

The Forum Voice

Winter 2018

Volume 20

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Forum Members:

Welcome to a new year of working together as members of the National Forum on Education Statistics! The Forum is committed to developing education resources that support local, state, and national efforts to improve K-12 education in the United States, and I look forward to working with you all on new and ongoing projects.

I would like to congratulate all of you on the Forum's recent accomplishments. Our summer 2017 Forum meeting was a great success. It provided the opportunity to attend engaging presentations from federal, state, and local education agency representatives; participate in robust discussions on emerging education data topics; and contribute to productive Standing Committee meetings. The Forum recently released several resources, which are included in the New Forum Resources section of this issue of the *Forum Voice*.

We continue to build off our accomplishments during the summer meeting by hosting webinars and virtual meetings on topics of interest to Forum members. Representatives from the National Center for Education Statistics Ed Tech Equity initiative, the Common Education Data Standards project, and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program have delivered presentations to Forum members. In addition, the Forum has organized two virtual meetings for new Forum members to help them become involved in the work of the Forum.

The success of the Forum is based on the collaborations, contributions, and collective expertise of Forum members like yourself who contribute to the Forum's mission to improve the quality, comparability, and usefulness of education data. The Forum helps foster strong working relationships between its members, which can contribute to new partnerships and initiatives in local, state, and federal education agencies. This issue of the *Forum Voice* includes an overview of the Delaware Education Data Forum, a new state-local partnership started by Adrian L. Peoples, Ed.D., and Kenneth Hutchins and modelled on the Forum. The Delaware Education Data Forum is a strong example of how Forum members are improving education data in their agencies.

Our members disseminate Forum resources and information by sharing resources with colleagues, delivering presentations, and attending conferences. Linda Rocks and Linda Roska recently participated in a webinar on collecting and managing data on displaced students with representatives from the Privacy Technical Assistance Center, the REL Program, and the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Program. TECH Chair Georgia Hughes-Webb represented the Forum at the International Association for K-12 Online Learning annual symposium, and PPI Chair Steve Smith represented the Forum at the State Educational Technology Directors Association's Education Forum and the National Future of Education Technology Conference.

We have several new projects underway for the upcoming year. The Forum has established three new Working Groups to develop resources on early warning systems data, personalized learning data, and education technology. The School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Working Group has begun development of SCED Version 6, and is planning new resources to assist SCED users. The Forum also recently reconvened the Communications Subcommittee to identify and develop methods for advancing Forum communications. These are important and timely topics for Forum members, and I am eager to learn from your contributions to these new projects.

We have another exciting year in front of us. I look forward to working with you and seeing you all at our annual meeting in Washington, DC.

Thank you.

Raymond Martin, Forum Chair
Connecticut State Department of Education

THE DELAWARE EDUCATION DATA FORUM: STRENGTHENING SEA-LEA RELATIONSHIPS

The annual National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) meeting and other Forum activities provide an opportunity for Forum members to meet with colleagues, discuss emerging topics in the field of education data, and collaborate to develop new resources to assist federal, state, and local education agencies. Forum members often build upon these opportunities to improve the work of their own agencies. One innovative new project that grew from Forum meetings is the Delaware Education Data Forum.

Delaware's state and local education agency (SEA and LEA) representatives, Adrian L. Peoples, Ed.D., (Delaware Department of Education) and Kenneth Hutchins (Appoquinimink School District [DE]), have contributed to several Forum projects. Adrian was a member of the working group that developed the *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education Data* and is a current member of the Data Visualization Online Course Project Group. Ken is the current Technology Committee Vice Chair and a member of the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Working Group. Both Adrian and Ken are currently participating in the Early Warning

Systems Data Working Group. Time spent on Forum projects and at Forum meetings provided Adrian and Ken with the opportunity to get to know one another better, share ideas for improving Delaware’s collection and use of education data, and develop a strong working relationship and friendship.

