Forum Guide to Data Governance
Glossary of Common Terms

National
Forum
on Education
Statistics

Common Education Data Standards (CEDS): an education data management initiative whose purpose is to streamline the understanding of data within and across P-20W institutions and sectors.[1]

data dictionary: defines the data elements collected and stewarded by an agency. Sometimes contains more metadata (for example, data types, lengths, uses/mappings to products the data support).

data element: An atomic unit of data that has precise meaning or precise semantics that can be defined and measured.

data inventory: defines all data sources available to an agency, along with ownership details, descriptions, priorities and other relevant information.

data owners: staff such as program area directors, subject matter experts (SMEs), or policy staff who have high-level authority over specific data elements or sets of data, and who are accountable for the quality of those data.

data privacy: refers to the legal and ethical requirements for protecting the confidentiality of data. These requirements involve: defining which data need to be protected, such as personally identifiable information (PII) or sensitive data; developing policies that define acceptable uses for the data; identifying authorized users of the data; protecting data that are released in public reports; and destroying data when they are no longer needed. See the *Forum Guide to Education Data Privacy*[2] for more information.

data security: refers to protecting the technical aspects of how data are collected, stored, and transferred through an information technology infrastructure. See the *Forum Guide to Education Data Privacy*[3] for more information.

data stewards: Individuals responsible for ensuring the quality of statistical information generated by an organization. Data stewards also generally assume responsibility for enhancing the information reporting process through staff development and by sharing data expertise with the various offices and programs that produce data and information in an organization.

ED*Facts*: a U.S. Department of Education initiative to collect, analyze, and promote the use of high-quality, pre-kindergarten through grade 12 data. ED*Facts* centralizes performance data supplied by state education agencies (SEAs) with other data assets, such as financial grant information, within the Department to enable better analysis and use in policy development, planning, and management.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): United States federal law that provides the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency. FOIA also requires agencies to proactively post online certain categories of information, including frequently requested records.[4]

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1   https://ceds.ed.gov/whatIsCEDS.aspx
2   https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016096.asp
3   https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016096.asp
4   https://www.foia.gov/about.html

maturity model: a tool that is used to develop, assess and refine an expansive program, which allows an agency to consistently measure the state of a program over time.

metadata: structured information that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage information. Metadata provide the context in which to interpret data and information.

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS): systems intended to enhance the ability of states to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, and use education data, including individual student records.[5]

sustainability: the ability of a program, process, or agency to continue to function effectively, particularly in the face of changing or evolving tasks, goals, resources, or staffing structures.

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[5]   https://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/about_SLDS.asp