CONTENTS

🍎 EDITORIAL BOARD

Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (MT)
Gunes Kaplan, Nevada Department of Education
Linda Jenkins, Arkansas Department of Education
Dawn Gessel, Putnam County Schools (WV)

🍎 LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to 2021, Forum members!

It should go without saying that at the time of last year's newsletter, none of us could have had any idea what the world would look like right now. 2020 proved to be an eventful year, to say the very least. The education world was rapidly and drastically reshaped by the sudden emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in ways that teachers, students, families, and education professionals will be reckoning with for years to come. But the Forum kept on rolling through all of it—it's heartening for me to look back at what we accomplished together during such a turbulent time. I hope it will be the same for you.

When schools and districts were forced to close their doors to students in the spring of 2020, with little notice and varying ability to make a successful transition to remote learning and teaching, the Forum stepped up to support their efforts with our resources and expertise. One service we provided, to immediate practical benefit, was a running list of the reopening plans developed by states. We kept this list up to date as agencies shifted their plans between remote learning, in-person learning, or a blend thereof as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic rippled around the country. We also gathered a collection of our most germane publications into the Forum Resources to Assist with Current Challenges handout. We also offered three virtual presentations on COVID-related topics in April and May 2020:

- Responding to State and Local Education Agency (SEA and LEA) Needs for Virtual Learning Solutions
- Cybersecurity and Remote Learning/Working
- Planning for, Collecting, and Managing Data About Displaced Students

We've released several new Forum resources:

- *Forum Guide to Data Governance*
- *Forum Guide to Exit Codes*
- *Forum Guide to Cybersecurity: Safeguarding Your Data*
- *School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Version 8* (and updates to the SCED Master List and the SCED Finder tool)
- *Forum Guide to SCED Uses and Benefits*

We've got more great resources queued up for 2021, including the fourth in our series of SCED videos, the *Forum Guide to Staff Records*, the *Forum Guide to Strategies for Education Data Collection and Reporting (SEDCAR)*, and a second module of the Forum's Data Visualization Online Course. Further up the pipeline, working groups on attendance, metadata, virtual education, and the latest version of SCED promise excellent resources to come later in the calendar.

I'm delighted to recognize a number of new members who have joined us in the Forum since the summer of 2019. Amid the upheavals of 2020, it was a pleasure to welcome new members to help us carry the Forum's mission forward. Please find their names further along in the newsletter—if you haven't reached out yet, feel free to send them a word of welcome.

As I write this, in the first days of 2021, COVID-19 continues to spread throughout our nation. But 2020 has proven that the Forum's ability to "keep calm and carry on" is nothing short of remarkable. I would like to thank all of you for being a part of this endeavor. It's an honor to work with you, and I know we will carry the Forum's mission on through whatever 2021 brings.

Happy New Year!

Dean Folkers, Forum Chair
Nebraska Department of Education

NEW FORUM MEMBERS

Since the Summer 2019 Forum Meeting, the Forum has welcomed 15 new members.

- Libby Bonesteel, Superintendent, Montpelier Roxbury School District (VT)
- Jane Clark; Senior Associate, Federal Policy and Advocacy; Data Quality Campaign
- Jeff Dase, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Decatur Public Schools District 61 (IL)
- Amy Feygin, Senior Researcher, Regional Educational Laboratory—Midwest
- Will Goodman, Administrator of Information Technology, Boise School District (ID)
- Brian Hartwell, District Superintendent, Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES (NY)
- Peggy Jones; Director of Accountability, Research and Measurement; Pasco County Schools (FL)
- Rose LeRoy, Director of Educational Data and Research, New York State Education Department
- Kyle McKinney, Director of Technology, Laramie County School District 1 (WY)
- Josh Stewart, Senior Researcher, Regional Educational Laboratory—Central
- Melanie Stewart; Director of Research, Assessment, and Data; Milwaukee Public Schools (WI)
- Fannie Tseng; Senior Program Officer, Research, Measurement and Evaluation; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Kris Williams, Director of Title I and Technology, Blytheville School District (AR)
- William Witkowsky, Director of Software Solutions, Illinois State Board of Education

NEW FORUM RESOURCES

- ***Forum Guide to Data Governance***
  The *Forum Guide to Data Governance* highlights how data governance programs benefit education agencies, and provides timely and useful best practices, examples, and resources for agencies implementing or updating their data governance programs. This resource provides an overview of data governance; discusses effective data governance practices, structures, and essential elements; and describes how to meet privacy and security requirements while also meeting data accessibility and sharing needs. It includes detailed case studies that offer an in-depth look at the challenges, successes, and lessons learned from education agencies in their data governance efforts.

