

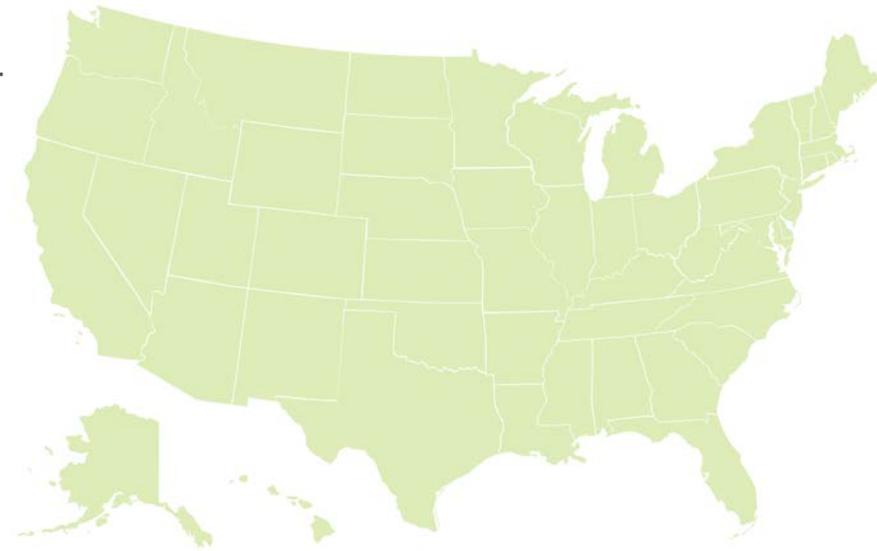
Forum Guide to Exit Codes

National Forum on Education Statistics

Mission: To plan, recommend, and develop education data resources that support local, state, and national efforts to improve prekindergarten through secondary education throughout the United States.

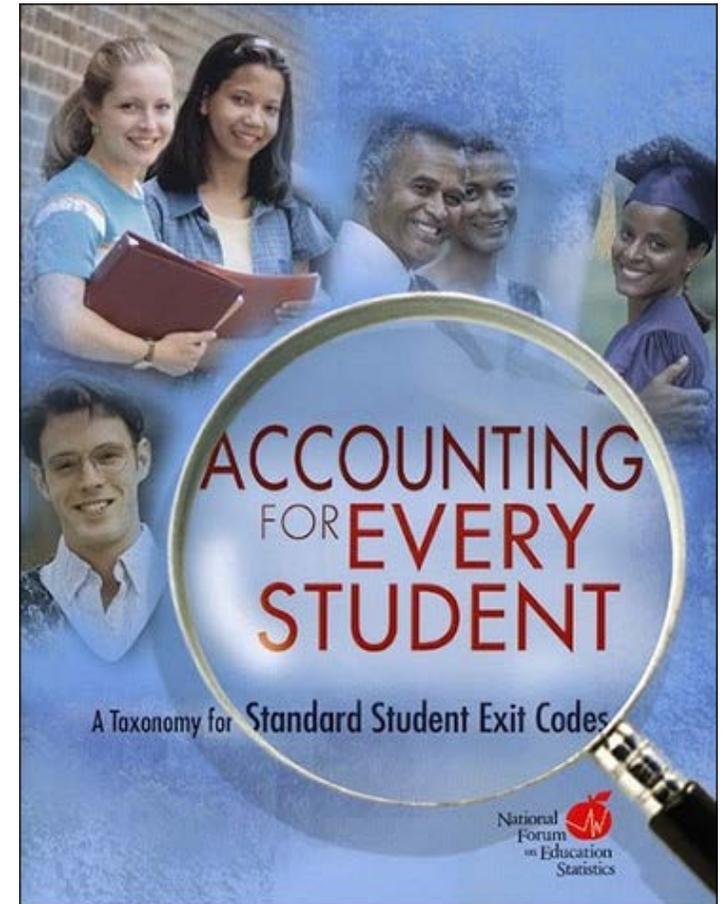
Members:

- Representatives of offices of the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies
- Representatives of state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs)
- Associate members from U.S. territories, Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), and national education associations



Working Group Motivation

- The Forum convened the Exit Codes Working Group to review and update [Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes](#), published in 2006.



Purpose and Audience

- **Purpose:** To provide an updated taxonomy for exit codes, information on best practices related to exit coding, and case studies that highlight different education agencies' approaches to and experiences with exit coding.
- **Audience:** Education agency leaders and staff who collect and use data on student exit status to accurately account for all students. This audience may include data managers, school registrars, accountability directors in SEAs and LEAs, school administrators, researchers, and policymakers.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to Exit Codes

Chapter 2: The Exit Codes Taxonomy

Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Chapter 4: Case Studies

Appendix: Characteristics of Sound Exit Code Taxonomies

Chapter 1: Introduction to Exit Codes

Chapter 1 answers these questions:

- Why did the 2006 Forum guide need an update?
- Why are exit codes important?
- What critical education questions can exit codes help users answer?
- How is an exit codes taxonomy useful at the federal level?
- How can SEAs and LEAs use the exit codes taxonomy?

