Forum Member Handbook

Foreword

The National Forum on Education Statistics is supported by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. Its mission is to develop and recommend strategies for building education data systems that will support local, state, and national efforts to improve public and private education throughout the United States. Forum members include representatives of state and local education agencies, offices of the U.S. Department of Education, other federal agencies, and national associations with an interest in education data.

This document was written for Forum members, and interested nonmembers, to improve their understanding of the Forum's goals and objectives, the processes and mechanisms the Forum uses to accomplish those goals and objectives, and the resources it develops for the education community.

Visit http://nces.ed.gov/forum for more information about the National Forum on Education Statistics, and to find the most up-to-date version of this resource.

Part One: About the Forum

About the Member Handbook

This Member Handbook of the National Forum on Education Statistics is designed to serve as a single, comprehensive resource about the purpose and operations of the National Forum on Education Statistics (the Forum). It is written for members of the Forum, and for interested nonmembers, to improve their understanding of the Forum's goals and objectives, the processes and mechanisms the Forum uses to accomplish those goals and objectives, and the resources it develops for the education community.

New members may find it helpful as they prepare for their roles in the Forum, whether as a state education agency liaison, a local education agency liaison, a federal agency member, or an associate member. Typically, it takes some time for a new member to become familiar with the Forum's culture, processes, and opportunities, and having a Member Handbook to consult should help expedite and simplify that process.

Seasoned members may find the Member Handbook useful as they engage in new activities, serve on committees and task forces, and accept leadership roles in the organization. It may also be a useful tool when mentoring new members and making presentations about the Forum and its resources to outside audiences.

The Handbook has two parts: "About the Forum" and "Forum Resources." The first part reviews the mission of the Forum, its membership, organizational structure, and operating processes. The second part describes Forum resources, including free publications and presentation materials, the outreach toolkit, web resources, and links to related organizations.

What is the National Forum on Education Statistics?

Background of the Forum

The National Forum on Education Statistics provides an arena for local, state, and national leaders in the education data community to discuss issues, address problems, develop resources, and consider new approaches to improving data collection and utility. It is a voluntary, democratic, and participatory federal-state-local body that identifies and addresses education data needs at the national, state, and local levels. The Forum was established by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education in 1989.

The Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary Education Improvement Amendments of 1988 (P.L. 100–297) gave NCES the authority to establish a National Cooperative Education Statistics System. NCES established the Cooperative System to "produce and maintain, with the cooperation of the States, comparable and uniform educational information and data that are useful for policymaking at the federal, state, and local level." The legislation identified seven broad topics as examples of areas that could be addressed by the data collection and reporting system. They are

1. schools and school districts;
2. students and enrollments, including special populations;
3. availability of school libraries and their resources;
4. teachers, librarians, and school administrators;
5. financing of elementary and secondary education;
6. student outcomes, including scores on standardized tests and other measures of education achievement; and
7. progress of educational reform in the states and in the nation.

NCES established the Forum to assist the National Cooperative Education Statistics System in achieving its congressional mandate. The Forum held its first meeting in March 1989, and the Forum formalized its goals, objectives, functions, organizational structure, and operations in January 1990 with the adoption of a *Policies and Procedures Manual* by the Forum membership. The *Policies and Procedures Manual* has since been revised several times.

The Forum's Mission

The major purposes of the Forum are to

- develop and propose, cooperatively, a national education data agenda and model(s) for education data systems that will meet the needs of education policymakers and program planners in the coming decade and beyond;
- inform federal, state, and local decisionmakers on the goals and progress of this cooperative education statistics system; and
- provide an arena in which federal, state, and local education interests can identify, debate, mediate, and where appropriate, recommend action on issues, emerging needs, and technological innovation salient to the improvement of education data comparability, uniformity, timeliness, and accuracy at the national level.

> **Forum's Mission Statement**
> The mission of the Forum is to develop and recommend strategies for building education data systems that will support local, state, and national efforts to improve public and private education throughout the United States. It is committed to improving the quality, comparability, and usefulness of elementary and secondary education data, while remaining sensitive to data burden concerns.

Who are the Forum Members?

Forum members include representatives from local and state education agencies, and federal agencies that have an interest in elementary/secondary education data. Federal, state, and local agency representatives are eligible to be full members of the Forum. Representatives of other organizations participate as associate members.