- ***Forum Guide to Exit Codes***
  The *Forum Guide to Exit Codes* provides best practice information for tracking data about when students transferred, completed high school, dropped out, or otherwise exited an education agency. As such, this resource defines exit codes and reviews their use in an education agency; provides an updated, voluntary, common taxonomy for exit codes; discusses best practices and methods for addressing specific challenges in exit codes data collection; and features case studies that highlight different education agencies' approaches to and experiences with exit coding. This resource updates the information included in the 2006 publication *Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes*.

- ***Forum Guide to Cybersecurity: Safeguarding Your Data***
  The *Forum Guide to Cybersecurity: Safeguarding Your Data* is intended to help agencies proactively prepare for, appropriately mitigate, and responsibly recover from a cybersecurity incident. The document provides timely and useful best practice information to help protect agency systems and data before, during, and after a cybersecurity incident. Case studies from states and districts that have planned proactively for or experienced a cybersecurity incident are included.

- ***School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Version 8* and related resources**
  The Forum's SCED Working Group published *SCED Version 8* in September 2020. This new version includes new and updated courses that were suggested by SCED users and subject matter experts in federal, state, and local education agencies. Following the release of *SCED Version 8*, the SCED Working Group also updated the SCED Master List and 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. *SCED Version 8* (as a sortable, downloadable file), SCED Finder, SCED videos, and other SCED resources are all available at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/SCED.asp.

- ***Forum Guide to SCED Uses and Benefits***
  The *Forum Guide to SCED Uses and Benefits* is designed to provide timely and useful best practice information to help education agencies understand the different uses and benefits of SCED. This guide was developed to provide a brief overview of SCED, highlight the research application and benefits of SCED to users, and illustrate SCED uses with case studies. This new resource was developed to supplement the suite of SCED resources currently available at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/SCED.asp. The content of this guide builds on previous work, including the 2014 *Forum Guide to SCED Classification System* and several case studies and videos highlighting how to use SCED.

FORTHCOMING FORUM RESOURCES

The Forum has had a productive year, with projects on data visualization, staff records, data strategies, and SCED nearing completion. Four new Forum resources will be published in the coming months:

- **Data Visualization Online Course Module 2: Applied Data Visualization**
  The Data Visualization Online Course Module 2: Applied Data Visualization demonstrates the effective application of data visualization to common education topics through scenarios that highlight recommended best practices. The second module builds upon the concepts presented in Module 1: Introduction to Data Visualization and includes a voluntary assessment of course content mastery for learners who wish to receive proof of course completion.

- ***Forum Guide to Staff Records***
  The *Forum Guide to Staff Records* updates information from the 2000 Forum resource, *Privacy Issues in Education Staff Records: Guidelines for Education Agencies*. The new resource provides an overview of the many types of information that may be classified as staff records; effective practices for collecting, maintaining, and protecting the privacy of these records; and information on managing access to the records, including open records requests.

- ***Forum Guide to Strategies for Education Data Collection and Reporting (SEDCAR)***
  The *Forum Guide to SEDCAR* was created to provide timely and useful best practices for education agencies that are interested in designing and implementing a strategy for data collection and reporting, focusing on these as key elements of the larger data process. It builds upon the *Standards for Education Data Collection and Reporting* (published by the Forum in 1991) and reflects the vast increase over the past three decades in the number of compulsory and/or continual data collections conducted by education agencies. This new resource is designed to be relevant to the SEAs and LEAs of today, in which data are regularly collected for multiple purposes, and data collection and recording may be conducted by many different individuals within an agency.

- **SCED Video 4: SCED Finder**
  SCED Video 4: SCED Finder demonstrates how to use SCED Finder to search and browse SCED codes; build a complete, 12-character SCED Identifier; and create a list of courses that can be saved and downloaded. The video is the fourth in a series; the first video introduced SCED, the second provided an overview of SCED coding, and the third introduced resources developed by the Forum to communicate information about SCED and assist SCED users.

