

Iowa's SCED Regional Course Coding Workshops

A Case Study

The Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) implemented the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED)—a voluntary, common classification system for prior-to-secondary and secondary school courses—beginning with SCED Version 1. SCED Version 1 included secondary course codes (published in 2007) and prior-to-secondary course codes (published in 2011). While IDOE still uses the original prior-to-secondary SCED codes, it has been transitioning to updated secondary school codes as new versions of SCED are released. This case study focuses on IDOE's process for implementing new high school course codes through the use of in-person, regional course coding workshops.

IDOE's Implementation of SCED

IDOE has been using SCED since the release of SCED Version 1. The state has fully adopted SCED; districts do not use separate, local codes.

SCED is used for many different purposes in Iowa. Like many states, Iowa uses SCED to compare course information and maintain longitudinal data about student coursework. IDOE has found that SCED is also useful for reporting data for the Civil Rights Data Collection (a survey required by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights); the *Condition of Education* (a congressionally mandated report provided to Congress each year); and data requests from legislators, researchers, and the public. Also, the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners has linked SCED codes to teacher licensure endorsements.

SCED has proven useful for identifying courses that qualify students for automatic university admission. Iowa's three public universities—the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa—use a formula called the Regent Admission Index (RAI) to determine which students gain automatic admission. One important variable in this formula indicates how many RAI-approved high school courses students have completed. The Iowa Board of Regents publishes a list of RAI-approved high school courses—classified by their SCED codes—that students, parents, counselors, and educators can use to help guide students.

How Iowa Uses SCED

IDOE uses SCED course codes for

- collecting data for the Civil Rights Data Collection (see <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>);
- collecting data for the publication *Condition of Education* (see <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/>);
- responding to data requests from legislators, researchers, and the public;
- linking courses to teacher licensure endorsements; and
- classifying the high school courses students can complete as part of the automatic admission process to Iowa public universities (see <http://www.iowaregents.edu/institutions/higher-education-links/regent-admission-index/> and <http://www.iowaregents.edu/media/cms/sced-pdf198A8E2F.pdf>).

Regional Workshops for High School Course Coding

IDOE uses SCED for many purposes, and it is therefore important that districts throughout the state can easily implement new versions of SCED. In 2017, IDOE began planning to update its secondary course codes to SCED Version 4 and address course coding issues that had arisen since the last update. To accomplish this, IDOE needed to share new information with districts: new codes had been added, existing codes had been revised (for example,

world languages courses and family and consumer science courses had been recoded), and several codes had been archived because they were no longer commonly used.

To help districts quickly and efficiently update SCED, IDOE typically offers webinars when new versions of SCED are released. However, representatives of IDOE realized that the size and scope of the SCED Version 4 update would present a burden for districts. They determined that the best way to assist districts was to offer regional workshops, which had previously been used when IDOE first implemented SCED. The representatives identified needed updates, prepared training materials to assist districts, and then held course coding workshops in different regions throughout the state.

IDOE emailed an invitation to districts informing them about 12 secondary course coding workshops in eight locations throughout the state, which would be held over a three-week period in spring 2017. The locations of the workshops were chosen so that no participant would have to travel more than two hours. In the invitation, IDOE explained that the workshops were voluntary, free of charge, and open. Recipients were invited to forward the email to anyone who might be involved in secondary course coding, such as curriculum directors, guidance counselors, high school principals, and others. IDOE also explained that the state's transition to SCED Version 4 would be effective in fall 2017, so anyone wishing to receive hands-on instruction on how to update and correct course codes would benefit from attending the sessions. Each session was scheduled for a three-hour period, and participants could expect to leave with the majority of their course code recoding complete.

Revisions for SCED Version 4

Version 4 of SCED included substantial revisions to several subject areas that had not been updated since the original version of SCED was released in 2007. These revisions focused on the following subject areas:

- English Language and Literature
- Mathematics
- Life and Physical Sciences
- Social Sciences and History
- World Languages and Literature
- Religious Education and Theology
- Physical, Health, and Safety Education
- Military Sciences
- Miscellaneous

Before the regional workshops

Those who wished to attend the spring 2017 workshops were required to register. The emailed invitation listed each workshop session by date, time, and location. To register, email recipients clicked on the link for the session they hoped to attend and registered per online instructions. Each workshop was limited to 60 attendees, so each attendee could receive personalized attention as needed. Multiple dates were scheduled in some cities to meet the demand for the workshops.

Participants were encouraged to bring a laptop and their local course guidebook (or other access to their local course descriptions). Each participant was also provided with an electronic copy of SCED Version 4, their district's current certified curriculum, and other helpful documents. For example, since SCED Version 4 included recoded world languages course codes, IDOE created and emailed to districts a worksheet for recoding those courses. These electronic documents allowed for expedited coding during the workshop, and IDOE personnel worked to ensure that the emails were sent out in a timely manner.

During the regional workshops

During each of the regional workshops, one IDOE representative provided information, while another IDOE representative walked around the room, assisting participants. Instructional time alternated with work time. For example, after being given guidance about changes to the world languages course codes, participants had the

opportunity to recode those courses (and receive personalized help as needed) before the group moved on to the next topic.

The regional workshop sessions focused on these topics:

- Updating SCED codes for archived courses
- Updating SCED codes for courses for which a more appropriate SCED code is now available
- Correcting past SCED coding mistakes
- Correcting errors in using course attributes

After the regional workshops

Approximately 85 percent of Iowa districts attended a spring 2017 workshop. The workshops were well attended and they received positive reviews from participants. Participants expressed appreciation for being given hands-on time to update course codes with the help of SCED experts. The workshops provided Iowa districts with the resources and support they needed to quickly transition to using new and updated SCED codes.

Resources

Board of Regents' Regent Admission Index

<http://www.iowaregents.edu/institutions/higher-education-links/regent-admission-index/>

Civil Rights Data Collection web page

<https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>

The Condition of Education

<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/>

Forum Guide to School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Classification System

https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2014802.asp.

Iowa Department of Education web page

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/>

RAI-Approved SCED Codes 2018: Individual List

<http://www.iowaregents.edu/media/cms/sced-pdf198A8E2F.pdf>

School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) web page

<https://nces.ed.gov/forum/SCED.asp>