

## Dropout Calculation Changes

The Department of Education is changing the way the dropout rate is calculated. After reviewing methods used from various states as well as examining the federal government's definition, Iowa is implementing the change beginning with last year's EASIER data. The following information is from Robert Stillwell's Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the common Core of Data: School Year 2007-08 (NCES 2010-341) located at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010341>.

*Definition of a dropout.* The CCD (Common Core of Data) provides an event dropout count. An event dropout count represents the number of students dropping out each year. According to the CCD definition, a dropout is an individual who

- was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year;
- was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year;
- has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved education program; and
- does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program; temporary absence due to suspension or school-approved illness; or death.

The following statements apply for the purpose of this definition:

- The school year is the 12-month period of time from the first day of school (operationally set as October 1), with dropouts from the previous summer reported for the year and grade in which they fail to enroll.
- Individuals who are not accounted for on October 1 are considered dropouts.
- A school completer is an individual who graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved educational program upon receipt of formal recognition from school authorities. A state- or district-approved educational program may consist of special education and district or state-sponsored GED preparation. (Note: Iowa follows the recommendation of the federal government and does NOT recognize a GED as a high school diploma.)

*Defining the school year.* Not all states follow a fall-to-fall school year. The CCD dropout count is based on an October–September school year in which a student's dropout status is determined at the beginning of the year. Some states follow a July–June calendar in which a student's dropout status is determined at the end of the school year.

Iowa will now be following the standard definition of an October – September school year. Operationally, this means the school year will begin on October 1, 2009 and end on September 30, 2010. Iowa's dropout rate calculation will now be based on a strict 12-month year. In previous years, the dropout rate was based on a July 1 – June 30 year with dropouts removed who had re-enrolled by October 1 of the following academic year. The prior calculation method resulted in a mix between the July – June calendar with the window of opportunity to return by October 1.

December 6 marks the opening of the dropout verification application. Because of the change in calculation method, you may notice any of the following:

1. Students who dropped out during the summer of 2009 through September 30, 2009 will not be counted as dropouts. While these students were reported as dropouts, the adjustment in the calendar year means these dropouts will not be included in your district or school's dropout rate.
2. Any student who was last reported as a dropout with an exit date between October 1, 2009 and September 30, 2010 will be included in the dropout rate.
3. The event dropout rate is defined as the count of dropouts from a given school year divided by the count of student enrollments within the same grade span at the beginning of the same school year (operationally defined as October 1). This is not a cohort calculation. Therefore, a student can be a dropout (included in the numerator) without being represented in the denominator (BEDS enrollment on October 1, 2009).
4. Students that receive an alternative high school credential (i.e., a certificate of attendance or a high school equivalency degree) and those that take more than 4 years to complete high school are not considered on-time completers but are also not counted as dropouts.
5. Students actively enrolled in Spring EASIER but not reported in fall were identified as missing. The missing students in grades 7 through 12 are reported as dropouts in the dropout verification.

The following students have been included as dropouts in the 2009-2010 Dropout Verification:

1. Students reported as dropouts (exit code 4)
2. Students reported as having reached maximum age (exit code 6)
3. Missing actives from Spring 2010 to Fall 2010
4. Students exited as no show (exit code 13) for whom no other enrollment exists (dropout moved back to last attending school)
5. Students with an exit code of end or change enrollment (14) that didn't go anywhere
6. Students who transferred to Job Corps but for whom no enrollment information was reported by Denison (While the student may have transferred to Job Corps, unreported students may have elected to not pursue a Denison diploma and are counted as dropouts.)
7. Students reported as transferred and who did not enroll in another Iowa district
8. Students reported as expelled, illness, or interim placed who did not return to active status and were not reported in the fall
9. Students miscoded in spring as graduates who did not enroll this fall

The dates for completing the dropout verification are December 6 through December 16. Please review the list of dropouts, resolve issues with an EASIER consultant, and verify the data by December 16.