

2022-23 Graduation Cohort Process

Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated December 14, 2022

This document aims to address common questions that arise during the graduation cohort process, especially during Phase I, in which districts shall submit required documentation and make changes in EIS. For details on using the Cohort application and timelines, please reference the [2022-23 Graduation Cohort Protocol](#).

1. How will the U.S. Department of Education's monitoring findings impact the graduation rate calculation?

- The department is currently working with the United States Department of Education (USED) to determine possible cohort adjustments that may impact federally reported graduate rates as a result of the USED monitoring findings.
- Any adjustments made will only impact the calculation of the federally reported graduation rate and will **NOT** impact how diplomas are conferred to students. Diplomas will continue to be conferred to students in accordance with, Tennessee State Board of Education rules and policies.
- The department will implement an additional data verification process in spring 2023 for districts to identify students who may be impacted by the adjustments. More information will follow, pending USED approval of the state's ESSA amendment.

2. What are the key dates in the 2022-23 Graduation Cohort process?

The Cohort process involves four phases; the key dates for each phase are summarized below:

- **Phase I tasks shall be completed by 5 p.m. CST on June 30, 2023**, including (1) updating withdrawal codes, (2) entering completion information, and (3) submitting Cohort Change requests (consult [Cohort Change Request Instructions](#) for more detail on tasks and timeline). In addition to entering and updating information in EIS, districts shall also provide acceptable documentation by the specified deadline.
- **Phase II tasks shall be completed by 5 p.m. CST on August 11, 2023**, including (1) entering completion information for summer graduates; (2) submitting 60-day appeals; and (3) submitting appeals ONLY to records that were submitted in Phase I. Appeals will only be considered to correct information when the issue is not due to district error or incomplete submission.
- **Phase III tasks shall be completed by 5 p.m. CST on September 15, 2023**, including (1) submitting appeals Only to summer graduates whose completion status were updated in Phase II, (2) submitting appeals ONLY for receiving students as a result of the 60 Day appeal process, and (3) reviewing preliminary graduation rate data. Appeals will only be considered to correct information when the issue is not due to district error or incomplete submission.
- **Phase IV** is the final stage of the cohort process when the finalized data are updated on the Cohort application on September 25 for district review before graduation data are released on the [Data Downloads](#) on September 28.

During each phase, there is a district submission timeline, a department review timeline, and a district review timeline. Please consult Table 1 of the [cohort protocol](#) for detailed tasks and timeline by phase.

3. Why may changes made in EIS not be reflected in the Cohort application?

The department updates the Cohort application data nightly during Phase I. Districts must enter or update completion information in EIS and wait until the correction loads (the next day) in the Cohort application before uploading documentation. The last date for districts to enter and update completion data in EIS is by **5 p.m. CST on June 14, 2023**, and the last date for districts to upload the required completion documentation to the Cohort application is **by**

5 p.m. CST on June 15, 2023. Details about each phase of the cohort process and the action steps during each phase are available in the [2023 Graduation Cohort Protocol](#).

During Phase II, the department will allow completion information updates for summer graduates only. Please note that completion information for summer graduates does not update automatically and will be reflected within one week of the changes in your district's student information system. To make sure the data in EIS are accurately reflected in the Cohort application, please ensure that the changes were made on the correct screen(s) for the correct field(s) for the correct student(s) in your Student Information System (SIS) or the Enhanced Data Entry screen well before June 16, 2023 deadline.

Please note that only EIS changes made during Phase I will automatically be updated in the Cohort application. It is the district's responsibility to ensure the Cohort application has been updated with all changes reported to EIS before the close of Phase I. Please check regularly to ensure all changes are accurately reflected in the Cohort application.

4. What should a district do if the cohort has a student with multiple state IDs or two students with the same student ID?

These cases can arise when students transfer between districts or because of atypical enrollment situations. To reconcile these records, please contact the Help Desk at DT.Support@tn.gov. Once the duplicated ID has been merged, use the [Change Request Worksheet](#) to submit the ID to TNEd.Graduates@tn.gov for exclusion. Specific directions for this process, including submission dates and timeline, are in the [Change Request Instructions](#). The process for merging student IDs is not complete until the cohort change request is submitted and processed by the department.

