April 16, 2018

Dear CALPADS Administrators and Accountability Coordinators:

NOTIFICATION AND GUIDANCE REGARDING CHANGES TO THE COHORT
GRADUATION RATE CALCULATION

The California Department of Education (CDE) is making changes to the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) to allow for the reporting of these data in the current year and to respond to new federal requirements. The following letter and attachments provide California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) Administrators and Accountability Coordinators with more detailed information regarding these upcoming changes.

Timeline Changes and Supporting CALPADS Report

The changes to the collection and reporting deadlines are being made in response to requests from the State Board of Education and local educational agencies (LEAs) to base Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) on the most recent data available. The CDE will use these data in the Class of 2018 cohort graduation rate in the 2018 California School Dashboard (Dashboard). To accommodate this need, the CALPADS data submission timeline for the four-year ACGR is being revised and shortened. Beginning this fall, LEAs will be required to exit all students from CALPADS at the end of the school year. Data will then be pulled from CALPADS in mid-September 2018 and used to calculate the four-year ACGR for the recently completed school year, including those students who graduate by August 15, 2018.

To assist LEAs with submitting and validating their four-year cohort data within this compressed timeframe, a new cohort report will be available in CALPADS in May 2018. This report will display the students in the 2018 cohort for each school in the LEA, along with counts of graduates and non-graduates, and the resulting graduation rates as students are exited in CALPADS at the end of the school year. As LEAs update their data, the changes will be reflected in the report the next day, giving LEAs ongoing opportunities to view and update their cohort data within CALPADS, something LEAs have not been able to do previously within CALPADS. The CDE will then pull data from CALPADS in mid-September (date to be announced) for the four-year ACGR for use in the 2018 Dashboard. Since LEAs will have seen the data used to calculate the rates within CALPADS, there will not be further opportunities to amend these data.
This new timeline may require LEAs to complete certain activities earlier than in the past. LEAs will need to exit all students from the prior school year within CALPADS to certify the End-of-Year (EOY) 3 submission, which closes on August 24, 2018. LEAs will then have until mid-September to: (1) verify and update the graduate indicators, including a-g completion, Golden State Seal Merit Diploma, State Seal of Biliteracy, as these indicators are used as part of the College/Career Indicator (CCI) on the Dashboard; and (2) exit any summer graduates, students who complete graduation requirements by August 15, 2018. The CDE recognizes that this is a significant change from past practice and provided CALPADS Administrators an earlier communication to help LEAs prepare for the transition on March 8, 2018, in CALPADS Update Flash #135. This communication is available on the CDE CALPADS Update Flash #135 Web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sp/cl/calpadsupdflash135.asp.

Business Rule Changes

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Inspector General (OIG), recently conducted an audit of the processes used by California to calculate the four-year ACGR for compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) non-regulatory guidance published in January 2017. Based on the OIG audit, the CDE is changing certain aspects of the four-year ACGR calculation. These changes will result in an estimated two to three percent decrease in California’s graduation rate, and likely a decrease in graduation rates for many districts and high schools.

One of the most significant changes is the handling of students who transfer to an adult education program before the end of the fourth year of high school. Previously, these students were removed from the cohort, thereby decreasing the denominator and increasing the graduation rate. Moving forward, these students will remain in the cohort and be counted as “other transfers” unless they receive a “regular high school diploma” by the end of the cohort’s fourth year of high school. This change, along with several other business rule and definitional changes will have an impact on graduation rates. A detailed summary of these changes is provided in the following attachments:

- Attachment 1: Summary of Business Rule and Methodological Changes in the Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate
- Attachment 2: Summary of Changes to CALPADS Student Exit Category Codes
- Attachment 3: Summary of Changes to CALPADS School Completion Status

Please carefully review these documents as they provide critical information for understanding these new business rule changes and will help LEAs establish local practices for managing and submitting accurate data to CALPADS.
2017 Cohort Graduation Data

The CDE will delay the public release of the 2017 graduation rates until June 2018, after LEAs have had another preview and correction opportunity for these data using the new business rules. The CDE previously provided LEAs with a private preview and data correction opportunity for the 2017 cohort calculated based on the prior year’s business rules and on data extracted from the CALPADS Operational Data Store (ODS) on December 26, 2017. Since the new cohort report will only be operational within CALPADS beginning with the 2018 cohort moving forward, the CDE will provide LEAs with another private preview and correction opportunity for the 2017 cohort calculated based on the new business rules. To do this, the CDE will re-extract data from the CALPADS ODS and re-calculate the 2017 four-year ACGR, then provide LEAs with a private preview and correction opportunity, before finalizing the four-year ACGR for the 2017 cohort. Several important dates for the 2017 cohort data correction process are provided in the timeline below.

California School Dashboard

These changes will impact the Graduation Rate and College/Career Indicators on the Dashboard. To provide a consistent basis for comparison within the Dashboard, the 2018 cohort will be used to calculate “status,” while the 2017 cohort will be used to calculate “change.”

