

Protocol - Child Count and Educational Environments

Essential Elements

Data Collection Name: December 1 Child Count or December 1 Count

Associated *EDFacts* File Numbers

- FS002 — Children with Disabilities (IDEA) School Age
- FS089 — Children with Disabilities (IDEA) Early Childhood

Prior to the Child Count snapshot, the OSE Data Manager sends an email notification to LEAs announcing the upcoming collection period. The communication includes a Child Count Preparation Checklist to ensure all required data elements are entered and validated in MSIS 2.0.

For the Child Count snapshot, the essential requirement is that each eligible student's record has the Special Education (SPED) Indicator marked "Yes."

Following the initial data verification period, the OSE Data Reviewer and OSE Data Analyst generate a missing data report and provide the results to the OSE Data Manager. The Data Manager then communicates with districts identified as having incomplete or missing information, providing them with an opportunity to review, correct, and resubmit their data prior to finalization of the Child Count snapshot.

Data Stewards: Provide title and names, contact information, department, and any notes on persons responsible for data collection, validation, and submission. If there are multiple parties responsible for or involved in the process, list them all (e.g., Part B data manager, *EDFacts* coordinator).

- Executive Director, Office of Special Education, Provides final review, approval, and certification of all SPP/APR submissions and related data reports.
- Education Program Administrator for Data and Reporting / Part B Data Manager, Office of Special Education, oversees data collection, validation, and analysis; coordinates timelines and ensures compliance with IDEA and federal reporting requirements; serves as primary liaison with Partner Support and OSEP.
- Data and Reporting Data Specialists, Office of Special Education, conduct data collection and validation; analyze district-level data; provide technical assistance to LEAs; ensure data accuracy in SharePoint and related systems.
- 618 Coordinator, Office of Special Education, Oversees IDEA Section 618 data collection and reporting; ensures accuracy and completeness of all federal submissions; collaborates with OSE and OTSS staff to align 618 data with SPP/APR indicators.

- 618 Specialist, Office of Special Education, Supports the 618 Coordinator with data validation and file preparation; maintains documentation for audit compliance; assists with trend analysis and technical assistance to districts.
- Director of Data Analysis and Reporting, Office of Technology and Strategic Services, pulls data from backend systems for Indicators 1–14; compiles data for the APR and LEA determinations; ensures consistency across state data systems.
- EDFacts Coordinators, Office of Technology and Strategic Services, Maintain EDFacts file specifications, formatting, and submission requirements; ensure alignment of all data files with federal reporting standards.

Data Collection Levels: These are the levels at which the SEA collects and reports the data.

Data Counts and Validation — MSIS 2.0

- In MSIS 2.0, student-level and aggregate data are collected, validated, and reported at multiple levels (school, LEA, and SEA) to ensure consistency and accuracy for federal reporting. Data are captured for all children with disabilities (ages 3–21) and include demographic elements such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, grade, disability category, educational environment (LRE), and English Learner status.
- MSIS 2.0 receives special education data in 3 different ways. The majority of data is received via API directly through LEAs' IEP vendors. LEAs who do not have an IEP vendor complete file uploads to import data into MSIS 2.0. Finally, students who are served but not enrolled in the LEA are entered and updated through a manual input screen (Non-Public Student Update). All child count and educational environment data are collected through these methods.
- MSIS 2.0 was re-designed beginning with the 2024-25 school year as a CEDS-based data collection system. The following educational environment codes were replaced by CEDS and EDFacts aligned values in the revised system.

Legacy Code	Legacy Definition	MSIS 2.0 Code	MSIS 2.0 Definition
PL	Regular program < 10 hrs./wk.; served elsewhere	RECo9YOTHLOC	Regular EC program < 10 hrs./wk. in other location
PJ	Regular program ≥ 10 hrs./wk.; served elsewhere	REC10YOTHLOC	Regular EC program ≥ 10 hrs./wk. in other location
PK	Regular program < 10 hrs./wk.; served in program	RECo9YSVCS	Services in regular EC program < 10 hrs./wk.



