of school, such a statement does not constitute verification.

C. School Records of Verification

- It is important that each school keep records that document the verification of a student's status. Since a student who drops out during a particular school year is not reported as a dropout until the fall of the following school year, careful records must be maintained so that an accurate count can be obtained.
- It is best, therefore, to seek a written form of verification, such as a copy of the transcript or a letter from the parent or guardian.

Section 4: Reporting Dropout Data

A. School Dropout Data Report

Each school that serves any combination of grades seven through twelve must submit dropout data, even if it has no dropouts to report.

B. District Dropout Data

Every district using PowerSchool must submit data by the SCDE's first quarterly data-collection upload period. If there were no dropouts at your school during the period from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, please indicate that fact on the form provided. E-mail the form no later than November 6, 2026, to dropoutprev@ed.sc.gov

Ensure that the following fields are completed for each student:

- student's grade level
- student's full legal name
- student's number
- student's SUNS (State ID) number
- student's ethnicity
- student's gender
- student's date of birth
- student's Pupil in poverty indicator
- student's English proficiency
- student's migrant status
- homeless
- EFA codes
- exit code
- dropout reason code
- dropout date

C. District Adult Education Dropout Data Report

Every school district must report students who have dropped out of an adult education program and are *no longer in the PowerSchool system*:

— Students who dropped out of an adult education program between October 1, 2025, and September 30, 2026, must be reported utilizing the PowerSchool system.

— Students who were enrolled in an adult education program and were being tracked by a district during the 2025–26 school year must be coded in PowerSchool as either W38 (Adult Education Diploma Tracking) or W40 (Adult Education GED Tracking).

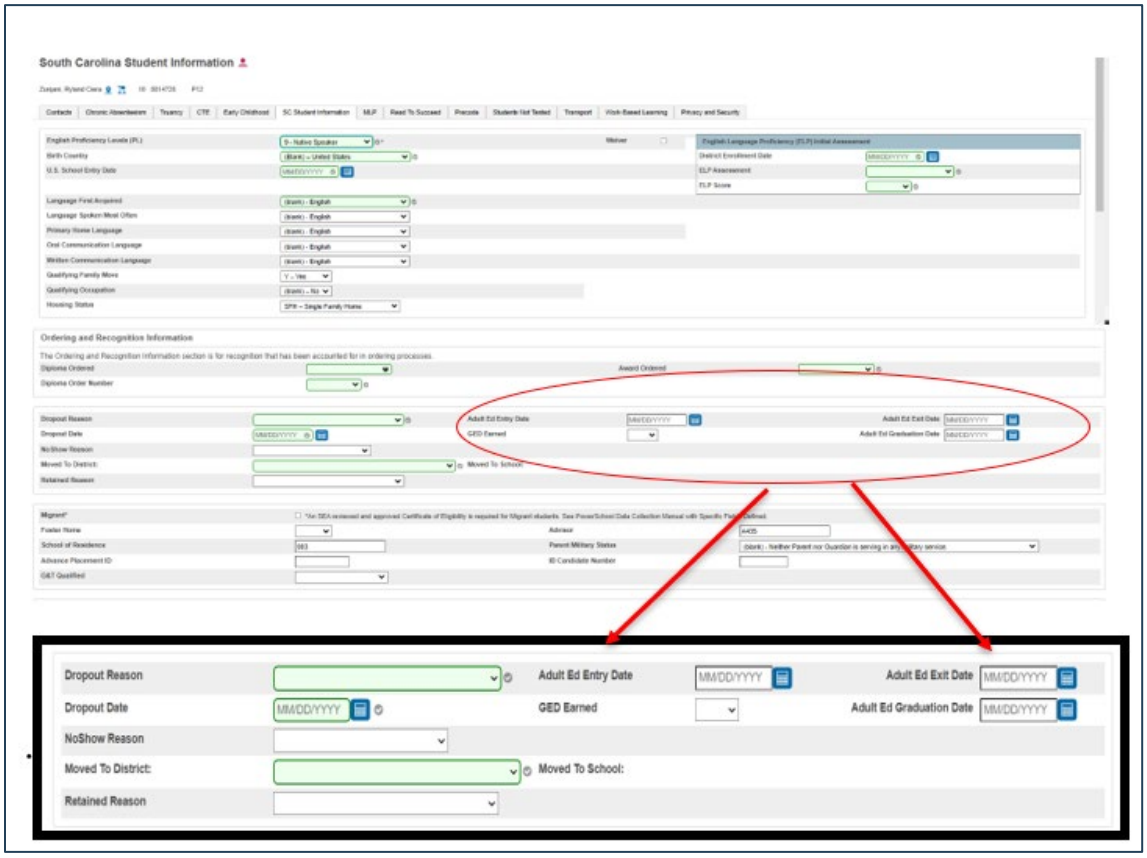
- Students who have earned an Adult Education Diploma or GED will not be considered an dropout. However, the school should update the GED Earned field and the Adult Education Diploma field in PowerSchool.
- Students who were tracked during the 2024-2025 school year should be coded in PowerSchool. (Please note that the online tool is no longer available for this process. All data will be reported utilizing the PowerSchool system.)