5. What should a district do if a "year entered grade 9" is listed incorrectly in the Cohort application?

The USED requires that the cohort is composed based on the year the student **first entered grade 9**. In the event that the "year entered grade 9" is listed incorrectly, the district must provide a transcript documenting that the actual year the student entered grade 9 was prior to the year reported in the Cohort application. However, if the student was not properly included in the prior year's graduation rate, the request may be denied. Districts can use the [Change Request Worksheet](#) to submit these changes to TNEd.Graduates@tn.gov. Specific directions for this process are in the [Change Request Instructions](#).

6. What action should be taken by districts having documentation that a student transferred to another school/district, but there is no subsequent enrollment in EIS?

For a student to be removed from the cohort, the student must be reported in EIS by the receiving school. Students with withdrawal codes of 03 and 04—indicating a transfer to another Tennessee district or school—who do not have a subsequent enrollment, will be flagged in the Cohort application. The student will remain in the district cohort unless proper action is taken. The district must work with the receiving school to have the student's subsequent enrollment reported in EIS **by 5 p.m. CST on June 15, 2023**, and appropriate documentation shall be uploaded on the Cohort application **by 5 p.m. CST on June 16, 2023**. If this does not occur, the student cannot be automatically removed from the cohort. For this reason, the department encourages districts to check periodically and follow up with the receiving school if the subsequent enrollment is not reflected in EIS.

7. How should I update EIS to reflect a student who was placed in jail or the custody of the Department of Children's Services (DCS)?

Withdrawal code 2 should be used **only** if the student transfers to a DCS-approved school¹ or a state-approved institution that offers an education program culminating in a regular high school diploma. Districts must submit documentation that the student is receiving educational services resulting in a regular high school diploma. **If the documentation does not support that the student was receiving educational services while at the DCS or state-**

¹ Please contact [TN Department of children's Service](#) for more information about DCS approved school or institution.

approved institution, the request will be denied.

Withdrawal code 2 is **not** to be used for students placed in jail or prison where no education program culminating in a regular high school diploma is offered. Withdrawal code 11 should be used for students withdrawn under court order or other government placement, such as jail or prison.

8. How should I update EIS to document early graduates?

For an early graduate to be properly documented in the cohort, districts must accurately report in EIS **all the following three components** in their SIS **by 5 p.m. CST on June 15 AND** upload acceptable documentation on the Cohort application **by 5 p.m. CST on June 16.**

1. The withdrawal code for the early graduate should be 12,
2. The listed graduation date should be before spring graduation, and
3. The completion type should represent one of the following regular high school diploma codes:
 - a. 1 - Regular diploma
 - b. 11 - Foreign language waiver
 - c. 12 - Art waiver
 - d. 13 - Foreign language and art waiver

9. How should I document an exchange student in the cohort who will not receive a diploma?

Students enrolled in a student exchange program who will not receive a diploma should be withdrawn using code 05 as an out-of-state transfer. For an explanation of required documentation by withdrawal code, please refer to Section 3.2 of the [2022-23 Graduation Cohort Protocol](#).

10. Why does the department require accurate information regarding student subgroup inclusion, and what should districts do if subgroup information is inaccurate?

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to calculate and report disaggregated subgroup graduation rates. At a minimum, every student must be included in a race/ethnicity subgroup. Where appropriate, students may also be flagged as Economically Disadvantaged (ED), English Learners (EL), Students with Disabilities (SWD), or Career and Technical Education (CTE). Students should be included in the ED, EL, or SWD subgroup(s) if the student was included in the subgroup at any time since entering high school. For instance, if a student was receiving special education services for two years in high school but was no longer receiving services at the time of graduation, the student must still be flagged for inclusion in the SWD subgroup for the purposes of graduation rate calculations. Please verify student subgroup assignment(s) in the cohort CSV download file.

11. Why does the "Included in Cohort" column show a "P"?

The "P" reflects that the student's inclusion in the cohort is "pending." The code will automatically change to a "Y" to signify that the student **is** included in the cohort, unless required supporting documentation is submitted for pending students **during Phase I** and approved by the department. If the documentation is submitted during phase I and approved by the department, the code will change to "N" to signify that the student **is not** included in the cohort. These decisions and changes to the cohort will be reported during Phase III.

12. Which withdrawal codes require supporting documentation, and how can a district upload these documents?

Districts must upload supporting documentation for students withdrawn using codes 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 17 for school years, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23. Districts can upload required documentation using the **Attach** link feature. For a more comprehensive list of adequate documentation for each applicable withdrawal code, please consult Section 3.2 [2022-23 Graduation Cohort Protocol](#).

13. What should a district do if a student repeated a grade, and the district wants to include the student in a subsequent cohort?