PI	Regular program ≥ 10 hrs./wk.; served in program	REC10YSVCS	Services in regular EC program ≥ 10 hrs./wk.
PG	Separate Class	SC	Separate special education class
PF	Separate School	SS	Separate school
PE	Residential Facility	RF	Residential facility
PC	Home	H	Home
PH	Service Provider Location	SPL	Service provider or other location
Legacy Code	Legacy Definition	MSIS 2.0 2.0 Code	MSIS 2.0 2.0 Definition
SA	Inside regular class ≥ 80% of day	RC80	Inside regular class ≥ 80% of day
SB	Inside regular class 40–79% of day	RC79TO40	Inside regular class 40–79% of day
SC	Inside regular class < 40% of day	RC39	Inside regular class < 40% of day
SD	Separate School	SS	Separate school
SF	Residential Facility	RF	Residential facility
SH	Home/Hospital	HH	Homebound/Hospital
SI	Correctional Facility	CF	Correctional facility
SJ	Parentally Placed Private School	PPPS	Parentally placed private school

- These mappings are applied automatically within MSIS 2.0’s backend logic to preserve historical comparability while ensuring alignment with federal IDEA Section 618 reporting codes.
- Grade-level data are also standardized under the revised MSIS 2.0. The legacy “ungraded” or “peer group” codes (52, 54, 56, 58) have been replaced by age-based grade structures aligned to the student’s educational program (preschool, elementary, middle, or secondary). This change ensures consistency across general and special education datasets and improves integration with EDFacts and Generate.
- For preschool reporting, only LEA- and state-level counts are produced. Beginning with the revised MSIS 2.0, early childhood environment codes are validated for students aged 3–5 against grade level assignments.
- Data are aggregated at the school, LEA, and SEA levels for children ages 6–21, while early childhood counts (ages 3–5) are reported at the LEA and SEA levels.

- Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) data and other applicable demographic data are also collected alongside the Child Count for all districts and integrated into MSIS 2.0 for equity and performance analyses.

Federal Reporting Period and Submission Dates: The reporting period as OSEP defines it (i.e., snapshot of a particular day or a period of time such as school year) and final due date.

The federal reporting period for the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) IDEA Part B data submissions is defined by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and follows a combination of point-in-time (snapshot) and cumulative (school year) reporting periods, depending on the indicator or collection type.

For Child Count and Educational Environments, the reporting period is a snapshot of data as of December 1 of each school year. All districts must finalize and certify student-level data in MSIS 2.0 by January 31 of the following calendar year. The verified dataset is then processed through MSIS 2.0 and Generate for submission.

For Discipline, Personnel, and Assessment data, the reporting period covers the entire school year (July 1 – June 30). Districts enter data throughout the year, and final updates must be completed by June 30 to ensure inclusion in the state's cumulative dataset.

The OSE and OTSS teams complete data validation, cross-checks, and corrections from July through August, with final OSEP submissions due by the federal deadlines for Child Count and cumulative year-end submissions (e.g., discipline, exiting, and personnel).

All finalized data are reviewed jointly by the Office of Special Education (OSE) and the Office of Technology and Strategic Services (OTSS) prior to submission in EMAPS and EDFacts.

State Collection and Submission Schedule: Provide a list of dates when the data collection period opens, when data are due to the SEA from the LEA, and when the SEA pulls the data after the collection closes.

Statewide training for districts is conducted one to two times per year to support accurate data entry and compliance with reporting requirements. The Educator-in-Residence provides on-site technical assistance and training for new Special Education Directors as well as districts requesting additional support.

Each year, the Office of Special Education (OSE) also conducts targeted training sessions around the December 1 Child Count to review data validation, coding procedures, and updates to MSIS 2.0. These sessions are designed to ensure district staff understand current guidance and timelines for accurate data submission.

State Collection and Submission Schedule (MSIS 2.0 2.0)

Child Count & Educational Environments (Dec 1 snapshot)

- Opens: September 1 (MSIS 2.0 live for new year; LEAs begin updates)
- LEA Key Dates:
 - December 1 – Official snapshot date
 - December 10 – Child Count certification due in MSIS 2.0
 - January 31 – Final LEA corrections complete in MSIS 2.0
- SEA Pulls:
 - Early January – Initial statewide pull for QA
 - February 1–15 (or the month of required submission should it change) – Finalized pull to MSIS 2.0/Generate
- Notes: OSE/OTSS run data checks monthly (Sept–Nov), and weekly (Dec–Jan).
- Clarification changes after Dec 1 are limited to data-quality fixes, not head-count gains.

Operational Conventions

- If a due date falls on a weekend/holiday, the deadline moves to the next business day.
- MSIS 2.0 runs data quality checks daily; EOY certification by June 30.
- All ED Facts submissions are generated through the Generate system and submitted to EMAPS with OTSS/OSE joint QA.
- Clarification windows are used for data-quality corrections only, not to inflate counts after snapshots. With increased data quality checks placed in MSIS 2.0, the goal is to eliminate post-snapshot edits.