One challenge that Adrian and Ken were both interested in solving was the need for improvements to the Delaware Department of Education’s (DDOE’s) process for aggregating data. DDOE had made several attempts to convene joint SEA/LEA groups to discuss data issues in the state; however, these groups were led by the SEA without LEA input or leadership, and focused primarily on aggregate data from the SEA perspective. Recognizing the need to address these data issues from the LEA perspective, Adrian and Ken established the Delaware Education Data Forum (herein referenced as the Delaware Forum) in 2016 to focus on student-level data issues, rather than aggregate data issues. Both Adrian and Ken had strong working relationships within their respective networks at the SEA and LEA levels. With the support of DDOE leadership and the Appoquinimink School District, Adrian and Ken were able to successfully draw upon these working relationships in establishing the Delaware Forum. The Delaware Forum is modeled on the National Forum on Education Statistics, and is designed to promote collaboration between SEA and LEA participants. The Delaware Forum is co-chaired by an SEA and LEA representative to ensure equal representation between SEAs and LEAs on agenda-setting and decisionmaking; currently, Adrian serves as the SEA co-chair and Ken serves as the LEA co-chair. The Delaware Forum provides LEAs with an equal voice in state-wide education data discussions. All public school districts in the state, as well as vocational schools, are invited to participate, and the Delaware Forum is working to increase charter school participation. Due to the small size of the state, the Delaware Forum is able to hold in-person meetings every other month. LEAs travel to the state capital to attend meetings at the DDOE. The Delaware Forum also holds virtual meetings in months where they do not meet in-person. The co-chairs reserve time during in-person meetings for all LEA participants to meet without the SEA participants.

Collaboration between the SEA and LEAs and a focus on data quality at the student level have been key to the Delaware Forum’s effectiveness. Thus far, the Delaware Forum has collaborated on reviewing three large, state-wide data sets, including accountability data and college and career-ready data. The LEA representatives’ review of these data has increased confidence in the data’s quality and accuracy and minimized the number of data errors identified after public release. The success of these reviews has motivated planning for collaboration on the next Civil Right Data Collection. Now in its second year, participation in the Delaware Forum is steadily increasing and the Delaware Secretary of Education has also attended a meeting of the Delaware Forum. The Delaware Forum is already improving SEA-LEA relationships. The SEA representatives have found it helpful to include LEA perspectives in data-related discussions, and LEAs have more positive perceptions of their relationship with the SEA.

When asked what advice they would give to other Forum members interested in developing a similar group in their state, Ken recommended that SEAs and LEAs engage in open and honest communication that is focused on how agencies can better work together to help students. Adrian found that having buy-in and support from both SEA and LEA staff, administrators, and leadership, establishing a clear mission, and celebrating small early successes were key to the Delaware Forum’s success. Adrian also recommended avoiding virtual meetings during a new group’s first year, and encouraging participants to couple criticism with realistic and actionable recommendations for improvement. Ken and Adrian also offered advice on how Forum SEAs and LEAs can use their time at annual Forum meetings to get to know their home state’s SEA/LEA representative, including spending time discussing issues of importance in their state. Adrian recommended a mind-share strategy, where SEA and LEA representatives discuss a simple set of questions – two data-related, one policy-related, and one that is unrelated to work – to help strengthen communication and trust.



NEW FORUM RESOURCES

- **School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Version 5 and related resources**

The Forum’s SCED Working Group released SCED Version 5 in November 2017. This new version focused on

updates to Subject Area 5: Visual and Performing Arts – in particular, new media arts courses – and Project Lead the Way (PLTW), Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Throughout the revision process, the Working Group collaborated with subject matter experts in federal, state, and local education agencies, as well as other groups, including the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, the College Board, the IB Organization, and PLTW. Following the release of SCED Version 5, the Forum also updated the [SCED Finder](#) tool with new and updated courses. SCED Finder helps users select SCED codes and assign elements and attributes to those codes; search SCED using keywords; browse the entire SCED; and create, edit, and export lists of courses with the selected course code and user-identified SCED elements. In addition, the SCED Working Group added new search options to SCED Finder to improve search results. The Working Group also released a video on course coding using SCED. SCED Version 5, SCED Finder, SCED videos, and other SCED resources are all available at <http://nces.ed.gov/forum/SCED.asp>.

