

High School graduation rates are calculated within NJSMART based on data that is submitted by district users who authorized by their respective LEAs. The NJDOE is committed to ensuring high quality data and accurate public reporting, and therefore developed a process beginning with the 2011-2012 school year that allows districts to correct past submission errors to improve district reporting accuracy.

More than 7,000 student level appeals were filed and processed for the 2011 high school graduation cohort. Districts can now able to submit appeal appeals that would correct submission errors that impact their Cohort 2012's 4-year graduation rate and Cohort 2011's 5-year graduation rate data in NJ SMART. This process is a student level appeal process.

Since NJSMART data is available to districts year-round through District Reports, districts are expected to actively manage and profile their data prior to August 31st to fix any errors. It is also imperative that districts properly inactivate their graduates by the respective August 2nd and August 31st inactivation deadlines. Appeal requests are a last-resort opportunity for districts to resolve issues found within their data submissions as of the August 31st snapshot.

This user guide is intended to be used by all NJSMART users who are preparing and submitting their respective LEA's high school graduation rate appeals. Users will be directed by NJSMART Help Desk staff to use this comprehensive step-by-step guide to facilitate the appeals process. It is highly recommended that you print, read, and keep this guide by your side as you navigate this process.

2012 Timeline Reminder

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| July 5, 2012 | <i>Begin inactivating 2011-2012 graduates and transfers in SID Management</i> |
| August 2, 2012 | <i>2011-2012 School Year Graduates – SID Management Inactivation Deadline</i> |
| August 31, 2012 | <i>2011-2012 Summer Graduates – SID Management Inactivation Deadline</i> |
| August 31, 2012 | <i>August 31st SID Management Snapshot 5PM Deadline</i> |
| September 10, 2012 | <i>Preliminary August 31st Snapshot Now Available; Appeals Period Opens</i> |
| October 5, 2012 | <i>Appeals Period 5PM Deadline</i> |

Guidelines

- Appeal requests may only be made regarding official graduation rates generated the most recent school year. For example, in 2012, only Cohort 2012's 4-year graduation rate and Cohort 2011's 5-year graduation rate are subject to appeal requests.
- Districts are responsible for the submission and maintenance of their own data in the NJ SMART system. By participating in the NJ SMART Appeals Period, districts are able to make changes to

data in the August 31st Snapshot, which is used to calculate official high school graduation rates; however, ***districts are expected to ensure that this data is reflected in their submissions prior to filing an appeal*** (e.g., if an appeal request indicates that a student's Exit Code should be "L" in the Graduation Report, then the student's current status in SID Management should be "L".)

- In order to make an appeal request, please navigate to the Graduation Appeals page found on the Reporting tab in the NJ SMART portal.
- All requests must be made at the individual student level with explanations for each student.
- All information must be submitted as required in the appeals request form. Please note that incomplete appeal requests cannot be considered.
- If the NJDOE requires further information from your district on an appeal request, NJ SMART staff will reach out once to the appeal contact based on provided phone and email information. A response from the district will be required in time for the Appeals Period deadline, or the request will be declined.
- The NJDOE evaluates each individual request that is submitted based on the information provided; all decisions are final.
- The NJ SMART Graduation Appeals process is specific to the NJ SMART data included in the August 31st Snapshot. This process is unrelated to the NJDOE's AHSA appeals process.
- The Graduation by Assessment Report is not subject to appeal through this process.
- If you have any appeal requests that are not relevant to the Appeal Request Form, please contact the NJ SMART Help Desk for assistance.

Types of Appeal Requests

Appeal requests are only considered for data items that are officially reported on to the state for the graduation report. Currently, data and scenarios that can be appealed include the six following Reasons for Appeal:

A. Cohort Status:

Student's status (active/inactive) or exit withdrawal code is incorrect (Not including Requested Exit Codes: T3; T8; T9; or TP)

B. Cohort Status:

Student transferred to a private school or out-of-state school (Only Includes Requested Exit Codes: T3; T8; T9; or TP) Please note: This type of appeal requires that the LEA has documentation to support this claim.