Processes

Collection:

Statewide training for districts is conducted one to two times per year to support accurate data entry and compliance with reporting requirements. The Educator-in-Residence provides on-site technical assistance and training for new Special Education Directors as well as districts requesting additional support.

Each year, the Office of Special Education (OSE) also conducts targeted training sessions around the December 1 Child Count to review data validation, coding procedures, and updates to MSIS 2.0. These sessions are designed to ensure district staff understand current guidance and timelines for accurate data submission.

District-Level Data Entry and Verification Process (MSIS 2.0)

Each district designates an MSIS 2.0 Coordinator or MSIS 2.0 Data Team responsible for maintaining accurate student-level data within the Mississippi Student Information

System (MSIS 2.0). The MSIS 2.0 Coordinator manages the ongoing data entry, validation, and submission processes for all student

records, while the Special Education Coordinator is specifically responsible for ensuring the accuracy of special education data used in the December 1 Child Count.

Districts operate local Student Information Systems (SIS), which interface with MSIS 2.0 through automated or scheduled data uploads. Local SIS platforms may vary by district (e.g., PowerSchool, SAM, or other state-approved systems). Each district is responsible for ensuring that local SIS data match MSIS 2.0 reports, including all required fields for demographics, disability category, educational environment, and enrollment status.

If MSIS 2.0 detects errors, districts are responsible for correcting them within their local SIS and verifying that updates are reflected accurately in MSIS 2.0. Errors typically occur due to missing data elements, invalid codes, or information that does not meet MSIS 2.0 business rule requirements.

Once the local SIS and IEP system reports align with MSIS 2.0, no active errors remain, and the district has reviewed the accuracy of the Child Count report in MSIS 2.0, the district certifies the Child Count data collection in MSIS 2.0.

Once the district certifies their Child Count data (certification is due on December 10 each year), this tags the certified data as the official Child Count dataset within MSIS 2.0.

Districts then complete the Child Count Verification Form, signed by the Superintendent, and upload it to the state's SharePoint site by December 20.

IDEA SSS Considerations:¹ Verify that data are consistent with responses in the IDEA SSS. Describe state definitions and parameters for relevant IDEA SSS questions.

The Education Program Administrator for Data and Compliance complete the IDEA State Supplemental Survey (SSS). All coding used for federal reporting follows the definitions and requirements outlined in the *MSIS 2.0 Special Education Manual*, which includes the complete list of Mississippi-specific disability, placement, and program codes used for IDEA reporting. MSIS 2.0 data quality checks ensure that the Child Count data match IDEA SSS responses. For example, ages of children identified for Developmentally Delayed disability are verified against the state-allowed age cutoff.

The Education Program Administrator for Data and Compliance complete the IDEA State Supplemental Survey (SSS). All coding used for federal reporting follows the definitions and requirements outlined in the *MSIS 2.0 Special Education Manual*, which includes the complete list of Mississippi-specific disability, placement, and program codes used for IDEA reporting. MSIS 2.0 data quality checks ensure that the Child Count data match IDEA SSS responses. For example, ages of children identified for

Developmentally Delayed disability are verified against the state-allowed age cutoff.

Data Cleaning Process — December 1 Child Count

The December 1 Child Count captures all eligible students with disabilities and their corresponding educational environments; however, the initial snapshot may not include complete demographic data. Around December 10, the OTSS Data Analyst generates a data quality report from MSIS 2.0 to identify records with missing or invalid elements—most commonly race/ethnicity, gender, and LRE codes.

The Education Program Administrator for Data and Compliance review the report and distributes district-specific spreadsheets to LEAs as soon as possible in December (or in early January if the state office is closed for the winter break). Each district must review its data, fill in or correct missing demographic elements, and ensure that all updates are entered into MSIS 2.0.

Once districts complete and return their spreadsheets, the Education Program Administrator compiles and reviews all submissions to confirm completeness and consistency. The compiled spreadsheet is forwarded to the Director of Data Analysis and Reporting, who coordinates with OTSS to apply verified demographic and LRE updates to the Child Count dataset within MSIS 2.0. These updates are typically made within one week of receipt.

After updates are applied, the Education Program Administrator receives an updated verification report from OTSS. The Administrator reviews the revised dataset for accuracy and cross-checks against prior years' data to identify any major shifts in student counts, demographics, or environments. Any anomalies are flagged for further review with the Director of Special Education and district personnel, as appropriate. This data is also available at any time to OSE staff in MSIS 2.0.