Chapter 1: Introduction to Exit Codes

Exit codes ...

- are attached to individual student records; and
- allow agencies to track students when they transfer, graduate, drop out, or otherwise exit a school or district.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Exit Codes

Comprehensive data systems include standard exit codes that personnel can use to account for every student as they exit a school for varied reasons. Exit codes are created and used differently according to different agencies' needs, and there is considerable variation among the exit codes used in different SEAs and LEAs.

The voluntary exit codes taxonomy presented in chapter 2 was designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of very different education agencies.

Chapter 2: The Exit Codes Taxonomy

Chapter 2: The Exit Codes Taxonomy

Category 1: Expected to Remain in the LEA

Category 2: Transferred Out

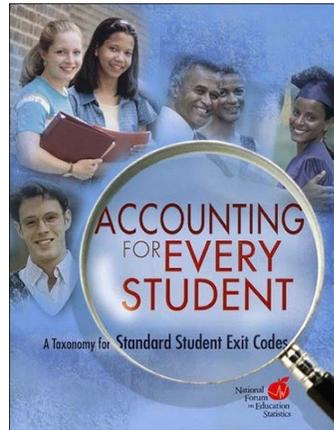
Category 3: Dropped Out

Category 4: Completed

Category 5: Expected to Return After an Extended Break

Category 6: Unable or Unlikely to Return

Chapter 2: The Exit Codes Taxonomy



The six categories remain the same as in the 2006 document.



Items listed within each category now align with CEDS.

Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Taxonomies are useful for sorting information into logical categories. However, if data are not properly collected and coded in the first place, this can lead to inaccurate analyses and conclusions.

Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Chapter 3 includes these sections:

- Withdrawal Procedures That Support Exit Code Data Quality
- Sound Data Collection Practices
- Data System and Data Governance Features That Support Exit Code Data Quality
- Validating Exit Codes
- Documenting and Verifying Student Exit Codes
- Accounting for the Exit of All Students

Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Sound Data Collection Practices

- *Forum Guide to Taking Action with Education Data*
https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2013801.asp
- *Forum Curriculum for Improving Education Data*
https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2007808.asp
- *Forum Guide to Building a Culture of Quality Data*
https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2005801.asp
- *Forum Guide to Planning For, Collecting, and Managing Data About Students Displaced by a Crisis*
https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2019163.asp



Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Withdrawal Procedures That Support Exit Code Data Quality

“Exit data are only as good as the **processes** people follow when a student withdraws and the care they take when entering information in a database or other record-keeping document. It is important for education agencies to be diligent about **crafting clear withdrawal processes** and helping staff understand how to **assign exit codes appropriately.**”



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Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Verifying That Exit Codes Are Correct and **Validating** Exit Codes

- *Verification* is the process of confirming that information is correct.
- *Validation* is a process that ensures that data agree with expectations for reasonable values and accepted norms.



Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Verifying That Exit Codes Are Correct

The National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC) held a virtual meeting on December 13, 2018, to discuss SEA and LEA strategies for documenting and verifying student transfers. The meeting focused on common challenges and their solutions, as identified by SEA and LEA practitioners.



The information provided has been incorporated into the new exit codes document.

Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Verifying That Exit Codes Are Correct

For example, here is information that NESAC provided:

Colorado has determined that “any student whose transfer to another educational environment cannot be verified is a dropout for reporting purposes.”

Source:

<https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=7579>



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Chapter 3: Best Practices in Exit Coding

Accounting for the Exit of All Students

SEAs and LEAs have found great benefit in reviewing how exit codes are assigned to

- students who concurrently attend multiple schools, charter schools, or who are homeschooled;
- truant students;
- foster and homeless students;
- students who complete high school coursework early;
- students who drop out temporarily;
- military-connected students;
- imprisoned or to-be-adjudicated students; and
- students with unique religious or cultural beliefs.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

Case studies appear in chapter 4.

They illustrate how exit coding works in practice in states and other jurisdictions.

The purpose of chapter 4 is to share ideas regarding exit codes and coding.