C. Transfer Cases:

Student transferred to another NJ SMART-submitting LEA in New Jersey prior to August 31st

D. County, District, School Codes:

Student is still within district but CDS codes are incorrect (Attending; Receiving; Resident; or Accountable)

E. Cohort Year:

Student's Cohort Year is incorrect

F. Entering Values:

Student's Entering Values are incorrect (Race; Gender; Lunch Status; LEP Status; Special Education Classification; Migrant Status; or Homeless Status)

Appeal requests for any other data points will not be considered. Please abide by the requirements below for each type of request.

1. Cohort Status

| REASON FOR APPEAL = A or B | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Description: | A student's Cohort Status is defined by their Student Exit Withdrawal Code (for inactive students) or Grade Level (for active students). Districts can request to change a student's inactive status from one exit code to another, can request to inactivate an active student, or can request to activate an inactive student in the August 31 st Snapshot. |
| Most frequent issue: | A district entered the incorrect Exit Code or uploaded the student as inactive after August 31 st . |
| Where to look: | Beyond the Graduation Report, districts can view these students in SID Management (if they have kept inactive records in their file uploads, which is not required). Student's Cohort Statuses are also viewable in their Enrollment Records, accessed by drilling down through the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Report. |
| How to fix data errors: | <p>Districts have full control over their students' Cohort Statuses since SID Management is open all year round. To activate a student, districts must submit the student as Status = A to SID Management. To inactivate a student, districts must submit the student as Status = I, with Exit Code, Exit Date, and Cumulative Days information filled out.</p> <p>To change the exit code of an inactive student, <u>districts must first submit the student as Active to SID Management and then inactivate them again with the new Exit Code.</u> (If you do not first activate the student, then the</p> |

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| | <p>change to the Exit Code will not be recorded!)</p> <p>Appeal requests for Cohort Status changes will require significant justification by districts regarding why they were unable to make these edits prior to August 31st.</p> |
| Requirements: | <p>Before making an appeal request to change a student’s Cohort Status, the district user must first update the student’s Status and/or Exit Code and Exit Date in SID Management. Before an appeal request will be approved for application to the August 31st Snapshot, <u>the NJDOE will verify the request against the student’s current status in SID Management.</u> If the request does not match the student’s current status, it will not be approved. (Please contact the Help Desk if you require assistance in making these updates.)</p> <p>Districts cannot request to change a student from one active Cohort Status to another (e.g., On-Track Continuing to Off-Track Continuing), as these active statuses hold equivalent meaning in the graduation rate calculations.</p> <p>Requests to change a student’s exit code to T3, T8, T9, or TP will require <u>additional documentation</u> (i.e., transfer card, letter from a parent/transfer district) from the district. District must email this attachment to njsmart@pcgus.com on the same day that they submit the appeal request. In the email’s subject line, write "Appeal Request Documentation: District XXXX" with your district's 4-digit district code in the title, and the student's SID number in the body of the email.</p> |
| Change implementation: | <p>NJ SMART will change a student’s Cohort Status in the August 31, 2012 submission. The appeals change <u>will not</u> persist beyond this snapshot. It is the district’s responsibility to make the necessary changes within SID Management prior to requesting an appeal, in order to ensure the sustainability of this change. For example, if the district was unable to inactivate a student with an exit code of “L” by the 8/31 deadline, they should first make this change in SID Management as soon as possible. Then, they can request an appeal from the NJDOE; if approved, NJ SMART will apply this Exit Code retroactively to the August 31st Snapshot.</p> |
| Appeal Request Form | Complete Section 1 and Section 6 |

2. Transfer Cases

| REASON FOR APPEAL = C | |
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| Description: | Districts may claim that a Transfer Out-Unverified student actually did |

