



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
District Accountability Coordinators

FROM: Daniel Ralyea
Director, Office of Research and Data Analysis

Jewell Stanley
Director, Office of State and Federal Accountability

DATE: April 16, 2024

RE: Revisions to the Four-year Cohort Graduation Rate Process

Beginning in the Spring of 2024, the four-year cohort graduation rate process is being brought into PowerSchool. Schools will identify their students to be included in the four-year cohort, and the graduate status of each identified student will be taken directly from PowerSchool records.

Cohort students will be flagged using the *Graduation Rate Worksheet* page in PowerSchool. This worksheet is currently undergoing revision, and once revisions are complete, the name of the worksheet will be the *Cohort Maintenance Worksheet* to identify its use not only for the four-year cohort but in identifying each high school cohort needed for accountability calculations. Although text on the worksheet may change after identifying a cohort student, the “include in denominator” flag will not be impacted by the change in text.

It is anticipated that additional changes to PowerSchool may be necessary in the future to more clearly identify those students who leave prior to graduation. Documentation requirements will be set and managed by Title I after this transition year and may also change.

During this transition year, the Office of Research and Data Analysis and the Office of Federal and State Accountability welcome input from schools and districts on what additional revisions to PowerSchool would be useful to streamline the four-year graduation rate process.

CHANGES FOR THE 2024 COHORT FILE AND GRADUATION RATE

Replacing Enrich Grad Rate Portal with PowerSchool. Rather than using the Enrich grad rate portal, the four-year cohort graduation rate students will be identified in PowerSchool. The *Graduation Rate/Cohort Maintenance Worksheet* within PowerSchool will be used to identify students with the appropriate documentation and who meet the criteria to be included in the 2024 four-year graduation rate cohort. There is no need to provide a Status Code for each student in the cohort, as has been done in previous years. Instructions for using the worksheet are available in the document *Cohort Maintenance Worksheet in PowerSchool* and available here: <https://ed.sc.gov/data/information-systems/power-school/sis-documents/>.

As in past years, the Office of Research and Data Analysis will prepare a Base file of students who appear to meet the criteria for inclusion in the four-year cohort. This file will be uploaded to the Advanced Data Transfer (ADT) system for schools to use as a reference document. Schools may want to compare the list of students identified by the agency to their list of cohort students. Schools also have the option of uploading the Base file to the Worksheet for mass identification of cohort students. A History file will also be available on ADT for reference. Both files are optional for the identification of four-year cohort students. ORDA will use *Diploma Earned* = “F” or “Z” and *Graduation Date* = Date prior to August 19, 2024, from PowerSchool to identify the on-time graduates from the students flagged as members of the 2024 four-year graduation cohort.

Statewide Cut-Off Date for this year’s graduates. Rather than including in the numerator those students who graduate before the 2024-25 school year begins in individual districts, there will be a state-wide graduation cutoff date of the **third Monday in August** (August 19, 2024). The final PowerSchool extraction that will be used for the calculation of the 2024 four-year cohort graduation rate will be as of August 23, 2024. This means all PowerSchool data for graduates must be published to the Ed-Fi API prior to August 23, 2024.

Adult Education Graduates. The Office of Adult Education now provides quarterly files on students receiving their high school diploma through Adult Education programs. This allows school staff to enter *Diploma Earned* and *Date Diploma Earned* into PowerSchool during the school year.

TIMELINE OF THE 2024 PROCESS

1. Using the Graduation Rate/Cohort Maintenance Worksheet in PowerSchool allows schools to identify cohort students throughout the year rather than waiting until the end of the school term. Documentation must be available per US Department of Education (USED) guidelines

to flag a student for removal from the graduation rate calculations. This documentation must be stored in the school or district for four years and available for Title 1 auditing purposes. Digitized documents are acceptable.

2. April 8, 2024 – Graduation rate cohort BASE and HISTORY files uploaded to ADT. The BASE file lists those students who appear to meet the criteria to be included in the four-year graduation rate cohort. The HISTORY file lists students meeting the criteria who have been enrolled in your school at any time in the 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, or 2023-24 school years. Both files are for information purposes only, but the BASE file may be uploaded to the Worksheet for a mass update if necessary.
3. July – The Office of Adult Education provides a list of fourth-quarter diploma earners.
4. August 23, 2024 – Final extraction from PowerSchool to create a file for graduation rate calculations. All PowerSchool data for graduates must be published to the Ed-Fi API prior to August 23, 2024.

Questions about the appropriate documentation of students for inclusion in the four-year cohort may be submitted to GradRate@ed.sc.gov.

Questions about the PowerSchool process for identifying students to be included in the four-year cohort may be submitted to powerschool@ed.sc.gov.