> **Education Agencies and Their Representatives Who are Members of the Forum**
>
> - The education agencies of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (hereafter referred to as the states)
> - One local education agency within a state selected by each Chief State School Officer
> - The NCES Commissioner (ex officio), the Associate Commissioners of major NCES divisions, and the office of the NCES Chief Statistician
> - The other principal offices of the U.S. Department of Education or programs within these principal offices that collect or use elementary/secondary education data, including but not limited to
>   Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
>   Office of Vocational and Adult Education
>   Office of English Language Acquisition
>   Office of Migrant Education
>   Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
>   Office of the Chief Information Officer
> - U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity

State Education Agency (SEA) Liaisons

An SEA representative to the Forum is formally appointed by the Chief State School Officer of each state and is expected to speak on his or her behalf regarding education data issues. The SEA representatives contribute valuable perspective and experience concerning state education data needs. The state representative may designate a permanent alternate who will attend meetings and manage other Forum responsibilities in the representative's place. In the absence of the state representative, the permanent alternate has the same voting and participation rights as a full member. A state representative's responsibilities include

- acting as a representative in the coordination of federal data collections at the state level and in other matters concerning the Cooperative System to promote the efficiency, quality, and usefulness of data;
- attending two annual meetings of the National Forum on Education Statistics and voting on any issues that may come before the full Forum for approval;
- participating in the annual NCES Data Conference and in the Management Information Systems (MIS) Conference;
- serving as the principal contact for all Cooperative System Contracts awarded to states;
- serving as a member of a standing committee;
- volunteering to work with one or more task forces;
- reviewing Forum/NCES publications as a preliminary step to Forum approval; and
- managing work relating to contracts for basic participation and for special task awards. (The basic participation contracts cover the costs of travel to meetings of the Forum while the special task awards cover specific state data improvement projects.)

Local Education Agency (LEA) Liaisons

An LEA representative is formally appointed by the Chief State School Officer of each state and is expected to participate in all Forum meetings as a full member. LEA representatives are authorized to vote on issues that come before the Forum and to hold office in the Forum. They are expected to contribute valuable perspective and experiences regarding local education agency data needs. Other responsibilities include

- attending two annual meetings of the National Forum on Education Statistics and voting on any issues that may come before the full Forum for approval;
- participating in the annual NCES Data Conference and in the Management Information Systems Conference (MIS);
- serving as a member of one standing committee of the Forum;
- volunteering to work with one or more task forces; and
- reviewing Forum/NCES publications as a preliminary step to Forum approval.

Associate Members

Associate members participate in Forum standing committee meetings and take an active role in committee, subcommittee, and task force activities. They participate in the discussion of issues, but they do not participate in formal decisionmaking of the full Forum, and do not vote for Forum officers or on policies and procedures. They may not hold office. In addition, the responsibilities of associate members include promoting the work of the Forum among the membership of their respective organizations and providing the Forum with valuable input from the perspective of their organizations.

Forum Organization

The Forum meets semiannually (each winter and summer) to discuss and work on data issues and specific topics related to education data in schools, districts, state education agencies, and the U.S. Department of Education. The Forum achieves its mission and objectives primarily through the deliberations and work of a Steering Committee and three standing committees designed to address major interests of the National Cooperative Education Statistics System. The committees may propose and support task forces, which are appointed for a specified time period to develop products about a specific topic (e.g., education indicators and virtual education data elements).

Forum Committees

Forum Steering Committee

The Forum Steering Committee oversees and coordinates all Forum activities. Members of the Steering Committee include the Forum chair, vice-chair, and immediate past chair, and the chairs and vice-chairs of the three standing committees. The Commissioner of the NCES is a member ex officio. The chairperson of the Forum leads the Steering Committee.

> **Committee Meeting Notes**
> The meeting notes of the committees may be accessed on the Forum's website at: http://nces.ed.gov/forum/meeting_notes.asp.

Standing Committees

Forum standing committees are designed to address the major mandates of the Cooperative System, promote long-range planning, and foster continuity in Forum activities. Membership in standing committees is limited to members and associates of the Forum. There are three standing committees: the National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC), the Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee (PPI), and the Technology Committee (TECH).

1. *National Education Statistics Agenda Committee.* NESAC's mission is to develop a national education statistics agenda. The agenda identifies issues and policy concerns bearing on the development of comparable and effective nationwide elementary and secondary education data collection, reporting, and use. The agenda focuses on the major areas of student, staff, fiscal, institutional, and other information that yields valuable perspectives on education in the United States.

2. *Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee.* PPI addresses ways to help SEAs and LEAs improve their efforts to collect and report comparable, accurate, and timely data. It also works to improve coordination among federal agencies and between federal and state agencies. In addition, PPI develops ways to reduce paperwork burdens at all levels of government, and explores ongoing and emerging issues such as data sharing and confidentiality of education records. PPI is also responsible for recommending amendments to the Forum Policy and Procedures Manual and for reviewing and recommending the formation of new task forces.

3. *Technology Committee.* TECH is concerned with new and proven technology strategies to improve the management and exchange of student and staff information and the technical infrastructure that supports these technologies. TECH's role and responsibilities include promoting the development and adoption of standards for electronic data exchange; sponsoring pilot and developmental projects in the exchange of data about students and education staff; examining the impact of new technologies on information exchange; and producing "best practices" guides to help schools, school districts, and state education agencies make good decisions about selecting hardware, software, and networking services for information management.

Subcommittees, Working Groups, and Task Forces

Standing committees may appoint subcommittees and working groups (which may become task forces upon additional approval).

