

# The Forum Voice

Winter 2023

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Adrian L. Peoples, Delaware Department of Education

Jonathan Wiens, Oregon Department of Education

Andrew Swickheimer, Noblesville Schools (IN)



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

We made it to 2023, Forum friends and colleagues!

Do you remember how we all felt at the beginning of 2022? After we'd spent the previous year adapting our procedures and perspectives to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including holding the first virtual

Summer Forum Meeting, we were ready to move on into the future ... but COVID-19 adapted as well, and as 2022 began, it was easy to feel that we'd been sent back to the starting line.

Now that 2022 is in the rearview mirror, I can't help but marvel at what a solid, productive year it turned out to be for the Forum. This was the year we took the changes and process innovations we'd made in 2021 and fine-tuned them where needed. Our country's educators and education stakeholders turn to us for advice, recommendations, and our excellent published resources, and we have continued to support them without interruption, from the smallest local school district up to the U.S. Department of Education. Every member of the Forum plays a role in our achievements—I can't say enough to express my thanks and appreciation to all of you. We couldn't have done it without you!

2021's Summer Forum Meeting taught us how to handle an event of that size and scope online; in 2022, we took what we'd learned and adjusted the format and schedule based on your feedback. We first hosted the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Commissioner Peggy Carr for a speech on the future of NCES and how the Forum can support the center's plans. In addition, our three standing committees spent time discussing new and perennial issues like these:

- machine learning and artificial intelligence;
- alternative models of schooling;
- changes in teaching;
- educator data qualification collection and reporting;
- data privacy;
- collecting, reporting, and using graduation rate data; and
- learning management systems (LMSs) and statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs).

In the months before the July Forum meeting, we also hosted discussions with experts from the federal level about the network of Regional Education Laboratories (RELs) and the ongoing modernization of EDFacts. Our July Forum meeting was streamlined, but the presentations and discussions were far from light. In addition to engaging and insightful presentations from ED's chief information security officer Steven Hernandez and Commissioner Carr, our standing committees discussed a broad range of topics, from data standards to demographic data, among others. The REL Roundtable event followed our July meeting in October, bringing together Forum members and REL representatives for virtual discussions about our respective work, along with webinars on the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) and EDFacts.

We didn't curb our publication activities in 2022. We put out a roster of new and updated Forum resources, with some still in progress for release early this year:

- *School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Version 10* and related resources, including SCED Finder and Master List;
- *Forum Guide to Digital Equity*;
- *Using Education Indicators: A Guide for State and Local Education Agencies*;
- *Forum Guide to State Education Agency Support for Local Education Agencies in Civil Rights Data Reporting*;
- *Forum Guide to Discipline Data* (forthcoming); and
- *Forum Guide to Understanding the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Classification System* (forthcoming).

We're continuing to develop the next version of SCED this year. Here's a look at the other topics our Forum working groups are addressing in 2023:

- data quality;
- data literacy;
- technology for teaching and learning; and
- data on the impact of the pandemic on student learning.

We've got so much ahead of us this year, and I cannot wait to get to work on our projects with all of you. We've brought the Forum through three difficult years since the start of the pandemic without missing a step. Let's hit the ground running in 2023!

Georgia Hughes-Webb, Forum Chair  
West Virginia Department of Education



## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: FORUM ONLINE COURSES AND TRAININGS

The Forum has developed several online courses based on Forum best practice publications. The Forum also has trainings for SCED users and new Forum members. These courses and trainings offer the education community an opportunity to learn about important education data issues and include videos, presentations, quizzes, and other supporting materials. These resources can be used by education agencies to train staff at many levels.

- **[Data Quality: Improving Education Data, Parts 1 and 2](#)**

This online course is based on the [Forum Curriculum for Improving Education Data: A Resource for Local Education Agencies](#). Part 1 contains materials designed to introduce the important concepts for creating a culture of quality data to all local education agency (LEA) staff members who affect the production of quality data, including board members, superintendents, principals, data coordinators/stewards, teachers, technology support staff, and office staff. Part 2 provides materials for those staff members responsible for overseeing the quality of an LEA's data, such as data stewards or data governance committee members.

- **[Forum New Member Training Suite](#)**

The Forum has developed this training to introduce newly appointed members to the Forum and provide information on Forum history, processes, and resources. The materials on this page are designed to help new members learn important content and understand their responsibilities as Forum members. The training outlines six steps to guide users through the process, which include an introduction to the Forum, more in-depth resources, an assessment for new members, and information about how to get involved in the Forum.

- **[SCED User Training](#)**

This training is designed to introduce new users to SCED and provide information on the benefits of SCED, the SCED coding structure, and tools for implementing and adapting SCED for use in education agencies. The materials on this page also can help experienced users learn more about SCED and the many free SCED resources. The training outlines six steps to guide users along the process, including reviewing the introductory materials, building their knowledge with more advanced resources, and completing an optional assessment at the end.

