Canon 6 Recommended Practices and Training

1) Use best practice resources to design your data systems and train data handlers. The topic is beyond the scope of this Guide, but there are a number of Forum publications that may be especially helpful (see appendix A):
   a. *Forum Curriculum for Improving Education Data: A Resource for Local Education Agencies*—for lesson plans, instructional handouts, and related resources for helping schools develop a culture of data quality.
   b. *Managing an Identity Crisis: Forum Guide to Implementing New Federal Race and Ethnicity Categories*—to guide implementation of the new federal race and ethnicity categories.
   c. *Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data*—to improve the quality, comparability, and utility of attendance data.
   d. *Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes*—to improve the quality, comparability, and utility of exit data.
   e. *Forum Guide to the Privacy of Student Information: A Resource for Schools*—to help apply federal, state, and local privacy laws.
   f. *Forum Guide to Education Indicators*—to help construct and apply commonly used education measures.
   g. *Forum Guide to Decision Support Systems: A Resource for Educators*—to develop a robust decision support system in an education organization.
   h. *Creating a Longitudinal Data System*—to learn more about the ten essential elements of a state longitudinal data system, as available from the Data Quality Campaign at *http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Publications-Creating_Longitudinal_Data_Systems-Lessons_Learned_by_Leading_States.pdf.*

2) Data system improvement is more than this *Guide* can address, but organizations are encouraged to develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan for improving and ensuring data quality, addressing issues such as
   a. assigning unique student identifiers;
   b. using prepopulated forms for assessments when appropriate;
   c. performing data verification, validation, editing, as necessary to assess and improve data quality;
   d. integrating systems to reuse data for multiple appropriate purposes (payroll, human resources, etc.) rather than collecting and rekeying information already owned by the organization;
   e. incorporating industry standards across disparate systems, such as the Schools Interoperability Framework standards available at *(http://www.sifinfo.org)*;
   f. utilizing applications that allow for easy import and export of existing student data; and
   g. identifying the authoritative source of data items when multiple systems include the same data items.

3) Update data practices to reflect changing policy needs. For example, the routine use of a surname as a family identifier may not be sufficient when the traditional family unit definition is expanded to include other family members, such as parents, stepparents, grandparents, or child advocates.

4) Train all data users about the concepts and practices surrounding the generation, maintenance, and use of high quality education data.