

TO: Indiana State Board of Education
FROM: Indiana Department of Education, Office of School Accountability
DATE: December 2, 2020
SUBJECT: Excessive Homeschool Exit Audits

This memorandum serves as an explanation for both the process and the recommendation the Department makes in the form of the attached spreadsheets.

Background

Pursuant to IC 20-26-13-10(b), a high school with a high number of students who left the cohort to attend homeschool must submit a request to the State Board of Education (SBOE) in a manner prescribed by the SBOE which demonstrates good cause to justify that these students should be removed from the cohort. If a school fails to demonstrate good cause for a student, then that student must be considered a “dropout” for purposes of calculating graduation rate.

At the July 8, 2020 business meeting of the SBOE, a memorandum outlining the process for the handling of the Excessive Homeschool Exit Audits was adopted, which assigned the review of such requests from schools to the Department of Education (DOE).¹ The DOE implemented this process with fidelity when reviewing audits and made determinations based upon the criteria established by the SBOE.

Process Overview

The DOE reviewed the 2020 cohort and identified 104 high schools that met the minimum threshold² established by IC 20-26-13-10(b) to be subject to the excessive homeschool exit audit. All 104 high schools were notified in late July 2020 of their required participation. This notification included how many students were subject to this audit, how to identify which students were subject to this audit, and the required documentation to support a student’s homeschool and “on-track” statuses. Lastly, the notification indicated that the documentation must be submitted to DOE between October 7-30, 2020.

It is important to note that 39 of the 104 schools were also subject to DOE’s mandatory graduation rate audit required under IC 20-26-13-11. The mandatory graduation rate audit looks at all students who exited the cohort, not just the students who exited to homeschool, and does not incorporate a review of the student’s “on-track” status at time of exit from the cohort.

Each high school was required to submit documentation to demonstrate that each student was on-track to graduate at the time of removal, and that the removal was properly initiated by the student’s parent, pursuant to the required documentation guidance issued by the DOE. Note that

¹ <https://www.in.gov/sboe/files/Excessive%20Homeschool%20Process%20Memo.pdf>

² For a cohort of 100 students or less, the threshold is at least ten percent (10.0%) of the students in the cohort being mobilized to homeschool, for a cohort of greater than 100 students, the threshold is at least five percent (5.0%) In both cases, the denominator equals the total number of students who were ever in the school’s cohort and were never moved to another Indiana school’s cohort.

both criteria must be demonstrated in order to be deemed “sufficient”. Submitted documentation underwent two independent reviews to determine whether the school sufficiently demonstrated “good cause” to support each student’s homeschool mobility status. The reviewers noted that the documentation submitted was either “sufficient” or “insufficient”. If there was a discrepancy between the findings of the two independent reviews, then a third review was initiated. It was not uncommon for there to be multiple reasons that the documentation was deemed insufficient; however, students were only identified “insufficient” due to one of the criteria.³

Schools were provided the audit results that detailed findings for each student upon completion of the DOE’s review. Schools were allotted five (5) business days to request a re-review of the documentation that was originally submitted. These audit results represent the final post re-review recommendations.

Recommendation

The table below summarizes the findings of the DOE’s review of the excessive homeschool audit conducted pursuant to IC 20-26-13-10(b) and the SBOE’s adopted procedures. Information regarding specific schools may be found in the spreadsheet included with this memorandum.

	Number	Percent
Total Students Requiring SBOE Action	1,606	
Total Insufficient Findings	1,081	67.3%
Total Sufficient Findings	525	32.7%

The Department respectfully requests that the findings summarized above and by the attached spreadsheets be approved, and all insufficient findings be reidentified as “dropouts” for purposes of the 2020 graduation rate.

³ Note that if both documentation supporting the homeschool exit and the “on-track” status were found insufficient, the default status was “insufficient” due to the homeschool exit documentation.