If updates to a district's Child Count data are made after the initial December 1 submission, the OSE Data and Reporting Team sends formal correspondence to that district summarizing the changes, explaining the reason for each correction, and confirming that updates are reflected in MSIS 2.0. Districts are expected to acknowledge receipt and verify that their local data matches the state record.

Once the data is validated and all discrepancies are resolved, the Education Program Administrator for Data and Compliance prepare a final summary report for the Director of Special Education. Together, they review and approve the final statewide Child Count and Educational Environments data for submission to OSEP.

The Director of Special Education, as the authorized state official, then signs the Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Certification Form, verifying that the data have been reviewed and approved by the State Education Agency (SEA). The Director of

Data Analysis and Reporting submits the certified data and the signed form to OSEP through EMAPS by the federal deadline.

As part of the modernization of MSIS 2.0, data quality checks have been put into place to prevent missing data in the Child Count. Students will not be included in the Child Count report until all required data elements have been entered, and all educational environments are correct for the age and grade level of the student. With these data quality checks, MDE plans to phase out the post-certification data cleaning process by the 2026-27 school year.

Internal Approval Process:³

Internal Approval Process

Each Local Education Agency (LEA) is responsible for certifying its December 1 Child Count data within MSIS 2.0 each year. Certification occurs through an online verification process in which the LEA's Special Education Director reviews student-level data, confirms that all eligible students with disabilities are included, and ensures the accuracy of the associated Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) codes, demographic data, and disability categories.

After reviewing the Child Count report, the LEA verifies accuracy by completing the Child Count Verification Form. This form is signed by the Superintendent and uploaded electronically to the state's SharePoint site by December 20. Electronic submission of this form serves as the official certification of the district's data by the LEA.

At the state level, the Education Program Administrator for Data and Compliance review all district certifications and verifies that each LEA has submitted its signed Child Count Verification Form. The Administrator then compares the certified district totals to the statewide aggregated Child Count to ensure internal consistency. If discrepancies or outliers are identified, the Administrator communicates directly with districts to confirm or correct data in MSIS 2.0 before the dataset is finalized.

Once all district-level certifications have been received and verified, the Education Program Administrator compiles a final statewide verification report for review by the Director of Data Analysis and Reporting and the Director of Special Education. The Administrator provides a summary of any changes, updates, or data notes, and confirms that all data align with federal IDEA Section 618 requirements and prior-year trends.

Following review and approval, the Director of Special Education—as the authorized official—signs the Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Certification Form on behalf of the State Education Agency (SEA). The Director of Data Analysis and

Reporting submits the certified data and signs form to OSEP via EMAPS by the federal deadline.

Submission:⁴ *EDFacts* file listed on p. 1.

Once the certified data are finalized and approved, the verified Child Count dataset is migrated from MSIS 2.0 by Extract, Transform, and Load (ETL) processes into Generate to prepare the data for federal reporting. The transformed data in Generate are then compared to the original MSIS 2.0 source data to confirm accuracy, completeness, and integrity before submission.

All data transformations follow the procedures outlined in the Child Count ETL Checklist, available on SharePoint: [MS Child Count ETL Checklist](#).

After the ETL process is complete, the OTSS Data Analyst runs the EDFacts file generated from Generate through the federal edit-check tools to identify and correct any anomalies or validation errors. Once the files pass all edit checks, the EDFacts Coordinator retrieves the final submission files from Generate and completes the upload to OSEP via EDPass.

All final and interim submission files are stored on the OTSS network drive in the folder designated for EDFacts Submitted Files. Each submission is retained for audit, version control, and historical documentation in accordance with MDE's data retention policy.

Response to OSEP Data Quality Report:⁵

When year-to-year data changes or anomalies are identified, the EDFacts Coordinator retrieves the data quality reports highlighting the areas of variance. These reports are provided to the Education Program Administrator for Data and Compliance for review.

The Education Program Administrator analyzes the reports, prepares data notes explaining the reasons for the year-to-year changes (such as program closures, district consolidations, or updates in reporting methodology), and submits the notes to the Director of Special Education for review and approval. Once approved, the Education Program Administrator forwards the finalized data notes to the EDFacts Coordinator, who enters them into EDPass as part of the official submission record.

Data Governance:

Mississippi has an established data governance committee and procedures that outlines the process for change control. Any changes to data collections must be formally submitted to the Change Review Board, a subset of the data governance committee and voted upon and approved by data owners.

Public Reporting:

Special ED Data is reported on MDE's website. Data comes from OTSS, and a PDF or locked spreadsheet is posted. <https://mdek12.org/ose>

Appendix:

Example of blank Child Count Verification: