



# Forum Guide to **Collecting and Using Attendance Data**







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Attendance Data**





## National Cooperative Education Statistics System

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) established the National Cooperative Education Statistics System (Cooperative System) to assist in producing and maintaining comparable and uniform information and data on early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. These data are intended to be useful for policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels.

The National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) is an entity of the Cooperative System and, among its other activities, proposes principles of good practice to assist state and local education agencies in meeting this purpose. The Cooperative System and the Forum are supported in these endeavors by resources from NCES.

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### January 2018

This publication and other publications of the National Forum on Education Statistics may be found at the websites listed below.

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### Technical Contact

Ghedam Bairu

(202) 245-6644

[ghedam.bairu@ed.gov](mailto:ghedam.bairu@ed.gov)



## National Forum on Education Statistics

The work of the National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) is a key aspect of the National Cooperative Education Statistics System (Cooperative System). The Cooperative System was established to produce and maintain, with the cooperation of the states, comparable and uniform education information and data that are useful for policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels. To assist in meeting this goal, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)—a part of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) —established the Forum to improve the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics. The Forum deals with issues in education data policy, sponsors innovations in data collection and reporting, and provides technical assistance to improve state and local data systems.

## Development of Forum Products

Members of the Forum establish working groups to develop guides in data-related areas of interest to federal, state, and local education agencies. They are assisted in this work by NCES, but the content comes from the collective experience of working group members who review all products iteratively throughout the development process. After the working group completes the content and reviews a document a final time, publications are subject to examination by members of the Forum standing committee that sponsors the project. Finally, Forum members (approximately 120 people) review and formally vote to approve all documents prior to publication. NCES provides final review and approval prior to online publication. The information and opinions published in Forum products do not necessarily represent the policies or views of ED, IES, or NCES.



## Working Group Members

This online publication was developed through the National Cooperative Education Statistics System and funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)—a part of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The Attendance Working Group of the National Forum on Education Statistics is responsible for the content.

### Chair

**Jan Petro**, Colorado Department of Education

### Members

**Kara Arzamendia**, Minnesota Department of Education

**Dean Folkers**, Nebraska Department of Education

**Laura Hansen**, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN)

**Mike Hopkins**, Rochester School Department (NH)

**Georgia Hughes-Webb**, West Virginia Department of Education

**Brad McMillen**, Wake County Public School System (NC)

**Zenaida Napa Natividad**, Guam Department of Education

**Linda Rocks**, Bossier Parish Schools (LA)

**Peter Tamayo**, Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

**Cheryl VanNoy**, St. Louis Public Schools (MO)

**Andrew Wallace**, South Portland School Department (ME)

### Consultants

**Elizabeth Lieutenant and Kristina Dunman**, Quality Information Partners

### Project Officer

**Ghedam Bairu**, National Center for Education Statistics

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## Foreword

The National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) is pleased to present the *Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data*. The purpose of this document is to recommend practices that will help education agencies collect, report, and use attendance data to improve student and school outcomes. This publication substantively revises and expands the information included in *Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data*, published in 2009, and incorporates current best practices, real-world examples, and role-specific tip sheets. It is designed to help state and local education agency (SEA and LEA) staff improve their attendance data practices.

One goal of the Forum is to improve the quality of education data gathered for use by policymakers and program decisionmakers. An approach to furthering this goal has been to pool the collective experiences of Forum members to produce best practice guides in areas of high interest to those who collect, maintain, and use data about elementary and secondary education. Improving student attendance data quality, collection, reporting, and use is one of those high-interest areas, and this document aims to provide best practices that meet the common needs of the education community, as determined by the collective experience of our working group members.

This document focuses on attendance data from the perspectives of the education data community and does not attempt to present a comprehensive account of the many issues related to student attendance.