CURRENT WORKING GROUPS

Forum working groups address specific issues and develop resources. The Forum is supporting four working groups:

- Attendance, Participation, and Engagement Working Group
- Metadata Working Group
- SCED Version 9 Working Group
- Virtual Education Working Group

Much of the Forum's work is collaborative, and resources often are developed in partnership with national, federal, regional, state, and local education agencies and stakeholders. To support the engagement of the full Forum in the development of Forum resources, Forum working groups may share resource outlines and drafts with the Forum for feedback. Forum members are encouraged to review and comment on drafts and contribute applicable case studies and real-world examples from their agency.

EVENTS

- **Regional Educational Laboratories (REL) Program Webinar**
  Chris Boccanfuso, Erin Pollard, and Janelle Sands, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, delivered a virtual presentation to the Forum on March 4, 2020. They provided an overview of the REL Program and an update on major projects and current activities of the RELs.

- **Strategies for Leveraging SCED to Support SEA and LEA Goals**
  The Forum and the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program joined efforts to deliver a virtual presentation on April 8, 2020. SCED Working Group Chair Susan Williams, Virginia Department of Education, and SCED Working Group member Rachel Kruse, Iowa Department of Education, shared their agencies' experiences with SCED. The presentation also provided an overview of SCED, including SCED Version 7 updates, and demonstrated how to use the SCED Finder tool. The webinar recording and presentation slides are available on the SLDS website at https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/17590.

- **Responding to SEA and LEA Needs for Virtual Learning Solutions**
  The Forum and the SLDS Grant Program joined efforts to deliver a virtual presentation on April 9, 2020. Allen Miedema, Northshore School District (WA), Jay Pennington, Iowa Department of Education, Adrian L. Peoples, Delaware Department of Education, and Dawn Gessel, Putnam County Schools (WV), shared their agencies' experiences transitioning to remote and virtual learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentation also provided information on the *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education Data*. The webinar recording and presentation slides are available on the Forum website at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016095.asp and the SLDS website at https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/18909.

- **Cybersecurity and Remote Learning/Working**
  The Forum and the SLDS Grant Program joined efforts to deliver a virtual presentation on April 28, 2020. Steven Hernandez, the chief information security officer at the U.S. Department of Education (ED), discussed cybersecurity and remote working and learning. He shared an overview of the current cybersecurity threats, best practices for securely using teleconferencing services, and federal resources that can help SEAs and LEAs. The webinar recording and presentation slides are available on the Forum website at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/index.asp and the SLDS website at https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/18939.

- **Planning for, Collecting, and Managing Data About Displaced Students**
  The Forum and the SLDS Grant Program joined efforts to deliver a virtual presentation on May 20, 2020. Jan Petro, Colorado Department of Education, Terri Hanson, Texas Education Agency, Frank Cernik, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Dean Folkers, Nebraska Department of Education, Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (MT), Laura Hansen, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN), and Julie Riordan, Regional

Educational Laboratory—Northeast and Islands, shared their agencies' experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent crises. The presentation also included an overview of the *Forum Guide to Planning for, Collecting, and Managing Data About Students Displaced by a Crisis*. The webinar recording and presentation slides are available on the Forum website at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2019163.asp and the SLDS website at https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/18977.

- **National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC) Virtual Meeting**
  NESAC held a virtual meeting on June 24, 2020. NESAC Chair Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (MO), and NESAC Vice Chair Gunes Kaplan, Nevada Department of Education, facilitated a discussion on timely topics of interest, including data-related issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. NESAC members focused on identifying types of data and data management practices.

- **Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee (PPI) Virtual Meeting**
  The PPI Committee held a virtual meeting on July 13, 2020. PPI Chair Bradley McMillen, Wake County Public School System (NC), and PPI Vice Chair Linda Jenkins, Arkansas Department of Education, facilitated a discussion on timely topics of interest, including data-related issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. PPI members focused on the policy, procedures, and implementation aspects of these topics.

- **Technology Committee (TECH) Virtual Meeting**
  The TECH Committee held a virtual meeting on July 14, 2020. TECH Chair DeDe Conner, Kentucky Department of Education, and TECH Vice Chair Dawn Gessel, Putnam County Schools (WV), facilitated a discussion on timely topics of interest, including data-related issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. TECH members focused on the technical aspects of these topics.

- **Cybersecurity Webinar**
  Steven Hernandez, the chief information security officer at ED, delivered a virtual presentation to the Forum on August 25, 2020. Steven addressed several timely cybersecurity topics, including technology equity and cybersecurity, cybersecurity in a telework environment, and securing personal information.

