

Massachusetts Department of Education Attendance and Dropout Reporting Guidelines

Attendance:

A student must be at school, or at a school related activity (e.g. field trip) for at least half the school day to be counted as present. For state data collection purposes, student absences are not differentiated as either excused or unexcused. All absences are counted together.

Enrollment:

A student is enrolled in a school if they are attending the school or are receiving services from the school on a full-time basis.

Dropout:

For purposes of reporting data to the Department of Education, a dropout is defined as a student in grade six through twelve who:

1. was enrolled in school at some point during the current school year;
2. is not enrolled on the reporting date;
3. has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved educational program; and
4. does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
 - i. transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program;
 - ii. temporary school-approved absence due to suspension or illness
 - iii. or death.

In reporting October 1 data, any student who was enrolled in your school the prior year, was expected to return for the current year, but has not and does not meet conditions 3 and 4 above, should be reported as a dropout in the October 1 SIMS data.

Investigating and Recording Extended Absences

A school may not remove a non-attending student from the enrollment without **evidence** that the student does not intend to return to school. Each district/school must have a procedure for investigating extended absences and must document reasonable efforts to locate the student and determine the reason for not attending. The procedure should include attempts to contact the parents/guardian by phone, through certified mail, and by a home visit.

The following table lists several possible scenarios and the appropriate reporting codes for each.

Scenarios	Reporting Outcome	
	Grade K - 5	Grade 6 - 12
1. The student is out for an <u>excused</u> absence for an extended period of time (e.g. verified medical reason).	➤ The student should be recorded as absent.	➤ The student should be recorded as absent.
2. The student is truant (unexcused absence).	➤ The student should be recorded as absent. The absence should be investigated as outlined above.	➤ The student should be recorded as absent. The absence should be investigated as outlined above. ➤ If the student does not return by the end of the school year and has had an extended period of consecutive absences, he/she should be reported as a dropout.
3. The student has transferred to another school (may be demonstrated through a transcript request from the receiving	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.

school or documentation of notice of transfer from the parent or guardian.)		
4. The student has dropped out of school.	➤ Not applicable.	➤ The student should be reported as a dropout. If the student is younger than 16 years old, the student should be treated as a truant (but reported as a dropout to the DOE).
5. The student has moved to another district or state, but it is not known if they have enrolled in school.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.	➤ The student should be reported as a dropout. If he/she returns to school, or the school receives documentation that the student is enrolled somewhere else after the reporting date, the status should be corrected or updated in the next data transmission.
6. The student has moved out of the United States, and it is unknown whether the student has enrolled in school.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.
7. Student is placed in a DYS or DSS facility	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer for the end-of-year 2003 data. Starting with the 10/01/03 data, the student should be reported as being sent to a DYS/DSS facility.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer for the end-of-year 2003 data. Starting with the 10/01/03 data, the student should be reported as being sent to a DYS/DSS facility.
8. Student is enrolled in a GED program	➤ N/A	➤ The student should be reported as a dropout unless the elementary/secondary school system remains responsible for the student (and the student continues to be reported in SIMS).
9. Student is incarcerated	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer, unless the student is eligible for special education services.*	➤ The student should be reported as a dropout, unless the student is eligible for special education services.*

* If student eligible for special education services is incarcerated, the student should be reported as enrolled for the end-of-year 2003 data. Starting with the 10/01/03 data, the student should be reported as being sent to a correctional facility, with related services only provided (see SIMS documentation for specific reporting codes).

Alternative School/Program

Students who remain enrolled in the district, in an alternative school or program, are not considered dropouts. They should be reported as enrolled in the district's SIMS data.

Adult Education

In most cases, students who leave the public elementary/secondary school and enroll in adult education should be reported as dropouts. The exception is when the public school system monitors the student's enrollment in the adult education program and reports the student (in SIMS) as a dropout if the student drops out of the adult program. In this case, the district would not report the student in SIMS while he/she is enrolled in the adult education program.

GED – Notification of receipt

If a student, who has been reported as dropout for a given school year, receives his/her GED by the following October 1, the district may report that to the Department, and the student won't be counted as a dropout in the final reporting by the Department.

Certificate of Attainment

Students who receive a certificate of attainment should be reported as such. They will not be counted by the Department as dropouts or graduates. If they pass MCAS over the summer, they will be counted as graduating with the class from the prior spring.

Data Collection & Data Reporting

The Department, in compliance with the USDE, reports an **event** dropout count – the number of students who leave school during a particular year. The Department reports two measures, the unadjusted dropout rate and the adjusted dropout rate. Any student who is a dropout on the last day of school will be counted in the *unadjusted* dropout data. Of these students, any student who does not re-enroll in school by the following October 1 will be counted in the *adjusted* dropout data. Therefore, there are students who may be reported to the Department as dropouts during the year that are not considered to be dropouts in the final counts (unadjusted and adjusted) for a given year. For example, if a student drops out of school in February, the district should report the student as a dropout in the March 1 SIMS data. If that student re-enrolls in school anytime before the end of the school year, he/she will not be counted as a dropout for that district. If instead he/she remains a dropout for the rest of the school year, but returns by the following October 1, he/she will not be counted in the district's adjusted dropout count. As another example, if District A reports a student as a dropout, but District B reports the same student as enrolled, the student will not be counted as a dropout for District A.

Please contact the Department at data@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-DATA (3282) if you have any questions regarding these reporting guidelines or if you have particular situations that are not covered by these guidelines.