Subcommittees

Standing committees may establish subcommittees to address ongoing issues beyond the scope of regular committee work (e.g., the Forum Communications Subcommittee). Subcommittees consist of members of the standing committee with a chairperson determined by the standing committee. Subcommittees do not require substantial resources to complete their assignments, although the chair of the standing committee may request that a listserv be created or that conference telephone calls be convened to conduct subcommittee work.

Working Groups

Working groups are convened by standing committees to determine whether there is merit in establishing a Forum task force to produce a specific product. If it is the consensus of the standing committee to establish a working group to investigate whether such a project should be pursued, the chair appoints an individual or group to complete the Request to Form a Working Group. Upon Steering Committee approval, the working group is authorized to meet once outside of regularly scheduled full Forum meetings to research a specific issue and determine whether there is a need for the Forum to formally establish a task force to produce a publication or other product.

Working groups may consist of Forum members, members of partnering organizations who bring expertise on the topic of interest, an NCES liaison, and a consultant who is contracted to perform support work. The working group may decide that additional research about the topic is not necessary (i.e., resources are already available) or not feasible (i.e., the topic cannot be addressed in a timely or cost-effective manner). Should the working group determine that additional work is desirable, it proposes a product development and dissemination plan for a proposed task force (see the Forum Product Development and Dissemination Guide at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pdf/guide_04.pdf for more information about the publication development process).

Should the parent standing committee agree with a working group recommendation to form a task force, the product development and dissemination plan is submitted to the Policies, Procedures, and Implementation Committee and the Steering Committee for consideration.

Task Forces

Once a written product development and dissemination plan is reviewed by the Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee to ensure that the objectives relate to the Forum strategic plan and there is no overlap with other Forum committees or task forces, PPI may recommend to the Steering Committee that a working group be made into a Forum task force. The Steering Committee either approves or disapproves the establishment of task forces. Membership on task forces is not limited to members and associates of the Forum. The task force will develop a work plan that includes objectives, deliverables, outcomes, and a timeline for the completion of the work.

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

At each summer Forum meeting, the Steering Committee nominates a slate of officers to be voted on by the full membership in a Forum election. The slate includes the Forum/Steering Committee chair, the Forum/Steering Committee vice-chair, and the chairs and vice-chairs of the three standing committees. Nominations for Forum officers may also be made from the floor. A quorum (at least half of the members of the Forum) must be present for an election to be held; officers are elected by a majority vote of those present.

> **Committee Members**
> Rosters of current committee members may be accessed through the Forum's website at: http://nces.ed.gov/forum/member_state.asp.

Forum and committee officers are elected for a period of one year and take office immediately following the summer Forum meeting at which they are elected. There is no limit to the number of terms an officer may serve.

The Forum Chair

The Forum chair is elected by Forum members for a one-year term and works with the Steering Committee and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate all Forum activities. Responsibilities of the chair include

- serving for one year as the Forum chair and representing the Forum as necessary;
- chairing each Forum meeting;
- chairing Steering Committee meetings;
- developing agendas for the Forum and Steering Committee meetings with NCES staff;
- leading special projects at the request of Forum members; and
- serving on the Steering Committee as the "immediate past chair" in the ensuing year.

The Forum Vice-Chair

The Forum vice-chair is elected by Forum members for a one-year term and works with the Steering Committee and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate all Forum activities. The Forum vice-chair is often nominated and elected to become Forum Chair in the year following the term of office. Responsibilities of the Forum vice-chair include

- assisting the Forum chair in meetings and in representing the Forum;
- assisting the Forum chair in developing agendas for the Forum and Steering Committee meetings;
- leading the editorial board for the Forum Voice;
- serving as chair in the absence of the chair;
- leading special projects at the request of the chair; and
- reviewing the Forum Strategic Plan and recommending updates, as necessary.

The Standing Committee Chairs

Standing committee chairs are nominated by their committees and elected by the full Forum. The standing committee chairs work with the Steering Committee and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate the work of their specific standing committee. Responsibilities of standing committee chairs include

- serving for one year as standing committee chair and representing the Forum as necessary;
- chairing standing committee meetings;

- reviewing reports or products of the standing committee's task forces and working groups;
- forwarding requests for creating working groups and task forces to the Steering Committee;
- participating in Steering Committee meetings and representing their committees;
- developing agendas for the standing committee meetings in collaboration with the NCES staff; and
- leading special projects at the request of their standing committees and Forum members.

Standing Committee Vice-Chairs

Standing committee vice-chairs are nominated by their standing committees and elected by the full Forum. The vice-chairs work with standing committee chairs and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate the work of their specific standing committees. Responsibilities of standing committee vice-chairs include

- assisting the standing committee chairs in meetings and in representing the Forum;
- assisting the standing committee chairs in developing agendas for the committee meetings;
- serving on the editorial board for the Forum Voice;
- chairing committee meetings in the absence of the chair;
- leading special projects at the request of the chair; and
- reviewing reports or products of the standing committee's task forces and working groups.

Subcommittee and Working Group Chairs

Subcommittee and working group chairs are appointed by their committee chairs. Committee chairs may appoint co-chairs or vice-chairs of subcommittees or working groups if they deem it necessary.