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| | transfer to another public school district in New Jersey. In another case, districts may have errantly coded a student as “T4” (Transfer Out-Unverified) when “T3” or “T8” actually applied (Excluded from Cohort). |
| Most frequent issue: | The “pick-up” district failed to upload the student in a timely fashion. In another case (e.g., requesting T3/T8), the district may have input the exit code incorrectly. |
| Where to look: | Districts can view their Transfer Out-Unverified students in the High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Report and view CDS codes in the Enrollment Record. |
| How to fix data errors: | <p>In cases where the “pick-up” district failed to upload the student in a timely manner, districts should contact the other district and instruct them to upload the student. Districts should work together to resolve these issues prior to the August 31st deadline.</p> <p>If the district inputs the incorrect Transfer Exit Code, they should follow the directions in the above <i>Cohort Status</i> section. Documentation will be required for these students.</p> |
| Requirements: | <p>For any transfer request, the student must be uploaded to SID Management by the “pick-up” district by the time the appeal request is made. <u>The NJDOE will verify the request against the student’s current status in SID Management.</u> NJ SMART will not upload students to another district; however, NJ SMART will retroactively apply that change to the August 31, 2012 Snapshot. If there is any situation in which the “pick-up” district is not cooperating, the district should contact NJ SMART for assistance.</p> <p>Be sure to input the correct CDS Codes for the student in the Appeal Request Form (Section 3), in addition to indicating the new Submitting District, so that Accountability is accurately calculated.</p> |
| Change implementation: | NJ SMART will place a student in the transfer district for the August 31 st Snapshot, but will not apply this change to other snapshots. The “pick-up” district must have already activated this student in SID Management, before this appeal change will be applied. |
| Appeal Request Form: | Complete Sections 2, 3, and 6 |

3. County, District, School (CDS) Codes

REASON FOR APPEAL = D

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| Description: | Users can request a change to a student’s Attending, Receiving, or Resident CDS Codes. The Accountable CDS Codes for a student are derived by NJ SMART, based on these submitted codes, and are also subject to appeal. |
| Most frequent issue: | For the most part, appeal requests related to CDS Codes are due to data entry error and impact accountability. |
| Where to look: | Districts can view their students’ Attending, Receiving, and Resident CDS Codes in SID Management and can view their Accountable students in the Graduation Report. Please refer to the <i>High School Graduation Accountable Rules</i> document on the NJ SMART Help tab for additional information. |
| How to fix data errors: | <p>Districts can edit Attending, Receiving, and Resident CDS Codes in SID Management.</p> <p>Accountable Codes: If districts feel that the students’ CDS Codes have been correctly inputted but still feel that the Accountability Codes have been derived incorrectly, the district cannot make this change. The district should contact the NJ SMART Help Desk.</p> <p>Appeal requests for CDS Code changes will require significant justification by districts, as districts are able to edit these codes themselves (in most cases) through August 31st.</p> |
| Requirements: | Students’ CDS Codes should be updated in SID Management with the requested codes, prior to the district’s appeal request. Before an appeal request will be approved for application to the August 31 st Snapshot, the NJDOE will verify the request against the student’s current CDS Codes in <u>SID Management</u> . If the request does not match the student’s current codes, it will not be approved. (Please contact the Help Desk if you require assistance in making these updates.) |
| Change implementation: | NJ SMART will change a student’s CDS Codes in the August 31, 2012 snapshot. The appeals change <u>will not</u> persist beyond this snapshot for Attending, Resident, and Receiving CDS Codes. It is the district’s responsibility to make the necessary changes within SID Management prior to requesting an appeal, in order to ensure the sustainability of this change. As for Accountable CDS Code changes, these will be applied to official snapshots for 4-year and 5-year graduation rates. |
| Appeal Request Form | Complete Sections 3 and 6 |

4. Cohort Year

| REASON FOR APPEAL = E | |
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| Description: | Cohort Years are assigned to students by NJ SMART based on the first school year in which they are submitted with a high school grade level. Once a student is assigned a Cohort Year, they stay in that same Cohort Year for the remainder of their student career. |
| Most frequent issue: | The most frequent reason for this appeal is user error in initially assigning the student Grade Level = 9. |
| Where to look: | In order to figure out why a student was assigned to a given cohort, the district can examine (a) the student's Enrollment Record (which shows grade levels submitted in June submissions) or (b) submitted State data from the State Submission Release History page (which shows all October and June data submitted). Tip: To assess whether the Cohort Year assigned is appropriate, check the student's Assessment Record to see what year they took their grade-level assessments. |
| How to fix data errors: | Districts cannot change a student's cohort year. They must appeal the record in the NJ SMART Appeals Period. |
| Requirements: | If you are requesting a Cohort Year prior to 2011, please contact the NJ SMART Help Desk. |
| Change implementation: | If your request is approved, the student's Cohort Year will be permanently changed in NJ SMART affecting all other iterations of graduation reports. |
| Appeal Request Form: | Complete Sections 4 and 6 |