Transition Timeline and Important Dates

The transition timeline and important dates for the calculation of the 2017 and 2018 ACGR are noted below. Please note that these critical dates will allow for the CDE to provide a private preview of the Graduation Rate Indicator and CCI on the 2018 Dashboard in November ahead of the December public release.

2017 Cohort Key Dates

- **April 27, 2018**: The CDE will extract the 2017 cohort data from the CALPADS ODS, which will be used to calculate the *preliminary* 2017 four-year ACGR based on the new methodology and business rules.

- **May 14, 2018**: The CDE will provide LEAs with a private preview of the 2017 ACGR and associated student-level data. LEAs will have two weeks to review and amend enrollment, exit, demographic, and program data in the CALPADS ODS. These data will be used to determine *final* 2017 cohort outcomes and student groups, along with meeting University of California (UC)/California State University (CSU) requirements, Golden State Seal Merit Diploma, and State Seal of Biliteracy indicators which are needed for the CCI in the Dashboard.

- **May 25, 2018**: The 2017 ACGR correction window deadline. The CDE will extract the corrected 2017 cohort data from the CALPADS ODS, which will be
used to calculate the final 2017 four-year ACGR based on the new methodology and business rules. Corrections made after May 25 will not be included in the 2017 ACGR.

- **June 20, 2018**: The CDE will provide LEAs with a pre-release private preview of the 2017 ACGR followed by the public release of the data on DataQuest.

### 2018 Cohort Key Dates

- **May 2018 (TBD)**: The CALPADS cohort report will be released and LEAs will be able to view the students in the 2018 cohort and verify/update their demographic, program, and student group information, if needed. Since most of the cohort students will not yet have been exited from CALPADS with a cohort outcome, they will appear as “still enrolled” in the cohort report until LEAs complete their CALPADS EOY 3 submission or exit all 2017–18 enrollments.

- **May 14, 2018**: The EOY submission window opens and LEAs can view EOY certification reports. LEAs continue to submit data, including annual exit records for all students.

- **July 31, 2018**: This is the initial EOY Certification Deadline. LEAs must exit all prior year enrollments to certify their CALPADS EOY 3 submission.

- **August 1, 2018**: The EOY Amendment Window opens.

- **August 24, 2018**: The EOY Amendment Window closes. LEAs must have submitted and certified data for all EOY submissions, including the following data that will be used in the 2018 Dashboard:
  
  o Course completion and Career Technical Education data for the College/Career Indicator
  
  o Suspension, chronic absenteeism, and cumulative enrollment data for the Suspension and Chronic Absenteeism indicators
  
  o Prior year enrollment data, which must be exited to certify EOY 3
  
  o For graduate completers, the met UC/CSU requirements, Golden State Seal Merit Diploma, and State Seal of Biliteracy indicators used for the CCI Indicator in the Dashboard (LEAs will have until mid-September to update these data and to exit summer graduates.)

- **Mid-September 2018**: The CDE will extract the 2018 cohort data from the CALPADS ODS, which will be used to calculate the final 2018 four-year ACGR based on the new methodology and business rules. All data corrections and updates must be submitted within CALPADS for the cohort report within
CALPADS. At this point, the 2018 cohort data in CALPADS will be final and no further updates will be incorporated into the 2018 ACGR. These data will be included in the 2018 Dashboard and used for federal reporting.

- **December 2018:** The 2018 Dashboard will be released, including the Graduation Rate Indicator based on the 2017 and 2018 ACGR, and the CCI.

**CALPADS Cohort Report Training**

The CDE will continue to assist LEAs with these new data reporting and collection changes and provide communications throughout the transition. In addition, California School Information Services (CSIS) is offering a CALPADS Cohort Report Training module to help support LEAs. The training will prepare participants to use the new cohort reports and verify the accuracy of the cohort groupings. The business rules will be explained including cohort inclusions, cohort outcomes, and cohort report processing window. The training will be offered to those LEA staff responsible for determining graduates, completers and dropouts and the reporting elements around these students, (e.g., met UC/CSU requirements, Golden State Seal Merit Diploma, State Seal of Biliteracy), and staff monitoring the graduation rate and/or the Dashboard impact.

**Supporting Documentation**

Please be advised that it is important for LEAs to maintain appropriate documentation supporting both cohort outcomes and removals, as these are subject to monitoring and auditing processes. Important information about the requirements for maintaining appropriate supporting documentation is included in Attachment 1. Additionally, LEAs may consult the CALPADS Data Guide, Appendix C for further information about required official and written documentation.

Thank you for your continued commitment and effort in submitting quality and timely data to CALPADS. If you have questions regarding the reporting of graduation rates, please contact the Data Reporting Office at 916-327-0219 or by e-mail at DRO@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Cindy Kazanis, Director
Analysis, Measurement, and Accountability Reporting Division

CK:rb

Attachments