## Intended Audience

The *Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data* will be of interest to anyone concerned about the utility of attendance data. More specifically, this document is intended for staff in federal, state, and local education agencies whose responsibilities include any aspect of collecting, reporting, or using attendance data. This audience includes program and data staff, researchers, administrators, policymakers, and others who are tasked with using attendance data to improve student and school outcomes.

## Publication Objectives

In alignment with the Forum's mission, this resource aims to

- explain why high-quality attendance data matter and how attendance data are related to other measures of student achievement and success;
- create a standard attendance taxonomy that supports improved attendance data quality and comparability between schools, districts, and states;
- identify common challenges to collecting accurate and comparable attendance data in elementary and secondary schools and provide practical suggestions for addressing these challenges; and
- define role-based actions that school, district, and state staff can take to improve the collection of high-quality attendance data and promote responsible data use.



## Organization of This Document

The guide is presented in the following chapters and appendices:

- Chapter 1 discusses why school attendance and attendance data matter and describes the relationship between attendance and student achievement and success.
- Chapter 2 describes the relationships between attendance, enrollment, and withdrawals.
- Chapter 3 explains the importance of using an attendance taxonomy and provides an exhaustive, mutually exclusive attendance taxonomy.
- Chapter 4 discusses common challenges and effective practices related to collecting, reporting, and using quality attendance data.
- Chapter 5 features tip sheets that summarize the key responsibilities, considerations, actions, outcomes, and motivations for a wide range of local and state stakeholders.
- Appendix A features a customizable letter template that can be used to communicate the importance of attendance to parents, guardians, and families.
- Appendix B lists additional Forum resources for schools, districts, and states.



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# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

Every school day counts in a student's education. Regular attendance is essential to providing students with opportunities to learn. From an instructional perspective, any absence, regardless of whether the absence is excused or not, interferes with student learning. While research substantiates the importance of teacher effectiveness on student academic success (Darling-Hammond 2000), even the most effective teachers cannot support student learning unless students are physically or virtually present in class.

The relationship between attendance and achievement often appears in early grades, and attendance can influence student outcomes throughout a student's school life. Absenteeism in prekindergarten and kindergarten is associated with future negative outcomes such as higher rates of absenteeism, slower progression, and lower achievement in later years (Connolly and Olson 2012). Poor attendance also has serious implications for older students. High school students who are chronically absent are less likely to graduate on time and more likely to drop out of high school; and high school students who drop out have been found to have exhibited higher rates of absenteeism throughout their childhood than high school graduates (Attendance Works 2014, Attendance Works and Healthy Schools Campaign 2015).

State and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) play an essential role in tracking, measuring, and addressing student attendance. 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 and others who support students and families to identify which students are absent, as well as the frequency of and reasons for their absences. By providing SEAs and LEAs with actionable information, these data can guide the design of interventions intended to improve attendance and, in turn, promote positive student outcomes and increased student achievement.

### What Attendance Means

Students are considered "present" if they are attending an instructional program approved by the state, district, and/or school. This definition applies to attendance in a physical school building or in a virtual learning environment. The codes used to track student attendance, including both present and absent attendance codes, are established based on school, district, and state attendance policies, and attendance data collection must comply with local, state, and federal regulations.

Attendance data may be collected in a variety of ways based on the school in which a student is enrolled. For example, attendance may be collected differently in elementary and secondary schools, even if those schools are in the same district. Whereas elementary school students may have their attendance recorded once or twice per day, secondary school students often have their attendance recorded more frequently as they change classroom locations throughout the school day.



Different attendance measures provide different levels of detail. For example, if attendance is collected as the number of minutes a student is present in a particular class period, it is possible to document and analyze the time the student is exposed to various topics or course content. Minute-by-minute attendance also allows for a record of when students sign out of classes, and helps account for tardiness. Attendance measures may also vary based on the characteristics of the learning environment. Attendance measures for courses that are taught in traditional, face-to-face settings are typically calculated based on the number of days and/or periods a student is present in the physical classroom. However, some courses may use performance-based attendance measures, which are flexible in measuring attendance beyond traditional hours in the classroom. These measures may include the number of meetings with instructional and support staff, the number of successfully completed assignments and/or lesson plans, or the amount of time spent actively engaged in a virtual learning environment. The expansion of virtual education has also introduced new measures of attendance. Attendance in a virtual environment may be measured based on minutes of instruction, time logged in, performance on assessments, competency achievement, or other factors.<sup>1</sup>

Discussions about student attendance often address related topics such as chronic absenteeism, average daily attendance, and truancy.