The U.S. Department of Education requires that the cohort is composed based on the year the student **first entered grade 9**. For example, if a student first entered grade 9 in the 2019-20 school year but was retained and repeated grade 9 during the 2020-21 school year, the student must be included in the 2019 cohort, per federal guidelines.

If a student entered grade 8 in 2019-20 but was retained and repeated grade 8 during the 2020-21 school year, the student would first enter grade 9 in 2021-22 and expect to graduate in 2024-25. It is important to note that if this student's EIS enrollment automatically rolled over with the 2020 cohort, district may submit a [Cohort Change request form](#) to correct the student's cohort and complete the [Change Request Worksheet](#) following the [Cohort Change Request Instructions](#).

14. How should a district document a student in EIS who is enrolled at an alternative school but will graduate from their original high school with a regular diploma?

To be counted as a graduate, students must graduate from a regular high school, not an alternative high school, on time and with a regular diploma. According to TCA § 49-6-3402(b): "All course work completed, and credits earned in the alternative schools or alternative programs shall be transferred to and recorded in the student's home school, which shall grant credit earned and progress thereon as if earned in the home school." Three actions are required for this to take effect:

1. The student must be withdrawn from the alternative school on or before the penultimate day of the school year.
2. The student must be enrolled in the regular high school on or before the penultimate day of the school year.
3. The graduation date and completion type must be entered in EIS, and the graduation date must fall within the school's defined calendar in EIS.

15. What action should be taken by a district finding a student who should have been included in a prior year's cohort?

Students who should have been included in a prior year's cohort cannot be removed, per federal law. For example, if a student's first year in grade 9 is 2019 but their enrollment is showing in the 2018 cohort, they must be included in the 2018 cohort. Although the student is not in that cohort, the 2018 cohort rates have been calculated and released and removing the student would leave the student without a cohort, tainting the data quality. Federal law requires students to be included in their **enrolled** first year grade 9 cohort. This is a district enrollment error and should have been changed the previous year. This example also highlights the importance of the cohort data verification process to ensure data quality and accuracy.

16. What action should be taken by a district that finds a student who transferred to homeschool?

Students who have been enrolled in homeschool require a code 10, and a parent must sign the official withdrawal [form](#)² and the form must be uploaded on the Cohort application following the timeline specified in table of the [cohort protocol](#).

² This form may be used for home school students both in Tennessee and other states.

17. Can students participating in the Individualized Education Account (IEA) program be removed from a cohort?

Students who are currently enrolled in the IEA program can be eligible to be removed from a cohort with a cohort change request and sufficient documentation. We would need a current transcript from the non-public school or program that the student has primary enrollment in. An additional transcript from the district would also be helpful to show the IEA enrollment.

18. Would a picture of a student appearing to graduate classify as approved documentation to remove a student from a cohort?

No, documentation must prove the student earned a regular high school diploma. Students could participate in a completion ceremony and receive a certificate that is not a regular high school diploma. A transcript or diploma would be approved documentation.

19. What action should be taken by a district that finds a student who spent less than 60 days in the school or district?

Students who are enrolled less than 60 days in a school or district are eligible to be removed and returned to the school or district in which they were enrolled for the majority of their high school career. These changes will be submitted to TNEd.Graduates@tn.gov during **Phase II only** as an appeal. More information for Phase II appeals process will be released in spring 2023.

20. When can schools and districts submit a cohort change?

Cohort Change requests can only be submitted and processed during **Phase I** as specified in Table 1 of the Cohort Change Request Instructions. Any cohort changes submitted after the Phase I deadline will be automatically denied. Districts must submit a [Cohort Change request form](#) and attach a [cohort change request worksheet](#).

21. Can districts submit and update data for future cohorts?

Starting in 2022-23, districts can submit and update data for not only current cohort (i.e., 2022-23 graduating cohort) but also future cohorts (i.e., 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26 graduating cohorts). Because students may move in and out of schools and districts throughout their high school years, **it is an optional task for districts to update data for future cohorts during the current cycle**. However, districts must make sure all information for 2022-23 graduating cohort is complete and accurate by the end of the 2022-23 graduation cohort process as specified in this document.

22. What completion code should be used for a student who took the HiSet exam?

The HiSet exam is a high school equivalency exam that is an alternate to the GED test. Therefore, students completing the HiSet should be given a completion code of 6.

23. Can a student completing a HiSet exam be withdrawn from the Cohort?

No. Per federal graduation rate guidelines and current Tennessee diploma options, HiSet degrees are not sufficient document for withdrawal from the cohort.