



National Reporting System

A Project of the U.S. Department of Education

National Reporting System (NRS) 2012 Changes Automatic Cohort Designation and New Measures Frequently Asked Questions

Entered Employment and Retained Employment

Entered Employment Cohort Definition: Learners who are not employed at time of entry and in the labor force who exit during the program year.

Retained Employment Cohort Definition: Learners employed at entry who exit during the program year; and learners who were not employed at time of entry and in the labor force, who are employed by the first quarter after exit quarter.

Q: How is “unemployed” defined? Does it include unemployed who have not looked for employment within the past four weeks?

A: The NRS Implementation Guidelines define “unemployed” as “*learners who are not employed but are seeking employment, making specific efforts to find a job and are available for work*”. This definition does not include a specific time period in which the individual has looked for work.

Q: Are there any changes to the reporting timeline for the program year related to the employment outcomes?

A: No, the reporting timelines have not undergone changes. Entered employment is collected in the first quarter after the student’s exit quarter and retained employment is collected in the third quarter after the student’s exit quarter.

Q: Will the time lag for reporting employment result in having students who set the goal under the former system and students who are automatically designated in the new system both included in the reported measures for entered and retained employment?

A: Yes, due to the time lag in employment reporting, there will be old and new cohorts mixed in the reports for Program Years 2012 and 2013. Both goal setting and automatic cohort students will be included for entered and retained employment in the tables for these years. States should not change the cohorts or follow-up procedures but should continue to follow both groups of students.

Q: Are States expected to update employment status during the year or at the time of exit and use that employment status to pull its tracking cohort or should employment status at entry be used for cohort definition?

A: States must use students' employment status at entry to determine cohort status for employment outcomes.

Q: How are students who are not seeking to enter employment to be reported?

A: Students who are not employed and are not seeking employment should be entered into NRS Table 6 as "not in the labor force."

Obtain Secondary Credential

Cohort Definition: All learners who take all General Educational Development (GED) tests, or are enrolled in adult high school at the high Adult Secondary Education (ASE) level, or are enrolled in the assessment phase of the External Diploma Program (EDP) who exit during the program year.

Q: What is the definition of adult high school?

A: An adult high school is a credit earning program sanctioned by State law, code, or regulation or Local Education Agency (LEA) authority that leads to a secondary credential.

Q: Students in adult high school earn a diploma through course credits (not GED tests). How do we place them in an Educational Functioning Level (EFL) and include them in the tracking cohort?

A: NRS Implementation Guidelines, Chapter II: *NRS Measure Definitions and Data Collection Methods* (pages 15 and 23) allow States to measure and report educational gain for adult high school students through the awarding of credits or Carnegie units. These adults may be placed in Low or High ASE based on the number of credits held upon program entrance as determined by State rules.

Students may be recorded as completing the Low ASE EFL by achieving enough credits or Carnegie units to advance from the 9th/10th grade level to the 11/12th grade level.

Students who enter the program meeting the State requirements for the 11th/12th grade level based on credits or Carnegie units should be placed in the High ASE EFL and are tracked for high school completion upon program exit.

Q: Is this cohort determined by EFL at entry or EFL at the end of the program year?

A: The cohort is defined by entry level EFL and only students who have exited the program are included in the cohort.

Q: Are all high ASE students in the cohort?

A: No, only high ASE students in adult high schools are in this cohort.

Q: Must a student pass all GED tests to be included as achieving the outcome?

A: Yes, students must pass all GED tests to be included as achieving the outcome.

Q: My State uses a score that is higher than the GED Testing Service recommended passing score to issue a high school equivalency diploma. Can we use that to define passing?

A: Yes, the score a State uses to issue a high school diploma or equivalency should be used to report high school completion in the NRS.

Q: Do students have to still be enrolled when they take the tests?

A: No, students are included in the cohort if they take all five tests before the end of the reporting period (December 31) for the program year in which they exit.

Q: Will States get credit for a student passing all five tests if this is done through multiple GED testing over the reporting period? In other words, if an enrolled student takes the GED test one time, passes three of five tests and then tests again and passes the other two tests (i.e., takes all 5 GED tests) does that student count for GED completion?

A: It doesn't matter if a student passes all five GED tests at one time or during the course of repeated attempts. As long as a student exits and passes all five tests before the end of the reporting period, the State can count that outcome.

Q: Are students who failed GED tests and retake them included in the cohort if they take them prior to the end of the reporting period?

A: Yes. Students who retake the tests should be included, as long as they meet all other requirements for the cohort.

Q: Is it possible to separate the reporting of the measure into two parts – such as all learners who are enrolled in adult high school at the high ASE level OR all learners who have attempted the State administered High School Exit Exam?

A: NRS reporting does not require or provide a mechanism to separate such categories of students. States may elect to separate these categories for State purposes.

Q: Are 12 hours required for GED reporting?

A: Yes. The 12 hour rule is unchanged. Only students who have 12 or more contact hours are included in NRS reporting.

Q: Are States required to enter GED scores to show attainment of the outcome?

A: No, States are not required to enter GED scores. The NRS does not provide a mechanism for such reporting.

Q: How should we indicate attainment of a GED, EDP, or secondary school credential or diploma if not through the actual test scores?