- **Chronic absenteeism** is defined by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) as the unduplicated number of students absent 10 percent or more of the school days during the school year. This new definition was introduced as part of ED's 2016-2017 *EDFacts* data collection.
- **Average daily attendance (ADA)** is often defined by state law or regulations. If states have not adopted a standard ADA calculation, it can be calculated by summing the counts of resident students attending public school each day of the school year and then dividing the sum by the total number of days that school is in session during the school year.<sup>2</sup> While ADA can be a useful attendance measure, it may mask the number of individual students who are chronically absent (Attendance Works 2014), and may need to be used with other attendance measures.
- **Truancy**, like ADA, is often defined at the state or local level and linked to thresholds for legal intervention. For example, Washington State defines truancy as missing five or more full days, unexcused, within a month, or missing 10 or more full days, unexcused, within a school year. Meanwhile, California considers a truant to be any pupil between age 6 and 18 absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year.


## Why Attendance Data Matter

The connection between student attendance and learning is clear: a missed school day is a lost opportunity for students to learn. Students who attend school regularly achieve at higher levels than students who are not regularly in attendance. Research has shown that consistent attendance supports student learning and is an important factor in student achievement, while absenteeism is related to lower student achievement. Eighth-grade students with fewer absences generally score higher on standardized tests than eighth-grade students with more absences (Musu-Gillette et al. 2016, p. 53). Attendance also strongly affects graduation, dropout, and postsecondary enrollment rates (Balfanz and Byrnes 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about virtual education data, see the National Forum on Education Statistics. (2015). *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education* (NFES 2016–095). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Available at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2016095.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016095.asp).

<sup>2</sup> From the *Documentation for the NCES Common Core of Data National Public Education Financial Survey (NPEFS), SchoolYear 2013-14 (FiscalYear 2014)* (p. 5, [https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pdf/NCES\\_2016302.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pdf/NCES_2016302.pdf)).



The negative impacts of chronic absenteeism may begin early in a child’s education and continue as he or she progresses through elementary and secondary school. Thus, it is critical to support consistent student attendance across all grade levels. Chronic absenteeism is shown to depress achievement outcomes, educational engagement, and social engagement as early as kindergarten (Gottfried 2014). The negative impacts of chronic absenteeism continue across elementary and secondary school and include lower test scores and an increased likelihood of chronic absenteeism in later years (London, Sanchez, and Castrechini 2016).

The relationships between attendance and positive student outcomes highlight the need for high-quality attendance data. Moreover, data from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) indicate that attendance is an issue of national concern. Over 6.8 million students, or approximately one out of every seven students, were chronically absent and missed 15 or more school days in the 2013-14 school year (Office for Civil Rights 2016). Any absence, whether excused or not, denies students the opportunity to learn in accordance with the school’s instructional program, but students who miss school are sometimes further excluded from learning opportunities because of chronic absenteeism. Penalties for students who miss school, such as the loss of course credits, detention, and suspensions, may unintentionally worsen attendance issues.

Targeted interventions that address the root cause of absenteeism can promote positive student outcomes, but the success of attendance interventions requires high-quality data. For example, a recent study used attendance data to trigger automated text messages to parents when their child was absent from class, which helped improve student attendance (Bergman and Chan 2017). Research supports the use of attendance data as a core indicator in early warning systems (Frazelle and Nagel 2015). These systems are designed to identify students who may be at risk of negative outcomes, such as dropping out of high school, and they enable schools to develop interventions before problems arise. Accurate, timely attendance data are also useful for ensuring student safety and well-being. Staff are accountable for student safety when school is open and in session, and they must be able to track where students are during school hours.