Please follow the instructions below to ensure that the students are correctly coded:

- Run a PowerSchool query to identify the students coded with the W38 (Adult Education Diploma Tracking) and W40 (Adult Education GED Tracking) during the 2024-25 school term.
- Enter the dropout reason code and a dropout date and then the Adult Education entry date and exit date in the appropriate field on the South Carolina Student Information page (see the graphic below).

NOTE: The dropout date must fall between October 1, 2025–September 30, 2026.

Figure 1: *Selecting the Adult Education entry and exit data in PowerSchool*



Note: Students who have earned their high school diploma or GED in the Adult Education program can be moved to the Graduate School in PowerSchool (school code '999) at some point after the dropout data collection process is completed for the current collection.

D. Dropout Data Collection Coding

School districts can use the following two methods in PowerSchool to identify a student who is determined to be a dropout:

- Select the exit code W36 (Dropout) in the transfer-student-out page and then enter a dropout reason code and a dropout date in the South Carolina Additional Student Information page.
- Simply enter the dropout reason code and a dropout date in the South Carolina Additional Student Information page. If none of the dropout reason choices seems to be appropriate, then select "Status Unknown."

Students identified as dropouts for the 2025–26 school year will be extracted by *these two methods only*.

E. Dropout Scenarios

The dropout reason field will be used as the "trigger" for identifying the dropouts in the following three basic scenarios:

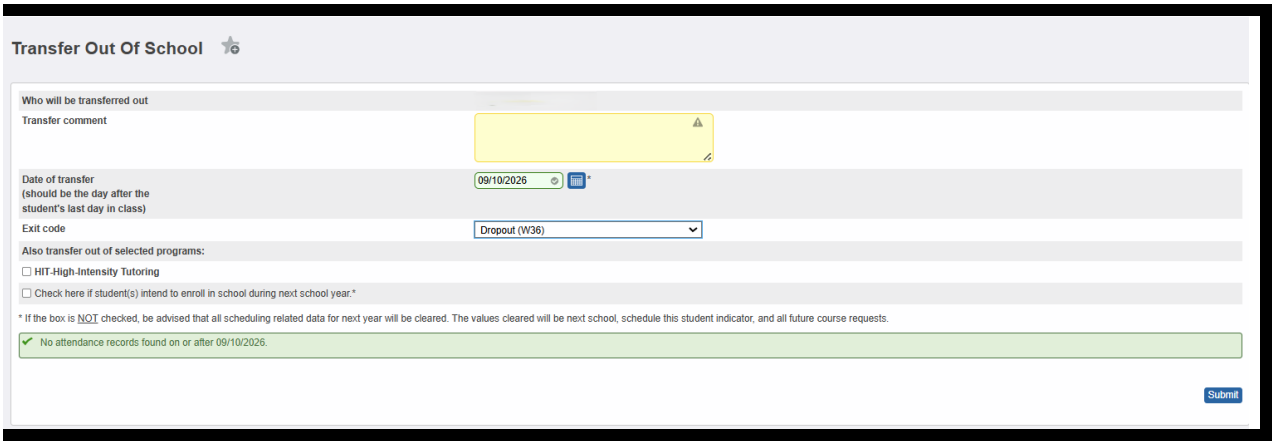
- A student withdrew prior to the end of the 2025–26 school year and has been identified as a dropout. The dropout reason and dropout date fields must be populated in the 2025–26 South Carolina Additional Student Information page.
- A student finished the 2025–26 school year, may or may not have been promoted to the next grade/school, but did not return in the 2026–27 school year and has been "no showed." The dropout reason and dropout date fields must be populated in the South Carolina Additional Student Information page.

  Note: Not all "no shows" are dropouts.
- A student started the 2026–27 school year, then withdrew prior to October 1, and has been identified as a dropout. The dropout reason and dropout date fields must be populated in the South Carolina Additional Student Information page.

In all three scenarios, we will be relying on the dropout reason and dropout date fields to identify students who have been coded as dropouts. If you assign the withdrawal code W36 to a student, please be sure to populate the dropout reason and dropout date fields as well.