Task Force Chairs

A task force chairperson is designated by the standing committee that requests the task force. The chair oversees and coordinates the work of specific topics of interest to Forum members. Responsibilities of standing task force chairs include

- leading task force work at the request of the Steering Committee, standing committees, and Forum members;
- chairing each task force meeting;
- selecting task force members with expertise in specific topics relating to task force work;
- identifying resource needs and establishing project timelines;
- scheduling and facilitating necessary meetings, phone conferences, and other events required for timely progress toward completion of task(s);
- developing agendas for the task force meetings in collaboration with NCES and support staff;
- developing products and promotional materials in collaboration with NCES and support staff;
- developing a product development and dissemination plan in collaboration with NCES and support staff;
- selecting outside reviewers for draft products in collaboration with NCES and support staff; and
- presenting the final products to the full Forum.

Forum Meetings

The Forum holds two meetings each year: one in the winter in conjunction with the NCES Management Information Systems (MIS) Conference, and one in the summer in conjunction with the NCES Summer Data Conference. The Steering Committee, standing committees, and active task forces/working groups all meet during this time. Task forces and working groups may also meet at other times as deemed necessary by their chairs and the NCES Project Officer.

Forum meetings include

- a new member orientation session held on the first day of all Forum meetings;
- opening and closing general sessions, usually with speakers from the federal government or national associations who update members on current and changing issues related to education data;
- standing committee meetings, in which the ongoing business of the Forum is conducted, major Forum initiatives are planned, and continuity in Forum activities is fostered; and
- professional development sessions, including seminars on important and current education data and technology issues, held on a periodic basis as determined by the Forum Steering Committee.

Consensus Process

The Forum endeavors to work by consensus decisionmaking in which all individuals party to a decision agree to the outcome before it is considered to be approved. To the extent possible, reports from committees, subcommittees, working groups, and task forces reflect the views of all their members.

When consensus cannot be achieved for decisions of the full Forum, majority rule as determined by a vote is used. Resolutions, reports for distribution to external audiences, and other actions representing the Forum as a whole must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of members present (a quorum—at least half of all members—must be present at a Forum meeting in order to hold an election or to vote on an amendment to the policies and procedures). Forum voting may also be conducted online via the Forum Voting Tool.

Getting Involved in Forum Activities

Standing committees plan initiatives, task forces develop resources, and Forum members participate in professional development programs—to mention just a few of the many activities that take place at Forum meetings. The best way for members to get immersed in Forum work is to attend both the winter and summer annual meetings where decisions and assignments are made. By attending Forum meetings, members learn who is doing what (and how and when) in the Forum.

The next stage of involvement occurs when the member joins a task force. Because task forces usually meet twice a year for 1-2 days in addition to sessions at Forum meetings, they are excellent opportunities for getting to know the Forum and its members. New members are especially encouraged to get involved in task force work.

Another way to participate in Forum activities is to disseminate the publications produced by the Forum. Meetings and conferences within member states or districts provide excellent opportunities to discuss the work of the Forum with colleagues and to bring ideas back to the Forum standing committees for discussion and possible action. Forum members are encouraged to use the items in the Outreach Toolkit (at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/outreach.asp) to assist in this effort.

Member Communications

Forum members communicate in person at the annual winter meeting, the annual summer meeting, and task force meetings. Information is shared with Forum members and the general public via the Forum website (http://nces.ed.gov/forum). The Forum website contains a wealth of information including access to Forum publications and meeting notes. The organization's newsletter, the *Forum Voice* (http://nces.ed.gov/forum/voice.asp), is published in an electronic format each spring and fall. Email addresses and telephone numbers for current Forum members can be accessed via the membership rosters listed on the website (http://nces.ed.gov/forum/membership.asp).

NCES, the Steering Committee, standing committees, and task forces also communicate through teleconferences scheduled on an as-needed basis throughout the year and via email listservs restricted to member use. Using the group's listserv address, members of a task force, committee, or other Forum group can send a message by email, which will be distributed to all members of the group. Only registered members of a listserv (i.e., only members of the group) can send messages via the listserv addresses below.

Group Name	Listserv Address
Communications Subcommittee	CommSub@nceslistserv.com
Data Use Working Group	DataUse@nceslistserv.com
Education Privacy Working Group	EducationPrivacy@nceslistserv.com
El/Sec Steering Committee	ELSEC-Steer@nceslistserv.com
Forum Members	ForumMembers@nceslistserv.com
Local Education Agency Liaisons (LEAs)	LEA@nceslistserv.com
National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC) Standing Committee	NESAC@nceslistserv.com
Policies, Programs and Implementation (PPI) Standing Committee	PPI@nceslistserv.com
SEA Data Use Working Group	SEA-DATAUSE@nceslistserv.com
State and Local Agency Members	SEA-LEA@nceslistserv.com
State Education Agency Liaisons (SEAs)	SEA@nceslistserv.com
Teacher-Student Data Link Working Group	TSDL@nceslistserv.com
Technology (TECH) Standing Committee	TECH@nceslistserv.com

Objectives and Strategies for Meeting the Forum's Goals

Goal I: Develop a comprehensive system of comparable local, state, and federal basic data elements useful for education decisionmaking at all levels of government.