## Using Attendance Data

Attendance is a critical component of educational equity. Educational equity generally refers to ensuring that all students can access the resources and support needed for educational success. Chronic absenteeism is rarely the sole barrier to student achievement. Absenteeism may be a symptom of other issues that hinder student learning, such as socioeconomic distress, health barriers, or cultural and social exclusion (Black, Seder, and Kekahio 2014). It is therefore important to understand how additional factors may impact student attendance and performance.

### Addressing Chronic Absenteeism: One District’s Approach

The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) uses a multi-tiered approach to resolve chronic absenteeism. Each school develops a system to quickly identify students with significant behavior and attendance issues. Schools then use their unique prevention and intervention supports to improve attendance. When a student is unable to increase school attendance, a referral is sent to the district’s attendance advocate program, which includes three advocates assigned to geographic areas of the district. The intent is to assign advocates to the high school feeder schools, including elementary. This gives each advocate an opportunity to work with the whole family to resolve barriers to regular school attendance. In addition, the attendance advocates partner with the courts, community agencies, and Boulder County Departments of Health and Human Services to assist those families with higher needs. The district’s approach to chronic absenteeism recognizes that school attendance is influenced by multiple issues within the school, family, and community systems.



### Sharing Data Improves Interventions

The evaluation of attendance data on its own will not support the identification of the root causes for an individual student's attendance problems. Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN) created a "Support and Intervention" area in the student information system to collect information on the support provided to students and to promote a more holistic view of each individual student. This area allows appropriate staff to enter data about the student and to view the supports and interventions that are being provided to the student by multiple departments, including attendance-related interventions. Staff providing attendance-related interventions can see what other departments are working with the student, and what other challenges the student might be experiencing. This can lead to the identification of the root cause of the student's attendance challenges and enable the personalization of supports that directly address the student's needs.

Attendance data are most useful when used with other data, to promote a more thorough understanding of student achievement. Data analytics can be valuable for understanding how factors that impact student achievement relate to attendance, especially at the course and individual student levels. Linking chronic absenteeism data with teacher performance data, demographic data, and behavior management data can help identify factors that support and hinder student achievement. For example, comparing attendance data with performance measures, such as graduation rates or course passing rates, can reveal opportunities to improve student achievement. In addition to reviewing individual student attendance data, reviewing aggregate attendance data can illuminate factors that are not typically associated with attendance. For example, it may be useful to look at whether there is a relationship between attendance and school climate across schools within a district, or between different subgroups of students.

Focusing on improving attendance rates is only the start of larger initiatives to promote engagement and improve student outcomes. Conducting research on attendance can help facilitate conversations between educators, policymakers, and families. Linking attendance data to other data such as achievement and school climate can help identify the root cause of issues that hinder student achievement and identify the best strategies for improving both student attendance and achievement.

### Students Come First

The most important measure in assessing attendance policies and programs is whether they meet the needs of students. Maximizing student learning opportunities and supporting student outcomes and achievement should always be the primary goal when considering how to improve attendance practices. Just as every school day counts in a student's education, every student counts in attendance policies, programs, and practices.

### Protecting Student Privacy

SEAs and LEAs that work with attendance data must be sure that data are collected, shared, and used in ways that are allowed under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). It is important that that student privacy be protected when collecting and analyzing attendance data. These data should be safeguarded while being used, and privacy standards should be followed before any data are shared. The Forum Guide to Education Data Privacy (2016) can help SEAs and LEAs protect student privacy through the responsible collection, analysis, and use of attendance data. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of the Chief Privacy Officer, which houses the Family Policy Compliance Office, Student Privacy Policy and Assistance Division, and Privacy Technical Assistance Center, amongst others, provides education stakeholders with timely information and updated guidance on data privacy, confidentiality, and security practices through a variety of resources. More information about privacy is available at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/>.