A: Attainment of a secondary credential should be determined by the issuance of the actual credential.

Q: Does the student need to earn the secondary credential after program exit? In other words, does this mean that the date of the final GED test has to be after the exit date of the student?

A: No, the GED test date could be before or after program exit. However, in order to include the student in the NRS tracking cohort for high school completion, the student must have exited the program.

Q: Can a student be in both adult high school and adult education simultaneously? How about EDP and adult education? Or EDP and GED?

A: To be counted in the NRS, a student must have at least 12 hours of instruction in an adult education program. States should determine their policies for dual enrollment in adult education.

Enter Postsecondary Education

Cohort Definition: All learners who have earned a secondary credential while enrolled, hold a secondary credential at entry, or are enrolled in a class specifically designed for transitioning to community college, who exit during the program year.

Q: Is a student with a secondary credential from a foreign country (e.g., an ESL student) included in the cohort for postsecondary education?

A: Yes, students with secondary credentials earned in other countries must be included in the tracking cohort for entrance into postsecondary education.

Q: Can students self-report having a secondary school credential, GED, or high school diploma? Should the program verify that a learner has a secondary credential or is this issue the same as the student self-reporting their employment status at entry?

A: Secondary credential is self-reported by the student. Verification is left to State or local policy.

Q: Are students who are co-enrolled in both adult education and postsecondary education (such as an I-BEST model) included in the postsecondary follow-up cohort?

A: Any student, who at exit holds a diploma or was enrolled in a transition class as designated by the State, is included in the follow-up cohort for entrance into postsecondary education.

Q: If a student exits in a program year and begins postsecondary education in that year, and is also enrolled in postsecondary education the following year, should the student be counted in both years since the tracking is over a 2-year period?

A: No, the student is counted only once. The reported count must be unduplicated.

Q: How is a transition class defined?

A: A transition class is a class that has a specific purpose to prepare students for entry into postsecondary education, training or an apprenticeship program.

Q: Will the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) provide a more comprehensive definition of a class specifically designed for transitioning?

A: No, but the definition of a transition class can be further refined by the State.

Q: Please clarify multi-year reporting of entry into postsecondary education.

A: States may report entry into postsecondary education to the end of the second program year after a student's exit year. In other words, students who exit during a program year may enter postsecondary education any time from exit through the end of the following program year (June 30). This means States can follow students and report for two years, in two rows on NRS Table 5. An unduplicated count is required.

Q: With multi-year reporting, it appears that survey States will need to survey students twice. This will cause an undue burden on survey States. Please provide additional clarification on the second year cohort to follow-up for survey States.

A: The extra time provided by these changes is intended to allow States to include students who take a longer time to enter postsecondary education or are harder to reach. States do not have to survey each student twice but should contact those students again that have not been successfully reached in the first year period or who have not had sufficient time to enroll in postsecondary education.

Cross-Cutting Questions on Cohorts and Goals

Q: Are programs supposed to re-identify cohort membership for students continuing in the next program year?

A: Yes, at the start of the program year, employment and secondary credential status should be updated for continuing students. However, the student is only counted in the cohort at exit.

Q: Should we no longer determine student goals now that NRS has moved to automatic cohort designation and no longer requires goals for the follow-up measures?

A: Although student goals are no longer required for NRS reporting, program staff should continue to set goals with students and help students achieve them, as part of good instructional practice.

Student Education and Highest Grade Level Completed

Q: How many hours, days, weeks or months of instruction constitute a grade level if the education system of the country of non-native students does not use grade levels?

A: Years of schooling should be used as grade levels.

Q: How do you count a student who only attended kindergarten?

A: Report kindergarten only as no schooling.

Q: How do we report education of learners who studied in both U.S. and non-U.S. schools?

A: Report the highest grade completed, whether in the U.S. or abroad. NRS Table 6 has a separate column for U.S. and non-U.S. schooling. The appropriate column should be used.

Q: How do we report education for students who were home schooled?

A: Home school students should be reported using the grade level equivalent consistent with State policy.

Q: Some students may be home schooled in a family trade. Does this constitute an alternative credential?

A: A credential must represent basic education and be conferred by an institution of learning (not from home). Home schooling in a trade devoid of academics may not count as a “grade” or as an “alternative credential.”

Q: What qualifies as “some college, no degree” in non-U.S. schools that may have different systems than the U.S.?

A: If a student attended a postsecondary institution, it would be considered “some college.” If a credential is awarded upon completion, it would count as a degree.

Teacher Experience and Credential

Q: Does teacher experience include all teaching experience or only adult education?

A: States should report only years of teaching experience in adult education.

Q: How are full-time and part-time defined?

A: States may develop their own definitions for full-time and part-time teaching status.

Q: What counts as a credential for teachers?

A: States should report only State recognized teacher credentials.

Q: How can you report teachers’ education, such as a master’s degree or a doctorate in education?

A: The NRS does not require reporting of teacher education. Only certification is reported.

Q: Should States report teacher experience and credentials at the beginning of the year, end of the year, or update this information during the year?

A: States should report teachers’ experience and credentials at the beginning of the program year and update this information at the start of each year.