- **[Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data](#)**

The *Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data* is designed to help state and local education agency staff improve their attendance data practices – the collection, reporting, and use of attendance data to improve student and school outcomes. The guide offers best practice suggestions and features real-life examples of how attendance data have been used by education agencies. The guide includes a set of voluntary attendance codes that can be used to compare attendance data across schools, districts, and states. The guide also features tip sheets for a wide range of education agency staff who work with attendance data.

- **[Forum Guide to Reporting Civil Rights Data](#)**

The *Forum Guide to Reporting Civil Rights Data* presents a variety of effective methods through which local education agencies (LEAs) report civil rights data to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. In addition, the guide provides examples of how state education agencies can voluntarily help their LEAs with Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) reporting. The guide includes an overview of the CRDC, a discussion of the challenges and opportunities in reporting civil rights data, an explanation of the CRDC reporting process, and six case studies that examine how specific education agencies report civil rights data.



FORTHCOMING FORUM RESOURCES

The Forum has had a productive year, with projects on facility information management and data visualization nearing completion. Two new Forum resources will be published to the Forum website in the coming months:

- **[Forum Guide to Facility Information Management: A Resource for State and Local Education Agencies](#)**

The *Forum Guide to Facility Information Management: A Resource for State and Local Education Agencies* includes best practices for the design, development, implementation, and use of facilities management information systems. The guide provides a framework for collecting, evaluating, and maintaining education facilities data, and builds upon information included in the 2012 publication *Forum Guide to Facilities Information Management: A Resource for State and Local Education Agencies*. The guide also references additions and improvements to the facilities data elements included in the [Common Education Data Standards \(CEDs\)](#).

- **[Forum Data Visualization Online Course](#)**

The Forum Data Visualization Online Course is a self-paced interactive online course based on content published in the *Forum Guide to Data Visualization: A Resource for Education Agencies*. The course explains data visualization and its application in education agencies, introduces the four key principles of data visualization, and explains the six-step process for data visualization. The course also features interactive exercises to help users learn key concepts and characteristics of effective data visualizations. The course includes a voluntary assessment for users who wish to complete the course for professional development.



CURRENT WORKING GROUPS

Much of the Forum's work is collaborative and resources are often developed in partnership with national, federal, regional, state, and local education agencies and stakeholders. Forum working groups are established to address specific issues and develop resources.

To support the engagement of the full Forum in the development of Forum resources, Forum working groups have begun sharing resource outlines with the Forum for feedback. Forum members are encouraged to review and comment on draft outlines, and contribute applicable case studies and real-world examples from their agency.

The Forum is currently supporting four working groups:

- [Early Warning Systems Data Working Group](#)
- [Education Technology Working Group](#)
- [Personalized Learning Data Working Group](#)
- [School Courses for the Exchange of Data \(SCED\) Version 6 Working Group](#)