# Chapter 2:

## Attendance and Enrollment

While attendance refers to a student's presence or absence in an instructional program approved by the state, district, and/or school, enrollment refers to whether a student's name was, is, or will be officially registered on the roll of a school or schools.<sup>3</sup> Attendance policies are closely related to enrollment policies. Clear, consistent attendance and enrollment policies can help state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) account for all students and maximize student participation in instructional time. Attendance and enrollment policies are often designed to address specific situations, such as how to calculate attendance for dual-enrolled students, transfer students, and other special cases; when to officially enroll or withdraw a student from an instructional program; and what types of accommodations can be made for students whose attendance may be compromised due to extenuating circumstances, such as chronic health issues. Such policies also clarify when students are officially enrolled and when a prolonged absence will result in a withdrawal.

### Barriers to Attendance and Enrollment, and Reasons for Withdrawal

Students who fail to enroll, or who fail to attend once enrolled, may be experiencing a wide range of barriers. Understanding these barriers can aid school officials in designing clear and equitable policies that guide decisions regarding when to officially enroll or withdraw students. These factors may include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Child care.** Some students may withdraw from school because they need to stay home to take care of children or younger siblings.
- **Documentation.** Some families opt not to enroll their children in schools because of immigration and documentation challenges.
- **Dropping out.** Students who have decided to drop out of school may neglect to formally advise their school of their decision or fill out the necessary paperwork to withdraw themselves from school.

#### Wraparound System of Support in District 51

District 51 in Colorado has developed a system of supports to address multiple barriers to attendance. The district employs four attendance advocates who work to develop trusting relationships with students and their families in order to address attendance issues. The advocates assess each family's needs, develop plans and goals to improve the student's attendance, and work with other agencies to help provide services and support that can improve attendance. In cases where these interventions do not result in improved attendance, the students are referred to the district's truancy department. After being assigned a truancy case manager, a case management plan is developed in order to avoid truancy court proceedings. Less than 1 percent of the District's student population ends up in the truancy court system, which helps to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach.

<sup>3</sup> CEDS Absent Attendance Category: <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000599>.

CEDS Present Attendance Category: <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000600>. CEDS Enrollment Status: <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000094>.

- **Economic instability and poverty.** Students face many barriers due to socioeconomic stress, which may impact their attendance. For example, students may need to work to help financially support their family, which may conflict with their ability to consistently attend school. Punitive measures against students who are unable to attend school due to economic instability and poverty may further exacerbate attendance issues and motivate them to decide to withdraw from school.
- **Foster care.** Students who are placed in a new school district need their student records transferred promptly. Issues with transferring student records could delay enrollment, negatively impact attendance, and result in additional challenges, such as the student being incorrectly enrolled in classes or not receiving appropriate school services.
- **Health.** Students may face enrollment barriers if they lack required proof of immunization. Students who suffer from chronic health conditions may be more likely to miss school due to doctor's appointments, hospitalizations, or outpatient care. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions may contribute to school avoidance behaviors, which can impact attendance and enrollment.
- **Homelessness.** Students who are temporarily or permanently homeless must be provided equal access to public education, but these students may be delayed from enrolling in school if they are unable to prove their residence in a district.<sup>4</sup> Once enrolled, students may face attendance barriers due to socioeconomic, transportation, health, or other factors.
- **Mobility.** Highly mobile students, such as the children of families who work in the agricultural sector, may face enrollment and attendance barriers while awaiting student information transfers from multiple districts and appropriate placement assessment. Additionally, when students relocate, there may be a gap in time between when a student withdraws from one school district and enrolls in another.
- **School Climate.** A student who feels bullied, harassed or unsafe in school may be less likely to attend and more likely to withdraw from school. Classroom climate can affect student perceptions of school relevance and self-efficacy, and certain