- **[The Forum Guide to Data Ethics Online Course](#)**

This online course is based on the [Forum Guide to Data Ethics](#) and focuses on how ethical principles apply to education data. It is intended for any person who handles data in an education organization, including superintendents, chief information officers, principals, teachers, registrars, counselors, school board members, data managers, technology directors, information systems staff, data stewards, technical staff, office staff, paraprofessionals, volunteers, and vendors.

- ***The Forum Guide to Data Visualization Online Course, Modules 1 and 2***

This online course is designed to help education agencies communicate data meaning in visual formats that are accessible, accurate, and actionable for a wide range of education stakeholders. It is based on the *Forum Guide to Data Visualization: A Resource for Education Agencies*. This course is intended for staff in local, state, and federal education agencies whose responsibilities include any aspect of analyzing data or sharing meaning through data with education stakeholders.



## NEW FORUM RESOURCES

- ***SCED Version 10 and related resources, including SCED Finder and Master List***

The Forum's SCED Working Group published SCED Version 10 in September 2022. 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 10, the working group updated the *SCED Master List* and *SCED Finder* with new and updated courses.

- ***Forum Guide to Digital Equity***

The Forum's Digital Equity Working Group developed a new resource to help education agencies close digital equity gaps through the collection and use of digital equity data. The *Forum Guide to Digital Equity* defines digital equity; explains the importance of having comparable, high-quality digital equity data; and discusses how those data can be used to identify issues, prioritize action, and create new programs or sustain existing efforts to address digital inequities.

- ***Using Education Indicators: A Forum Guide for State and Local Education Agencies***

The Forum's Education Indicators Working Group developed a new resource that provides timely and useful information on education indicators, how their collection and use have changed over time, and how agencies use them strategically. This new guide highlights best practices for using indicators; discusses how the relevance, collection, and use of indicators have changed over time; and considers common challenges in creating and using education indicators.

- ***Forum Guide to State Education Agency Support for Local Education Agencies in Civil Rights Data Reporting***

The Forum's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) Reporting Focused Working Group expanded upon the 2018 *Forum Guide to Reporting Civil Rights Data* to address the different ways in which state education agencies (SEAs) can support LEAs in their CRDC federal reporting. The group developed this companion publication to highlight this topic through case studies and best practice recommendations.

- ***Forthcoming Forum Guide to Discipline Data***

The Forum's Discipline Data Working Group developed a new resource to help education agencies improve the effectiveness of efforts to collect, report, and use disciplinary incident data. The resource provides information on the types of data commonly collected, discusses the importance of collecting incident data, and identifies key considerations for agencies implementing and managing an incident database.

- ***Forthcoming Forum Guide to Understanding the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Classification System***

The *Forum Guide to Understanding the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Classification System* provides information on the structure of SCED codes, the process for ensuring that SCED remains up to date and accurate, and the benefits of SCED use. The guide is intended for both new and existing SCED users and contains best practices for SCED implementation and use. Additional information on SCED use, including case studies, is available in the companion publication, *Forum Guide to SCED Uses and Benefits*.



## CURRENT WORKING GROUPS

Forum working groups address specific issues and develop resources. The Forum is supporting four working groups, in addition to the working group that develops SCED:

- **Data Literacy Working Group:** This new working group will address the needs of federal, state, and local education agencies by developing and releasing a new resource focused on best practices for increasing data literacy in varied stakeholder groups.
- **Data Quality Working Group:** The working group is developing a new resource that will help states and districts that may be seeking to improve or further develop their policies and practices related to data quality.
- **Data on the Impact of the Pandemic on Student Learning Working Group:** This new working group will develop and release a new resource focused on SEA and LEA strategies for tracking student learning gains and losses during and after the move to virtual and remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Technology for Teaching and Learning Working Group:** This new working group will develop and release a companion resource to the 2019 *Forum Guide to Technology Management in Education* focused on the selection, implementation, management, and support of education technology.
- **SCED Working Group:** The working group currently is planning the development of SCED Version 11.

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.