UPDATES AND EVENTS

- **Summer 2017 Forum Meeting**

The 2017 Summer Forum Meeting took place July 30 – August 1 in Washington, DC. Past Forum Chair Laurel Krsek, San Ramon Valley Unified School District (CA), welcomed Forum members to the meeting, and introduced Marilyn Seastrom, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Chief Statistician, who delivered an overview of the NCES publication, *Best Practices for Determining Subgroup Size in Accountability Systems While Protecting Personally Identifiable Student Information*. The opening session panel discussion focused on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) state plan development process. Joint session presentations addressed a number of timely topics in education data: Susan Williams, Virginia Department of Education, and Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (MT), led an interactive session on Forum products; Kathleen Styles, Chief Privacy Officer at the U.S. Department of Education (ED), spoke about student privacy; Melissa Siry, Jessica McKinney, Patrick Carr, and Jane Clark, ED, delivered a presentation on ESSA; and Steve Smith, Cambridge Public Schools (MA), moderated a panel session on the Civil Rights Data Collection. Standing committees met to discuss topics of particular interest to committee members, including federal data policy and collections, the Common Education Data Standards Initiative, data privacy and security, ESSA, Forum projects and resources, the Regional Educational Laboratory Program, and more. The meeting concluded with a presentation from Peggy Carr, Acting Commissioner of NCES, who provided an update on NCES initiatives. Detailed meeting notes—including notes and presentations for all joint sessions, standing committee, and Steering Committee meetings—are available on the Forum website at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/summer_17.asp.

- **The Role and Impact of Technology on Education: The NCES ED TECH Equity Initiative webinar**

Halima Adenegan, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), delivered a virtual presentation to the Technology Committee on September 13, 2017. Halima provided information about the NCES ED TECH Equity Initiative and received important feedback on the Initiative from Forum members. The presentation slides are available on the Forum 360 website at <https://forum.grads360.org>.

- **Steering Committee and New Members' virtual meeting**

The Steering Committee hosted a virtual meeting for new Forum members on September 13, 2017. Meeting attendees reviewed the Forum mission; shared feedback on the Summer 2017 Forum meeting; and discussed how to strengthen engagement with and understanding of the Regional Educational Laboratory Program.

- **Communications Subcommittee meeting**

The Communications Subcommittee held an in-person meeting on Monday, October 23, 2017 to address the Forum's evolving communications needs; consider the ways in which the Forum communicates with its members, potential partner organizations, and other audiences; and work to promote the dissemination of information about the Forum and Forum publications.

- **CEDS 101: An Introduction to CEDS webinar**

Members of the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) team delivered a virtual presentation to the Forum on November 1, 2017. The presentation provided a basic introduction to CEDS for Forum members who are unfamiliar with CEDS. The presentation slides are available on the Forum 360 website at <https://forum.grads360.org>.

- **Using CEDS webinar**

Members of the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) team delivered a virtual presentation to the Forum on November 8, 2017. The presentation included information on using CEDS, including a discussion of CEDS tools Align, Connect, and Generate. The presentation slides are available on the Forum 360 website at <https://forum.grads360.org>.

- **Introduction to the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program webinar**

Liz Eisner and Chris Boccanfuso, National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance, delivered a virtual presentation to the Forum on December 12, 2017. Liz and Chris provided a brief overview of the REL program and discussed how state and local education agencies can work with their RELs. The presentation slides are available on the Forum 360 website at <https://forum.grads360.org>.

- **PPI virtual meeting**

The Policies, Programs and Implementation (PPI) Committee held a virtual meeting on January 9, 2018. PPI Chair Steve Smith, Cambridge Public Schools (MA), led the meeting. Attendees reviewed the PPI mission; shared feedback on the Summer 2017 Forum meeting; and discussed topics of interest, plans, and ideas for the 2018 PPI meeting. The meeting notes are available on the Forum 360 website at <https://forum.grads360.org>.

- **New Members' virtual meeting**

The Forum hosted a virtual meeting for new Forum members on January 18, 2018. Meeting attendees reviewed the Forum website; offered their perspectives on member roles and responsibilities; began planning for the 2018 New Member Orientation; and discussed how to strengthen engagement with and understanding of the Regional Educational Laboratory Program.

- **Upcoming events**

The Forum is currently planning to hold full Forum webinars and Standing Committee virtual meetings on topics of interest to Forum members. Event details, including dates, topics, and speakers, will be posted to the Forum 360 community pages as more information becomes available.



NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The *Forum Voice* is released as an electronic publication. To contact the Forum, email Ghedam Bairu.



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