F. Selecting the Exit Code W36 (Dropout) in PowerSchool

Figure 2. *Selecting the Exit Code W36 (Dropout) in PowerSchool*



G. Locating the Dropout Reason and Dropout Date in PowerSchool

Figure 3. *Dropout Reason and Dropout Date in PowerSchool*

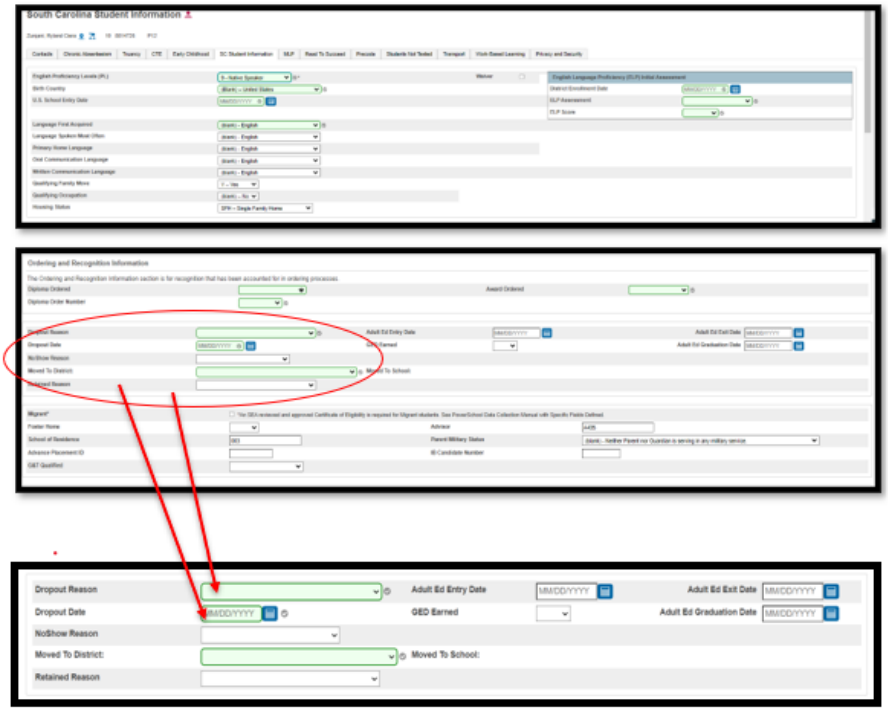
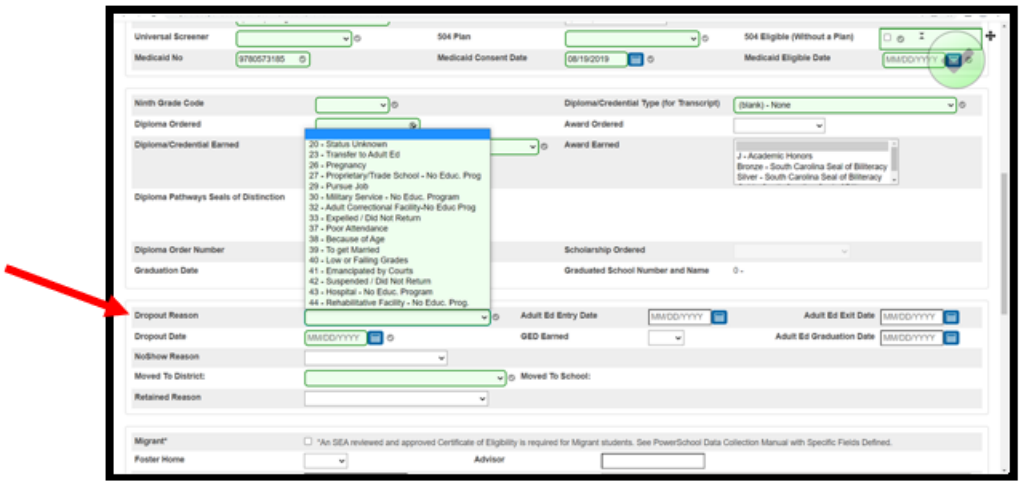


Figure 4. *Selecting the Dropout Reason in PowerSchool*



The SCDE will extract the dropout data from the school districts' September data upload for review only. Please note that the dropout data will be extracted again at your district's 45th day.

H. Getting Follow-Up Assistance

Questions about dropout data-collection policies and procedures or requests for assistance should be directed to the Dropout Prevention and Retrieval Team at 803-734-3057 or dropoutprev@ed.sc.gov. Questions about PowerSchool and the quarterly data collection should be directed to PowerSchool at Powerschool@ed.sc.gov.

Appendix: Schools Having No Dropouts

Name of school district: _____

Name of district superintendent: _____
(Please type or print.)

Signature of district superintendent: _____

Please list all schools in your district serving grades seven through twelve that had no dropouts during the 2025–26 school year.

Deadline: November 6, 2026