Goal I Objective:

A comprehensive, dynamic set of basic data elements will be developed that adhere to a set of common definitions, are comparable within and across reporting levels, are timely and available on a schedule appropriate for decisionmaking, and provide an accurate and reliable picture of what they measure.

To meet this objective, the Forum endorses the following strategies:

A. Identify the basic data elements relating to students, staff, finance, facilities, and technology at school, district, state, and national levels.
B. Disseminate and promote the use of basic data elements.
C. Review the content and completeness of the system of basic data elements and the procedure for identifying elements on a continuing basis.
D. Assist with the adoption and use of standards for data collection and reporting.
E. Support efforts to plan the development and implementation of automated and integrated education data systems.
F. Identify and seek to remove organizational and technical barriers, problems, and unresolved questions impeding the development, adoption and use of shared data items.

Goal II: Improve coordination, integration, and consolidation of the collection and dissemination of quality education data.

Goal II Objectives:

1. The reporting burden on state and local data providers will be minimized.
2. Communication and coordination among the various data providers and requesters will be improved.
3. Data collectors will employ the most efficient and secure data collection procedures that are technically feasible.
4. Products of the Forum's work (i.e., reports, programs, etc.) will be designed, disseminated and promoted to maximize usefulness.
5. States will implement and share projects that demonstrate the use of technology to improve data collection, access, analysis and reporting.

To meet these objectives, the Forum endorses the following strategies:

A. Promote ongoing coordinated reviews of education data collection activities.
B. Support the use of standard definitions in education data collections.
C. Promote efficiency in data collection and access through the use of new and emerging technologies.
D. Promote the better integration of education data collections.
E. Work to improve the dissemination and usefulness of education data and promote its use through Forum products.
F. Establish linkages with postsecondary education to promote coordination and efficiency in data collection and use.
G. Promote procedures and practices that ensure data quality at all levels of education.

Goal III: Promote the Forum as a widely recognized cooperative body addressing issues of education data policy and as a leader in setting data standards.

Goal III Objectives:

1. Local, state, federal, and other stakeholders will be actively engaged in the development and implementation of education data standards.
2. Education data standards will be developed, adopted, and widely disseminated.
3. Collaborative partnerships among and between states and the federal government will further the development of education policy.

To meet these objectives, the Forum endorses the following strategies:

A. Disseminate widely and promote the use of Forum products.
B. Strengthen coordination by expanding membership as appropriate.
C. Actively seek collaborative relationships with agencies and groups to work toward common education data issues and goals.
D. Promote consultation and information sharing with the private research, development, and service sectors.
E. Establish, review, and disseminate guidelines for policies affecting the production, use, confidentiality, release, and dissemination of education statistics.
F. Periodically review and update all Forum products as appropriate.

Report every other year on progress toward strategic plan goals.

Part Two: Forum Resources

The Forum web page, located on the NCES website (http://nces.ed.gov/forum/), is a rich resource for both Forum members and the larger education community. It provides information about current Forum activities, the *Forum Voice* newsletter, meeting notes, and policies and procedures for conducting Forum meetings and activities, as well as the Forum's strategic plan.

The Forum's many resources can also be accessed at the website, including publications about education data, best practices, and materials for promoting the Forum.

A "Related Resources" page (http://nces.ed.gov/forum/resources.asp) provides links to online materials about the Federal Register, FERPA resources (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), and NCLB resources (the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) among other information that Forum members and others in the education community may find useful.

Outreach Toolkit

For members who wish to promote the Forum and its resources, the Outreach Toolkit website (http://nces.ed.gov/forum/outreach.asp) offers several downloadable promotional tools, including a Forum Overview PowerPoint™ presentation, publication summaries, publication PowerPoint™ presentations, and sample articles and letters. Several of these are described below.

Materials About the Forum

Shared Knowledge for Shared Success

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2010905.asp

This brochure provides information about the Forum's publications developed to provide states, districts, and schools with helpful advice on the collection, maintenance, and use of elementary and secondary education data. The brochure also includes information on the Forum's history, purpose, membership, and all of its free resources.

Forum Overview PowerPoint Presentation

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/about.asp
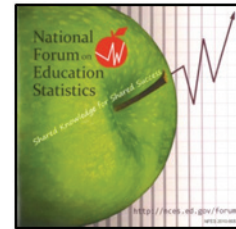
This PowerPoint presentation offers an introduction to the National Forum on Education Statistics and summarizes many of the free resources developed by the organization. It is intended for use (and modification) by Forum members and others engaged in outreach activities on behalf of the Forum.
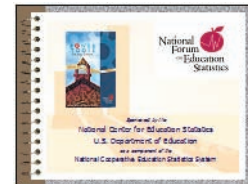
Recent Publications and Resources

The publications described below can be accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp.