#### Princeton Closet Outfits Students for Success

Princeton Closet, affiliated with the Princeton City School District in Ohio, helps ensure that school-age children have the proper necessities to be successful in the classroom. The Closet provides families in need with new clothing, donated from business partners and retail stores, and gently used clothing, donated by staff members and families. Additionally, the Princeton Closet has backpacks and other school supplies so children are ready for school. Ensuring that families and students have these basic needs helps improve attendance and reduce barriers to consistent attendance. In addition to the support provided by the Closet, thousands of children and families in the Princeton City School District are served by secular and non-secular food pantries in the area. These community-based support services help ensure that students have access to the resources needed to succeed in school.

#### Using Data to Identify and Assist Students Facing Barriers

In Minnesota, the Department of Education collects data on a subset of students with limited or interrupted formal education. This group includes students who are older learners who entered school in the United States after grade 6; have at least two years less schooling than their peers; function at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics; and who may be preliterate in their native language. While such students often value education and the opportunities it can provide, many face barriers to meeting their own basic needs or the needs of their families. Collecting data about this subset of students helps Minnesota schools and districts provide targeted services that promote attendance and support student learning.

<sup>4</sup> McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, 42 U.S.C. § 11301 et seq.

instructional methods used in the classroom, such as competitive grading systems, may negatively impact attendance.

- **Suspension/Expulsion.** Students who are expelled or who receive a long-term suspension may be enrolled in an alternative instructional program, barred from re-enrollment in their school, or prevented from enrolling in a different school or district.
- **Transportation.** Students who do not have reliable transportation, are outside of school bus routes, or are unable to safely walk to school may be challenged to attend school on a regular basis, which can lead to withdrawals for nonattendance.
- **Travel.** Students who travel or live away from their home district for an extended period of time may be visiting a foreign (or home) country. In certain cases, students may be temporarily enrolled in their host country's education system or a foreign exchange program. If parents do not notify the original school about the new enrollment, the student may be considered chronically absent and subject to withdrawal.

### Washing Machines Improve Attendance

Some students may miss school if they do not have clean clothes to wear. Schools have found that a practical solution is to offer students and their families access to laundry facilities in schools so that a lack of clean clothes does not present a barrier to school attendance.

### Overcoming Attendance and Enrollment Barriers

School officials play an essential role in helping students and families overcome attendance and enrollment barriers. Engaging in proactive outreach to students and their families and communicating the importance of attendance to families is the first step to understanding the barriers students may face and can help to prevent attendance issues. Specialized staff, including community liaisons and translators who work with families from diverse linguistic backgrounds, can promote communication between schools, students, and families. The *Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Disaggregated Data on Racial/Ethnic Subgroups* (2016) includes more information on how cultural differences can impact student attendance.

## Enrollment Transfers

Some SEAs and LEAs do not track attendance for students until a student is officially enrolled. In practice, this means that some students may be temporarily unaccounted for if they fail to promptly enroll when transferring to a new school district. Without attendance data for the student, school staff may be unaware of the student's absence and therefore unable to implement timely interventions. States with statewide student information systems (SISs) may be able to transfer student records immediately, which alerts schools and districts of their new transfer students. Some agencies have implemented a no-show absent code that indicates when a student was expected to enroll in a school but never began. This code helps track students who transition between schools and districts and allows schools to begin collecting attendance data for transfer students prior to their formal enrollment.



In Louisiana, Bossier Parish Schools implemented a no-show absence code. Initial absence marks come from the classroom teacher(s), who have access to the no-show absence code during the first few weeks of the school year. These data are reviewed by office staff, who are then able to make decisions based on the reported data. For example, at the school level, staffing levels may be aligned with the numbers of students who are in attendance (enrollment minus no-shows); at the student level, additional outreach and communication with the student's family may help determine the cause for the student's absence.