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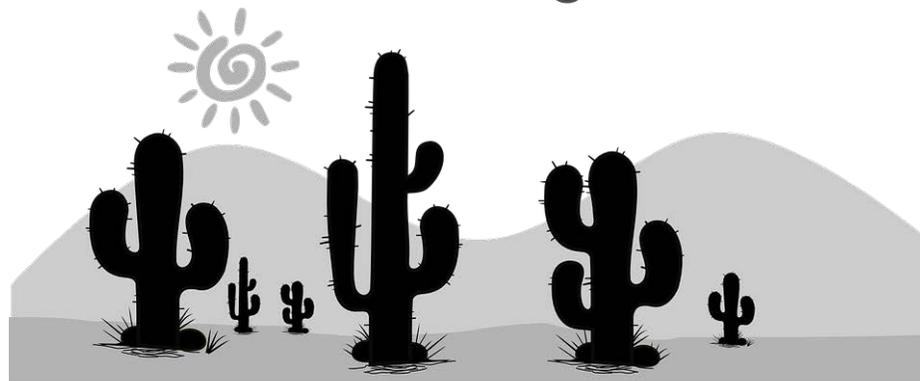


Chapter 4: Case Studies

How Nevada SEAs and LEAs Collaborated to Move From Local to Statewide Exit Codes

When the Nevada Department of Education started using a new statewide student information system, it also standardized its entry and exit codes.

The SEA worked with all of its LEAs to gather current codes and consolidate them into one statewide list.



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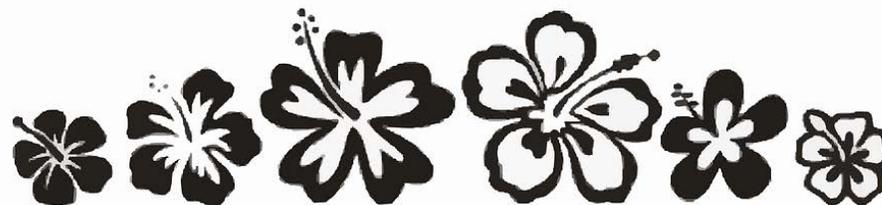
Chapter 4: Case Studies

How Hawaii Uses Exit Codes Data to Track Transient Students and Dropouts

Acquiring accurate exit codes data is a particular challenge in Hawaii because of its large population of military families. Students from military families remain in the Hawaii public schools for approximately 3 years before their parents receive a new permanent change of station notice.

Each fall, schools are asked to verify two types of student exits:

- **Mainland exits**
- **Unknown exits**



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Chapter 4: Case Studies

Utah Tiebreaker Strategies: Exiting Students Who Attend Two Schools

Exiting students who attend two schools can be tricky, especially in terms of accountability for dropouts. Utah created a tiebreaker policy for students who attend two or more schools during the student's final cohort year. The tiebreaker establishes a hierarchical order of factors used to select a single school.



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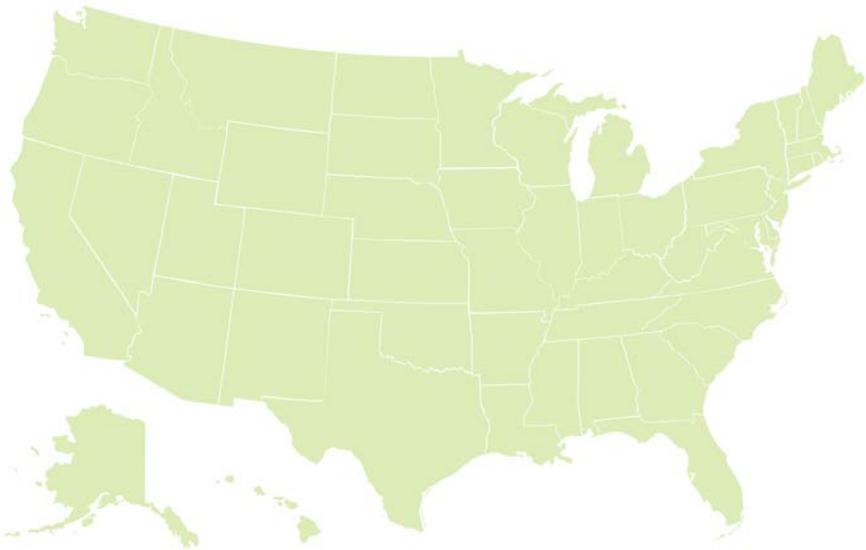
Additional Case Studies

- **A New Exit Code in Guam for High School Students Waiting to Be “Reset”**
- **The Maine Department of Education’s Use of CEDS Element “Withdrawal or Exit Type”**

Forum Guide to Exit Codes



Appendix: Characteristics of Sound Taxonomies



An appendix presents a list of features common to sound coding taxonomies.

Agencies that incorporate these features in their exit code taxonomies should find that they can map their taxonomies to the one presented in chapter 2.

Exit Codes Working Group

Co-Chairs

Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (Montana)

Jan Petro, Colorado Department of Education

Members

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Gunes Kaplan, Nevada Department of Education

Zenaida Napa Natividad, Guam Department of Education

Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (Missouri)

Susan Williams, Virginia Department of Education

Forum Resources

- For more information about the Forum, please visit <https://nces.ed.gov/forum/index.asp>
- Download free Forum resources at <http://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp>

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