Forum Guide to Ensuring Equal Access to Education Websites: Introduction to Electronic Information Accessibility Standards

Websites and other electronic information technology are an important way in which education institutions communicate with the public. To disseminate information widely, these resources must be accessible by many different people, including those with disabilities. In order to help state and local education agencies, as well as other education institutions, make their technology accessible, NCES and the Forum will soon release the *Forum Guide to Ensuring Equal Access to Education Websites*. This resource reviews ways in which certain disabilities may impede web usage, describes legislation that mandates accessibility, recommends strategies for improving accessibility and complying with laws, and provides useful resources for education institutions implementing or improving accessibility standards.
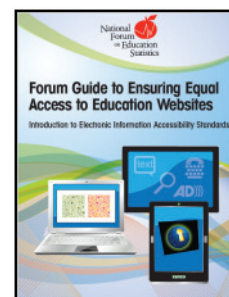
Forum Guide to Crime, Violence, and Discipline Incident Data

Developing policies to reduce school crime requires accurate and timely data about where, how, and why existing crimes occur. While there are no guarantees that greater awareness of the status of crime and violence in schools will prevent future incidents from occurring, accurate and timely data enable policymakers and practitioners to more effectively focus interventions aimed at improving the safety and security of all students, staff, and school facilities. The *Forum Guide to Crime, Violence, and Discipline Incident Data* presents strategies for implementing an incident database, including system design, management, and training; recommends a body of data elements, definitions, and code lists useful for collecting accurate and comparable data about crime, violence, and discipline; and offers suggestions for the effective presentation and reporting of crime, violence, and discipline data. Collaboration with the Discipline Data Working Group of the U.S. Department of Education ensures that the document will also be useful to states and districts reporting data to the Office for Civil Rights, the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and ED*Facts*.
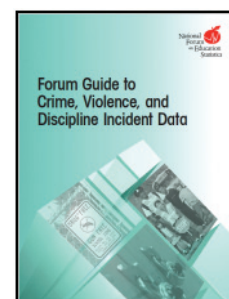
Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems (Series)

By facilitating the collection and use of detailed, high quality student- and staff- level data linked over time, longitudinal data systems (LDSs) hold promise for enhancing both the way education agencies use data to serve students and the way they do business, from the policy level to the school office and into the classroom. The *Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems* series is intended to help state and local education agencies meet the many challenges involved in building robust LDSs, populating them with quality data, and using this new information to improve the education system.

Book I: What is an LDS?

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2010805.asp

This document, the first installment of a four-part Forum Guide series on longitudinal data systems (LDS), focuses on the fundamental questions of what an LDS is (and what it is not), what steps should be taken to achieve a sound system, what components make up an ideal system, and why such a system is of value in education. The full series is intended to help state and local education agencies meet the many challenges involved in building robust LDSs, populating them with quality data, and using this new information to improve the education system.

Book II: Planning and Developing an LDS

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2011804.asp

This document discusses the critical planning and development phases of an LDS project. It guides readers through the process of engaging a wide variety of stakeholders to create a vision for an LDS, build support for the undertaking, develop the system, and gauge how well it is meeting intended goals.

Book III: Effectively Managing LDS Data

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2011805.asp

This document focuses primarily on data governance, providing not only a definition and overview of the topic, but also a practical framework to help education agencies implement an effective data governance structure and process to ensure the quality and utility of the data. The book also explores ways to ensure data quality through staff training, validation procedures, and establishment and adherence to data standards. Finally, the document discusses the challenges of securing the LDS to protect individual privacy and the confidentiality of education records.

Book IV: Advanced LDS Usage

This document, the last in *The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems* series, focuses on more sophisticated applications of longitudinal data systems, including a summary of the many uses of longitudinal data and tips for implementing effective training and professional development programs. It will be released in the summer/fall of 2011.

Prior-to-Secondary School Course Classification System: School Codes for the Exchange of Data (SCED)

The *Prior-to-Secondary School Course Classification System: School Codes for the Exchange of Data (SCED)* provides a taxonomy for assigning standard codes to elementary and middle school courses. The taxonomy is intended to help schools and education agencies maintain longitudinal information about students' coursework in an efficient, standardized format that facilitates the exchange of records as students transfer from one school, district, or state to another, or from one level of education to another. This taxonomy complements the *Secondary School Course Classification System: SCED*, which covers the secondary school level. By design, the prior-to-secondary course framework mirrors, in large part, the secondary course framework in that it consists of four basic elements: course description, course level, available credit (for secondary) or grade span (for prior-to-secondary), and sequence. Taken together, these elements create a unique identification code for any course from pre-K through grade 12.
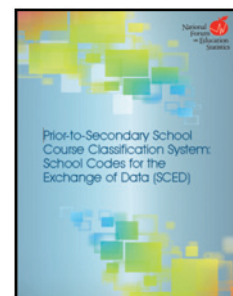
Forum Guide to Data Ethics Online Course