## 2022 FORUM MEETINGS AND SESSIONS

- **Commissioner’s Update: Envisioning the Future of the NCES and Reflecting on the Context of COVID-19**  
Peggy Carr, the Commissioner of NCES, delivered a presentation to the Forum on February 24, 2022. Commissioner Carr shared her vision for NCES and explored how the Forum can support it.
- **National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC) Standing Committee Meeting**  
NESAC held a virtual meeting on March 4, 2022. NESAC Chair Gunes Kaplan, Nevada Department of Education, and NESAC Vice Chair Laura Hansen, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN), facilitated a discussion on graduation rates. NESAC members focused on identifying best practices for collecting and reporting these data.
- **New Members Meeting**  
The Steering Committee hosted a virtual meeting for new Forum members and mentors on March 31, 2022. The virtual meeting helped new members learn more about the Forum and how to engage in Forum activities.
- **Technology (TECH) Standing Committee Meeting**  
TECH held a virtual meeting on April 13, 2022. TECH Chair Dawn Gessel, Putnam County Schools (WV), and TECH Vice Chair Chandra Haislet, Maryland State Department of Education, facilitated a discussion on machine learning and artificial intelligence.
- **Policies, Programs, and Implementation (PPI) Standing Committee Meeting**  
PPI held a virtual meeting on April 20, 2022. PPI Chair Linda Jenkins, Arkansas Department of Education, and PPI Vice Chair Stephen Gervais, San Bernardino City Unified School District (CA), facilitated a discussion on alternative models of schooling and changes in teaching.
- **NESAC Standing Committee Meeting**  
NESAC held a virtual meeting on April 27, 2022. NESAC Chair Gunes Kaplan, Nevada Department of Education, and NESAC Vice Chair Laura Hansen, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN), facilitated a discussion that expanded on topics that emerged during the March graduation rate discussion, including best practices for using graduation rates and other measures of student success.
- **REL Program**  
Chris Boccanfuso, Liz Nolan, and Heidi Gansen, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), delivered a presentation to the Forum on May 5, 2022. They provided an overview of the



REL program, its goals and focus areas, and opportunities for the RELs to work with, engage, and support SEAs and LEAs.

- **EDFacts Modernization**  
Ross Santy, Kelly Worthington, and Barbara Timm, NCES, delivered a presentation to the Forum on May 12, 2022. They provided an update on EDFacts, including progress made on the EDFacts modernization plans.
- **TECH Standing Committee Meeting**  
TECH held a virtual meeting on June 15, 2022. TECH Chair Dawn Gessel, Putnam County Schools (WV), and TECH Vice Chair Chandra Haislet, Maryland State Department of Education, facilitated a discussion on LMSs and SLDSs.
- **NESAC Standing Committee Meeting**  
NESAC held a virtual meeting on June 21, 2022. NESAC Chair Gunes Kaplan, Nevada Department of Education, and NESAC Vice Chair Laura Hansen, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN), facilitated a discussion on educator data qualification collection and reporting.
- **PPI Standing Committee Meeting**  
PPI held a virtual meeting on June 24, 2022. The Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) Team delivered a presentation and engaged in a discussion with PPI members on data privacy topics, including data protection responsibilities as a component of cross-agency data sharing and the intersection of data interoperability and data privacy.
- **New Member Orientation Session**  
The Steering Committee hosted a virtual meeting for new Forum members and mentors on June 27, 2022. The virtual meeting allowed new members, mentors, and Steering Committee members to reconnect with one another before the July Forum meeting and helped newly appointed members to learn about the Forum.
- **July 2022 Virtual Meeting**  
The 2022 Summer Forum Virtual Meeting took place online on July 12-14, 2022. Past Forum Vice Chair Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (MT), welcomed members to the meeting and introduced joint session presentations that addressed several timely topics in education data: Steven Hernandez, chief information security officer at ED, discussed cybersecurity in SEAs and LEAs; and NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr provided an update on NCES projects and activities. Standing committees met to discuss topics of interest to committee members, including data standards, modern systems and technology, demographic data, and other new and important issues in the field of education data. Notes for all joint sessions, standing committee, and Steering Committee meetings are available on the Forum website at [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/meeting\\_notes.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/meeting_notes.asp).



## OTHER PAST EVENTS

- **REL Roundtables**  
The Forum held virtual roundtable discussions with the RELs on October 24, 2022. The purpose of the REL Roundtables was for Forum SEA and LEA representatives to meet their region's REL representative, with the goal of strengthening relationships and collaboration between the two groups. Forum SEA and LEA representatives enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the RELs and their work, while REL representatives to the Forum appreciated the opportunity to disseminate their work to education data experts in their regions.
- **CEDS Webinar**  
The CEDS team delivered a virtual presentation to the Forum on November 15, 2022. The webinar provided an overview of CEDS, as well as how SEAs and LEAs use CEDS, and it included time for discussion and Q&A. The webinar was intended to serve both as an introduction to CEDS for the newer Forum members who may be unfamiliar with CEDS and as a refresher for the established Forum members who were interested in the latest developments.

- **EDFacts Webinar**

The Forum held a webinar on EDFacts on February 1, 2023. Kelly Worthington and Barbara Timm, NCES, provided an update on EDFacts, including progress on the EDFacts modernization effort, how EDFacts is leveraging CEDS, and changes made in response to the Forum’s recommendations.



## **NEWSLETTER INFORMATION**

The *Forum Voice* is released as an electronic publication. To contact the Forum, email [Ghedam Bairu](mailto:Ghedam Bairu).



## **LINKS TO PAST ISSUES OF THE FORUM VOICE**

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