5. Entering Values

| REASON FOR APPEAL = F | |
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| Description: | LEAs can submit appeal requests to change a student's value for one of the officially reported subgroup variables: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Special Education Classification, Lunch Status, Homeless Status, Migrant Status, and LEP Status. In the Graduation Report, Entering Values for subgroup categories are reported; thus, the subgroup categories will reflect the values submitted for the student when they were first assigned a Cohort Year (usually in Grade 9). |
| Most frequent issue: | The most frequent reasons for this type of appeal are (1) user data entry |

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| | <p>error in the submission in which the student entered the Cohort Year or (2) district users not understanding the difference between Entering Values and what was most recently submitted for the student.</p> |
| <p>Where to look:</p> | <p>Besides your High School Graduation Cohort Status Profile Report, districts can view this information in:</p> <p>Race/Ethnicity & Gender (SID Management) – Only the most recent SID Management Snapshot is available for district viewing, so districts will be unable to see their students’ Entering Values in SID Management.</p> <p>Free and Reduced Lunch Status, Migrant Status, Homeless Status*, and LEP Status (State Submission) – Districts can look at past State Submission data on the State Submission Release History page. Districts should examine subgroup data from the submission in which the student was first assigned a Cohort Year.</p> <p>*Note: Homeless Status was first collected in June 2011, so for any student who entered a cohort prior to that time, their Homeless Entering Value is taken from the June 30, 2011 State Submission.</p> <p>Special Education Classification (Special Education Submission) – Districts should look to the October 15th Special Education Submission of the same year in which the student entered the cohort. For example, if the student entered in October 15th State Submission, check the October 15th Special Education Submission. If the student entered in the June 30th State Submission, check the subsequent October 15th Special Education Submission.**</p> <p>**Note: Special Education data is collected once per year, while State Submission data is collected twice per year.</p> |
| <p>How to fix data errors:</p> | <p>Districts cannot change a student’s Entering Value. They must appeal the record in the NJ SMART Appeals Period.</p> |
| <p>Requirements:</p> | <p>Districts can only request to change the student’s Entering Value to their most recently submitted (“Most Recent”) value (from the prior June 30th Snapshot).</p> <p>For all fields except Special Education Classification, the Most Recent Values would come from the prior June 30th Snapshot; for Special Education Classification, the Most Recent Value would come from the prior October 15th Snapshot. Please note that values are only changed under extenuating circumstances.</p> |

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| Change implementation: | If your request is approved, the student’s subgroup value will be changed in the August 31 st Snapshot. |
| Appeal Request Form: | Complete Sections 5 and 6 |

Frequently Asked Questions

How is accountability determined?

Accountability CDS Codes are derived based off of business rules supplied by the NJDOE and checked against the *Accountable High School List*. Please see the NJ SMART Help Tab for this documentation.

Does the NJDOE monitor districts’ *Excluded from Cohort* counts?

Yes, the NJDOE regularly monitors districts’ *Excluded from Cohort* counts. As the Exit Codes associated with the *Excluded from Cohort* status should not occur regularly, the NJDOE will contact any districts that have unusually high counts to investigate these students further.

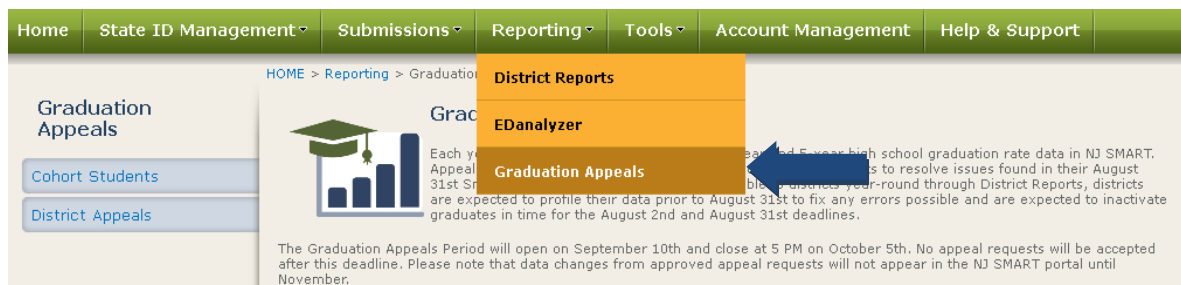
Does the NJDOE monitor districts’ *Graduate* counts?