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/dataethics_course.asp

Through multimedia presentations, vignettes, and recommended practices and training guides, this online course teaches users the ethical principles contained in the *Forum Guide to Data Ethics*. Intended for any person who handles data in an education organization, this course offers practical lessons related to maintaining professional integrity, and ensuring data quality and security. Users may take a final assessment, completers of which will receive a certificate from the Forum.
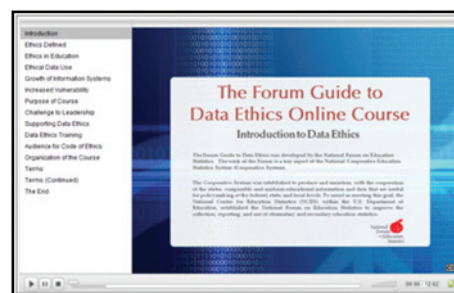
Forum Guide to Data Ethics

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2010801.asp

This document presents a code of ethics for data management in education settings. Its canons, examples, descriptions, and recommendations reflect situations that arise in real schools, school districts, and state education agencies. The guidance is intended to supplement existing data ethics policies in education organizations or serve as a template when organizations create new policies.
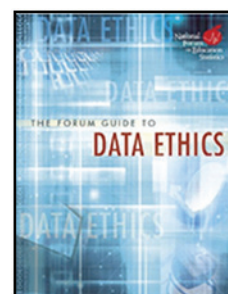
Crisis Data Management: A Forum Guide to Collecting and Managing Data About Displaced Students
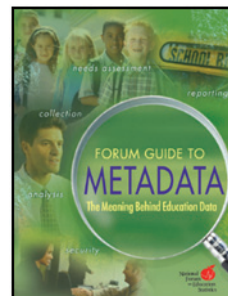
http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2010804.asp

This document provides guidelines that can be used by elementary and secondary education agencies to establish policies and procedures for collecting and managing education data before, during, and after a crisis.

Forum Guide to Metadata: The Meaning Behind Education Data (2009)

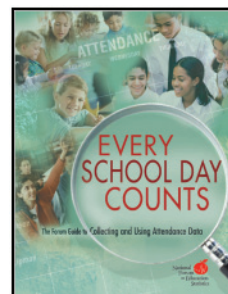http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2009805.asp

The purpose of this guide is to empower people to more effectively use data as information. To accomplish this, the publication explains what metadata are; why metadata are critical to the development of sound education data systems; what components comprise a metadata system; what value metadata bring to data management and use; and how to implement and use a metadata system.

Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data (2008)

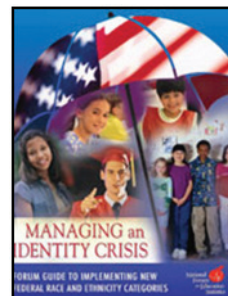http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2009804.asp

This document includes an exhaustive and mutually-exclusive list of attendance codes to provide the basis for accurate comparisons between districts and states. The product also presents real-life examples of how attendance information has been used by school districts.

Managing an Identity Crisis: Forum Guide to Implementing New Federal Race and Ethnicity Categories (2008)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2008802.asp

This best-practice guide is developed to assist state and local education agencies in their implementation of the new federal race and ethnicity categories—thereby reducing redundant efforts within and across states, improving data comparability, and minimizing reporting burden. It serves as a toolkit from which users may select and adopt strategies that will help them quickly begin the process of implementation in their agencies.

Forum Guide to Core Finance Data Elements (2007)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_20078001.asp

This publication establishes current and consistent terms and definitions for maintaining, collecting, reporting, and exchanging comparable information related to education finances. It is designed to accompany *Financial Accounting for Local and State School Systems: 2003 Edition* by identifying common reporting requirements and defining frequently used indicators and calculations that use data elements from accounting and other data systems.

Forum Curriculum for Improving Education Data: A Resource for Local Education Agencies (2007)
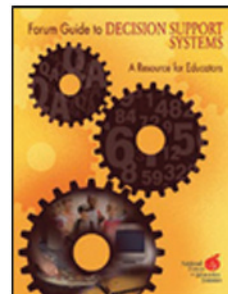
http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2007808.asp

This resource supports efforts to improve the quality of education data by serving as training materials for K-12 school and district staff. It provides lesson plans, instructional handouts, and related resources, and presents concepts necessary to help schools develop a culture for improving data quality.

Forum Guide to Decision Support Systems: A Resource for Educators (2006)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006807.asp

This NCES/Forum guide was developed to help the education community better understand what decision support systems are, how they are configured, how they operate, and how they might be developed and implemented in an education setting.

Forum Guide to Virtual Education (2006)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006803.asp

This publication offers recommendations for collecting accurate, comparable, and useful data about virtual education in the elementary/secondary education setting. It highlights policy questions and data elements that are critical to meeting the information needs of policymakers, administrators, instructors, and parents involved in virtual education.

