



Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data

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Every school day counts in a student's life. While research substantiates the importance of teacher effectiveness on student academic success, even the best teacher cannot be effective unless students are present in class. Regular attendance is essential to providing students with opportunities to learn, and these opportunities are limited when students do not attend school.

Moreover, access to accurate, timely data about whether individual students and groups of students regularly attend school is critical to making instructional and programmatic choices targeting student attendance behaviors. High-quality data enable educators to identify which students are absent; as well as the frequency of, and reasons for, their absences. By arming schools with actionable information, these data can guide the design of interventions intended to improve attendance and student achievement.

Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data offers best practice suggestions on collecting and using student attendance data to improve performance, includes a standard set of codes to make attendance data comparable across districts and states, and presents real-life examples of how attendance information has been used by school districts. The publication has the following four objectives:

- explaining why high-quality attendance data matter;
- creating a standard attendance taxonomy that defines “attending/present” and “not attending/absent,” categorizes attendance codes in an exhaustive and mutually exclusive way, and supports improved attendance data quality and comparability between states and districts;
- identifying common challenges to collecting accurate and comparable attendance data and providing practical suggestions for addressing these obstacles; and
- demonstrating how detailed, accurate attendance data can supply actionable information to guide policy and procedural changes in schools, districts, and states with a goal of improving student attendance.

This publication is available electronically at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2009804.asp. Instructions for ordering print copies are also available on the National Forum on Education Statistics website.

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