Yes, the NJDOE monitors districts’ *Graduate* counts in two ways. First, beginning in 2012, the NJDOE will evaluate adherence to the August 2nd deadline for regular school-year students and will reach out to district superintendents if it appears that their district missed the deadline. As with last year, the NJDOE will also monitor compliance with the August 31st deadline. Secondly, the NJDOE will look into any graduates that are not matched with assessment data, as shown in the Graduation by Assessment report (available as a District Report in NJ SMART in September 2012).

How to Submit an Appeal

In order to request a graduation appeal, district users must navigate to the *Graduation Appeals* page, which can be found under the *Reporting* tab in the NJ SMART portal (see Figure A). In order to view the *Graduation Appeals* page, users must have District Reports access; to obtain this access, users should contact their district’s Web User Administrator (WUA). On the *Graduation Appeals* page, users will find two subpages: *Cohort Students* and *District Appeals*.

Figure A



Cohort Students Page

This page lists all students that have been submitted by your district who are currently assigned to a Cohort Year. Use filtering, sorting, and exporting options to explore this data.

- If you click on the LID of a student, you will be taken to the *Cohort Student Details* page.
- From this page, you can click the *Create Appeal* button to open the record's *Appeal Request Form*.

District Appeals Page

This page lists all student records appealed by your district and indicates their NJDOE Decision Status.

- If you click on the LID of a student, you will see the appeals request form submitted for that record as well as notes from the NJDOE once a decision is made.
- The possible Decision Statuses are:
 - Submitted: The default status upon submitting a request.
 - Pending: The NJDOE has reviewed the request but not yet made a decision.
 - Declined: The NJDOE has declined the request.
 - Approved: The NJDOE has approved the request.
- Once an appeal has reviewed by the NJDOE, no further edits can be made to the request.

Appeal Request Form

Please ensure that the information that you submit is accurate as each student can only be appealed once. Below, you will find a mock-up of the Appeal Request Form with tips on what information to provide, given your type of appeal request.

Appeal Request

NJ SMART Graduation Appeal Request

Please refer to the NJ SMART Graduation Appeals User Guide for full instructions on how to fill out this form. All users are expected to have read this guide prior to submitting any graduation appeals.

Reason for Appeal (1)

Please choose the scenario that best describes your reason for appealing this student's graduation data.

Reason for Appeal (2)

If applicable, please choose the second scenario that describes your reason for appealing this student's graduation data, if more than one situation exists.

DEPENDING ON YOUR "REASON FOR APPEAL", YOU WILL NEED TO FILL OUT ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS.

SECTION 1 - COHORT STATUS APPEALS

IF YOUR REASON FOR APPEAL = A or B, please fill out this section. Indicate what status that you believe this student should be. If you are requesting an Inactive status for a student, you must fill out Status = Inactive and fill out the requested Exit Code and Exit Date. If you are requesting an Active status, you must fill out Status = Active and leave Exit Code and Exit Date blank.

Requested Status

Requested Exit Code

Requested Exit Date (YYYYMMDD)

If your requested Exit Code = T3, T8, T9 or TP, then documentation is required to verify this request. On the same day this appeal request is submitted, email the documentation as an attachment to njsmart@pcgus.com with the following subject line: "Appeal Request Documentation: District XXXX" with your district's 4-digit district code in the title, and the student's SID number in the body of the email. If these instructions are not followed or documentation has not been submitted by the time the request is reviewed by the NJDOE, the appeal request will not be considered.

SECTION 2 - TRANSFER STUDENT APPEALS

IF YOUR REASON FOR APPEAL = C, please fill out this section.

Student Scenario

Please indicate which option best describes your student's scenario.

Communication History

Please describe the steps that you have taken to resolve the issue so far with the district in question, including any communications and corresponding dates, in 250 characters or less. Communication history is required for all Reason for Appeal = C appeals.

Other District's Contact Information

Please fill in the information of the other district involved with resolving the student's situation. If the other district had requested a new SID for the student, then include the SID below.

District Code

Other District SID

A-F

A or B

C

TIP #1: First, select your type of appeal in Reason for Appeal (1). In rare circumstances, you may need to request two appeals for the same student; if so, choose a second type of appeal in Reason for Appeal (2). Depending on the Reason, you will need to fill out the following sections.

TIP #2: Only fill out Sections 1 through 5 if the instructions indicate that you should, based on your Reason for Appeal. Note: Most appeals only require two sections to be completed.