- **Technology Equity Panel Discussion**
  Dean Folkers, Nebraska Department of Education; Don Benton, Linda Jenkins, and Carmen Jordan, Arkansas Department of Education; Bradley McMillen, Wake County Public School System (NC); and Rachel Johnson and Aaron Smith, Loudoun County Public Schools (VA), participated in a virtual panel discussion on September 21, 2020. The panelists shared their agencies' experiences supporting technology equity, including collecting data on technology equity.

- **Pacific Perspectives: Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education Data**
  Jay Pennington, Iowa Department of Education, participated in a REL—Pacific webinar with education agency staff from the Pacific region on September 23, 2020. The presenters shared their agencies' experiences with virtual education. Jay also highlighted the *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education Data*, which provides helpful information for SEAs and LEAs that are implementing or expanding their virtual education offerings. The webinar recording is available through the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at https://youtu.be/T5B_2_U6MR0.

- **New Members' Meeting**
  The Forum hosted a virtual meeting for new Forum members on September 29, 2020. The new members learned more about how the Forum works and discussed Forum activities with members of the Forum Steering Committee.

- **Education Equity Indicators Webinar**
  Natalie Nielsen, Stuart Elliott, and Judith Koenig (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine) delivered a virtual presentation to the Forum on October 19, 2020. The presentation reviewed the work of the National Academies' Committee on Developing Indicators of Educational Equity and provided information on

two reports: *Monitoring Educational Equity* and *Building Educational Equity Indicator Systems: A Guidebook for States and School Districts*.

- **Effective Practices for Establishing and Sustaining SEA and LEA Data Governance**
  The Forum and the SLDS Grant Program joined efforts to deliver a virtual presentation on November 4, 2020. Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education, and Laura Hansen, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN), shared their agencies' experiences with data governance. The presentation also highlighted the *Forum Guide to Data Governance*, and provided helpful information for SEAs and LEAs that are implementing or updating their data governance programs.

- **Disclosure Avoidance Webinar**
  The Forum and the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) joined efforts to deliver a virtual presentation on February 3, 2021. Frank Miller, ED, and the PTAC team provided an overview of best practices and staff training in the area of disclosure avoidance methodology and public reporting.

- **Data Security and Destruction Best Practices Webinar**
  The Forum and the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) joined efforts to deliver a virtual presentation on March 9, 2021. The PTAC team provided an overview of current data security best practices for education data systems and best practices for data destruction.

- **Attendance, Participation, and Engagement Panel Presentation**
  Jan Petro, Colorado Department of Education, Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (MO), Rachel Kruse, Iowa Department of Education, and Laura Hansen, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN), will participate in a virtual panel presentation on March 25, 2021. The panelists will provide an overview of the forthcoming *Forum Guide to Attendance, Participation, and Engagement*, and share information on how agencies approached these data in spring 2020 and what they are doing for school year 2020-21.

- **Generate Overview & Update Webinar**
  Members of the Generate team will deliver a virtual presentation to the Forum on April 15, 2021. The presentation will provide an overview of the Generate solution, describe the process for states to implement Generate, and look at how modernization efforts might leverage this tool for further value added opportunities.

- **Monthly Steering Committee Meetings**
  The Steering Committee oversees and coordinates all Forum activities. Members conduct monthly conference calls to discuss Forum events and to review the status of Forum projects. Facilitated and led by Dean Folkers, Nebraska Department of Education, the conference calls allow Steering Committee members to discuss, plan, and review Forum projects and events.

- **Upcoming Events**
  The Forum is planning Forum webinars and virtual meetings on topics of interest to Forum members. Event details, including dates, topics, and speakers, will be posted to the Forum360 website as more information becomes available.

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

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

LINKS TO PAST ISSUES OF THE FORUM VOICE

Winter 2020	Fall 2013	Fall 2009	Fall 2005	Spring 2002
Winter 2019	Winter 2013	Spring 2009	Spring 2005	Fall 2001
Winter 2018	Spring 2012	Fall 2008	Fall 2004	Spring 2001
Winter 2017	Fall 2011	Spring 2008	Spring 2004	Fall 2000
Winter 2016	Spring 2011	Fall 2007	Fall 2003	Spring 2000
Winter 2015	Fall 2010	Spring 2007	Spring 2003	Fall 1999
Spring 2014	Spring 2010	Fall 2006	Fall 2002	Spring 1999