

Attendance and Dropout Reporting Guidelines

The following guidelines are intended to answer questions district staff may have in reporting student attendance and dropout data to the Department. The guidelines apply to public school students, including students with disabilities who are placed by the district in public or private special education schools, and students in DYS facilities.

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.

Enrollment:

A student is enrolled in a school if he/she is attending the school or 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; or
 - iii. death.

Note: Students younger than 16 should be treated as truant, but reported as dropouts (see scenario #4 below).

In reporting October 1 data, any student who was enrolled in the district 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.

MGL c. 76 S. 18 states that “no student sixteen years of age or older shall be considered to have permanently left public school unless an administrator of the school which such student last attended has sent notice within a period of ten days from the student’s fifteenth consecutive absence to the parent or guardian of such student in both the primary language of such parent or guardian and English, stating that such student and his parent or guardian may meet with the school committee or its designated representatives prior to the student permanently leaving school, within ten days after sending of the notice.”

The table on the following pages lists several possible scenarios and the appropriate reporting outcomes 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. If the student is receiving educational support services during the excused absence, and the school sends staff to the student's home or hospital program to deliver such services, then the student should be recorded as present on the days when staff is providing such services.	➤ The student should be recorded as absent. If the student is receiving educational support services during the excused absence, and the school sends staff to the student's home or hospital program to deliver such services, then the student should be recorded as present on the days when staff is providing such services.
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. Student is expected to be in membership, but fails to show up at start of school year.	➤ 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 show up by October 1 he/she should be reported as a dropout. If the Department finds the student reported as enrolled in another district, the dropout will not be counted for the first district.
4. The student has dropped out of school.	➤ Not applicable. See scenario #2.	➤ 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 Department.
5. The student has transferred to another school (may be demonstrated through a transcript request from the receiving school or documentation of notice of transfer from the parent or guardian).	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.
6. The student has moved to another city/town or state and as a result is no longer attending school in your district. There is no indication whether the student has enrolled in school elsewhere.	➤ 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. If the next transmission is the following school year, the change to the EOY data should be reported to the Department.

Scenarios	Reporting Outcome	
	Grade K - 5	Grade 6 - 12
7. The district has documentation that the student has moved out of the United States, to another country or to one of the US territories. 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.
8. Student is known to be residing and receiving education services in a DYS facility.	➤ The student should be reported as residing in a DYS facility (see SIMS documentation for detailed reporting rules).	➤ The student should be reported as residing in a DYS facility (see SIMS documentation for detailed reporting rules).
9. Student is in DSS custody. DSS moves the student to a private educational setting.	➤ The student should be reported as being placed by DSS in a private educational setting (see SIMS documentation for detailed reporting rules).	➤ The student should be reported as being placed by DSS in a private educational setting (see SIMS documentation for detailed reporting rules).
10. Student is in DSS custody. DSS moves the student to another public school in another district.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.
11. Student receives an in-school suspension.	➤ Student is <u>not</u> recorded as absent.	➤ Student is <u>not</u> recorded as absent.
12. Student receives an out-of-school suspension or temporary exclusion.	➤ Student is recorded as absent, except for each day that he/she receives alternative education for more than ½ day.	➤ Student is recorded as absent, except for each day that he/she receives alternative education for more than ½ day.
13. Student is permanently excluded and the district <u>is</u> providing alternative education.	➤ Not applicable	➤ A School Safety & Discipline form should be completed. If the alternative education is full-time, the student should continue to be reported in SIMS as enrolled. If the alternative education is not full-time, the student should be reported as Permanently Excluded in SIMS.
14. Student is permanently excluded and the district is <u>not</u> providing alternative education	➤ Not applicable	➤ A School Safety & Discipline form should be completed. The student should be reported as Permanently Excluded in SIMS.

Scenarios	Reporting Outcome	
	Grade K - 5	Grade 6 - 12
15. Student leaves school to attend alternative school/program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If school/program is part of the district, student should be reported as enrolled in SIMS. If school/program is in another district, student should be reported as transferred. If district is out-placing student in a private alternative school/program, student should be reported as “sending” in SIMS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If school/program is part of the district, student should be reported as enrolled in SIMS. If school/program is in another district, student should be reported as transferred. If district is out-placing student in a private alternative school/program, student should be reported as “sending” in SIMS.
16. Student is enrolled in a GED program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The student should be reported as a dropout unless the elementary/secondary school system remains responsible for the student, and the student is enrolled full-time (therefore the student continues to be reported in SIMS). If a student, who has been reported as dropout for a given school year, receives his/her GED <u>by the following October 1</u>, the district may report that to the Department, and the student will not be counted as a dropout in the final reporting by the Department.
17. Student is incarcerated in a House of Correction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The student should be reported as a dropout, unless the student is eligible for special education services. In this case, the student should be reported as being sent to a correctional facility with related services only (see SIMS documentation for detailed reporting rules).
18. Student leaves the public elementary/secondary school system to attend an adult education program. The program leads to a regular high school diploma, contingent on the state competency determination requirement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not applicable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In most cases, students who leave the public elementary/secondary school system 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.
19. Student leaves the public elementary/secondary school system to attend Job Corps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Student is reported as a dropout.

Scenarios	Reporting Outcome	
	Grade K - 5	Grade 6 - 12
20. Student leaves the public elementary/secondary school system to be home-schooled. The district approves the home-school program.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.	➤ The student should be reported as a transfer.

Dropout Data Reporting

The MA Department of Education, in compliance with the United States Department of Education, 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 who 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.