TIP #3: FILL OUT SECTION 1 IF REASON FOR APPEAL = A or B. If you request an Active status, do not fill in Exit Code or Exit Date. If you request an Inactive status, fill in Exit Code and Exit Date.

TIP #4: If your Reason for Appeal = B, you must email documentation to njsmart@pcgus.com at the time of the appeal.

TIP #5: FILL OUT SECTION 2 IF REASON FOR APPEAL = C. For all "C" appeals, fill out Student Scenario, Communication History, and District Code. If the student has a different SID in the other district, then Scenario = B and "Other District SID" should be filled out.

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SECTION 3 - CDS CODE APPEALS

IF YOUR REASON FOR APPEAL = C OR D, please fill out this section with requested CDS codes, reflecting where the student is currently enrolled. Requested CDS Codes should be valid codes taken from the NJ SMART CDS Code List v.14.

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|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Requested Attending CDS Codes: | County Code: | <input type="text"/> | District Code: | <input type="text"/> | School Code: | <input type="text"/> |
| Requested Receiving CDS Codes: | County Code: | <input type="text"/> | District Code: | <input type="text"/> | School Code: | <input type="text"/> |
| Requested Resident CDS Codes: | County Code: | <input type="text"/> | District Code: | <input type="text"/> | School Code: | <input type="text"/> |

C or D

SECTION 4 - COHORT YEAR APPEALS

IF YOUR REASON FOR APPEAL = E, please fill out this section with the requested Cohort Year. (Note: If you are requesting a Cohort Year prior to 2011, you will need to contact the NJ SMART Help Desk.)

Requested Cohort Year:

E

SECTION 5 - ENTERING VALUE APPEALS

IF YOUR REASON FOR APPEAL = F, please choose the subgroup category that you are appealing, below. Districts can only request to change the student's Entering Value to the most recently submitted ("Most Recent") value for that student. If you select a Subgroup Category below, you will be requesting to replace the Entering Value with the Most Recent Value.

Most Recent Value Request Subgroup Category (1):

Subgroup Category (2):

Subgroup Category (3):

F

SECTION 6 - ALL APPEALS

Explanation of Request

Please explain your scenario in 250 characters or less. An explanation is required for each selected Reason for Appeal; without an explanation, the request will not be considered.

A-F

Explanation of Missing the 8/31 Deadline

IF YOUR REASON FOR APPEAL = A, B, C, or D, please explain why you were unable to edit this student information prior to the August 31st deadline in 250 characters or less.

Requesting District's Contact Information

Please fill in the contact information of the person in your district who is responsible for monitoring this appeal.

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Contact First Name | <input type="text"/> | Contact Last Name | <input type="text"/> |
| Contact Phone Number | <input type="text"/> | Contact Email Address | <input type="text"/> |

By clicking the SUBMIT APPEAL button, you will submit your appeal request to the NJDOE. In doing so, you are verifying that the information that you have included above is correct. By clicking the CANCEL button, you will cancel this request.

TIP #6: FILL OUT SECTION 3 IF REASON FOR APPEAL = C or D. Fill out all fields with valid CDS Codes; the codes should match whatever is currently in SID Management. For Transfer Cases, consult with the other district.

TIP #7: FILL OUT SECTION 4 IF REASON FOR APPEAL = E. If you need to request a Cohort Year prior to 2011, contact the NJ SMART Help Desk.

TIP #8: FILL OUT SECTION 5 IF REASON FOR APPEAL = F. You can select just one category, or up to three.

TIP #9: For all appeal types, you must fill out an Explanation of Request and your district contact's information. IF REASON FOR APPEAL = A, B, C, or D, you must explain why this student's information was not updated as intended prior to the 8/31 deadline (i.e., Students' status and CDS codes can be updated in SID Management year-round).

Summary Table

| Appeal Type | Description | Sections Required | Evidence Required: SID Management Updated | Evidence Required: Documentation |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------|--|---|
| A | Cohort Status (Except T3, T8, T9, or TP) | 1, 6 | Y | N |
| B | Cohort Status (If Requesting T3, T8, T9, or TP) | 1, 6 | Y | Y |
| C | Transfer Cases | 2, 3, 6 | Y | N |
| D | CDS Codes | 3, 6 | Y | N |
| E | Cohort Year | 4, 6 | N/A | N |
| F | Entering Values | 5, 6 | N/A | N |