Forum Guide to the Privacy of Student Information: A Resource for Schools (2006)

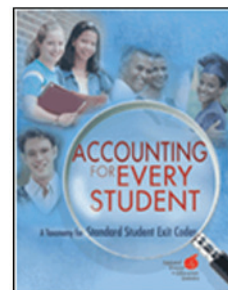http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006805.asp

This publication was written to help school and local education agency staff better understand and apply the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a federal law that protects the privacy interests of parents and students with respect to information maintained in student education records. It defines terms such as "education records" and "directory information," and offers guidance for developing appropriate privacy policies and information disclosure procedures related to military recruiting, parental rights and annual notification, videotaping, online information, media releases, surveillance cameras, and health-related information.

Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes (2006)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006804.asp

This publication was developed to help education agencies develop effective information systems for tracking the enrollment status of students. It presents a student-level exit code taxonomy for states and districts that accounts for 100 percent (and not 90 percent or 110 percent) of all students. It also offers "best practice" advice regarding effective practices for tracking students, collecting exit codes data, and distinguishing among high school completion credentials.

Forum Guide to Education Indicators (2005)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2005802.asp

This publication provides encyclopedia-type entries for 44 commonly used education indicators. Each indicator entry includes a definition, recommended uses, usage caveats and cautions, related policy questions, data element components, a formula, commonly reported subgroups, and display suggestions. The document will help readers better understand how to appropriately develop, apply, and interpret commonly used education indicators.

Forum Guide to Building a Culture of Quality Data (2005)
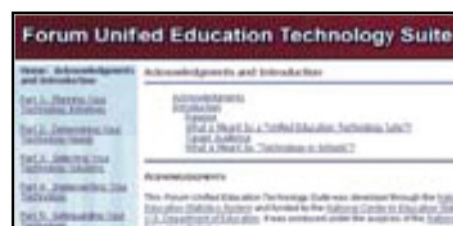
http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2005801.asp

This publication focuses on data entry—getting things right at the source. As such, it recommends a practical process for developing a "Culture of Quality Data" based around individual "Tip Sheets" for the many people involved in providing quality data, including principals, teachers, office staff, school board members, superintendents, data stewards, and technology staff.

Forum Unified Education Technology Suite (2005)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_tech_suite.asp

This publication presents a practical, comprehensive, and tested approach to assessing, acquiring, instituting, managing, securing, and using technology in education settings. It is written for individuals who lack extensive experience with technology, but are tasked with leading technology initiatives in a school or district setting.

Forum Guide to Protecting the Privacy of Student Information: State and Local Education Agencies (2004)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2004330.asp

This publication presents a general overview of privacy laws and professional practices that apply to information collected for, and maintained in, student records. The document provides an overview of key principles and concepts governing student privacy, summarizes federal privacy laws, identifies issues concerning the release of information to both parents and external organizations, and suggests good data management practices for schools, districts, and state education agencies.

Facilities Information Management: A Guide for State and Local Education Agencies (2003)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2003400.asp

This publication provides a framework for identifying a basic set of school facilities data elements and definitions that will meet the information needs of school and community decisionmakers, school facility managers, and the general public. It presents recommendations for designing and maintaining an information system that addresses the condition, design, use, management, and financing of elementary/secondary education facilities. It also includes commonly used measures, data elements, and a list of additional resources for the practitioner.

Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities (2003)

http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2003347.asp

This publication is intended to help school facilities managers plan for efficient and effective operations. It provides practical advice on a range of topics, including how to conduct a facilities audit, planning for maintenance to ensure smooth operations and avoid costly surprises, managing staff and contractors, and evaluating maintenance efforts.

Appendix A. Useful Acronyms

ED	**U.S. Department of Education**
ED*Facts*	ED*Facts* is a collaborative effort among ED, state educational agencies, and industry partners to establish a process for states to directly submit elementary and secondary education data from the state, district, and school levels to ED by electronic means.
FERPA	**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act** FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.
Handbooks	**The *Student Data Handbook, Staff Data Handbook*, etc.** This body of data handbooks is collectively referred to as the "Handbooks" or the "NCES Handbooks." They define standard education terms for students, staff, schools, local education agencies, intermediate education agencies, and state education agencies.
LEA	**Local Education Agency** (i.e., a school district)
MIS Conference	**The NCES Management Information Systems (MIS) Conference** The MIS Conference is an annual meeting held in the winter (in conjunction with the Winter Forum Meeting) and is co-hosted by NCES and a different state each year.
NCES	**National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education)** NCES sponsors the National Forum on Education Statistics to foster federal-state-local cooperative efforts to improve the accuracy, timeliness, and utility of education data.
NESAC	**National Education Statistics Agenda Committee** A Forum standing committee that supports the development of comparable and effective elementary and secondary education data systems.
PPI	**Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee** A Forum standing committee that addresses the policy implications of the Forum's work on national education data issues.
SEA	**State Education Agency** (i.e., a state department of education)
TECH	**Technology Committee** TECH is a Forum standing committee that considers methods, especially technology-related strategies, for improving data collection and communication within states and between states and the federal government.