St. Louis Public Schools in Missouri has implemented a system in which students are flagged with a “Y” when they first attend classes in the new school year. Students who do not receive a “Y” can be further investigated.



Minnesota high schools use an “unknown” error report to track students who indicate that they are transferring to another school or district but never enroll in that school or district. These reports can be produced throughout the year so that schools can track transfer students immediately following their transfer. These reports have helped LEAs more accurately report high school student enrollment and exit status data.

Tennessee state law mandates that a student be withdrawn after 10 consecutive absences as a dropout. Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) recognizes that an investigation should take place, but if the student is withdrawn with the dropout code, it is easy to lose track of students whose absences need to be investigated. MNPS assigns a different code in its local SIS that indicates a “dropout under investigation” and that links to the state code for a dropout to ensure that state reporting is accurate. This local code allows intervention and support teams to identify students that need follow-up services.



Guam’s Board Policy on Dropouts includes a “No Show after Enrollment” code that is used to compute the dropout rate and allows schools to accurately track the status of students who have dropped out or transferred schools.

## Withdrawals

Decisions regarding when to withdraw a student from a school are influenced by a variety of factors, including the student’s individual attendance situation, as well as school, district, and state withdrawal policies. Schools, districts, and states use different criteria to determine when students should be withdrawn.



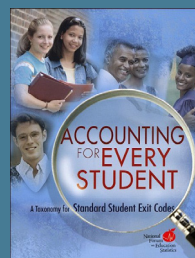
North Carolina withdraws students after they accumulate 10 consecutive days of unlawful absences.

Minnesota has a state-wide code that allows students to be withdrawn after 15 consecutive days absent. Minnesota’s drop code is used at the discretion of LEAs, and some use it more often than others.



In Maine, students remain on enrollment rolls for one month of “no shows” before being withdrawn. Removing students from enrollment helps improve attendance data quality by making attendance metrics, such as average daily attendance, more accurate.

### Exit Codes



A student exit code taxonomy can be used to track the enrollment status of all students. For more information about student exit codes, see the National Forum on Education Statistics. (2006). *Accounting for*

*Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes* (NFES 2006–804). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Available at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2006804.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006804.asp).



Tennessee’s state-level withdrawal policies state that a student must be withdrawn as a dropout after 10 consecutive or 15 cumulative absences in a semester, unless documentation can be obtained that verifies the student is enrolled in another school or educational program.

Guam has policies for student withdrawals based on absences or age. Schools must document efforts to intervene and assist chronically absent students before students may be officially withdrawn. Additionally, to help avoid the need to withdraw students who reach the age limit of compulsory education, schools must support student completion of academic requirements before students reach the age limit.



It is important to have established processes and checks in place before officially withdrawing a student. Regularly monitoring attendance data and using these data to implement interventions may reduce the frequency of withdrawals due to nonattendance. Many schools and districts have scheduled interventions, such as family conferences, letters, and additional outreach, which occur when a student accumulates a certain number or percentage of days absent. In addition, some districts use a “dropouts under investigation” code to monitor and investigate potential dropouts and to proactively intervene before students are withdrawn due to nonattendance. Such policies help to guarantee that students are not withdrawn prematurely while also ensuring that students are not counted as absent after they should have been removed from a school’s attendance roster. If policies result in negative student outcomes, such as withdrawals due to suspensions or nonattendance, then the policies do not represent best practices. Attendance, enrollment, and withdrawal policies and decisions should be designed to best meet the educational needs of students.

# Chapter 3:

## Attendance Taxonomy Category Descriptions

Promoting attendance starts with valid and reliable data, but data on absenteeism are sometimes difficult to capture and compare due to differences in definitions. For example, there are variations in how states and districts categorize partial day attendance, excused and unexcused absences, and tardiness. The need for common attendance data definitions is compounded by the growing variety of educational settings in which students spend their time, including virtual schools, community schools, and work-study placements. In the absence of standardized definitions, it can be difficult to compare attendance data and attendance interventions across schools, districts, and states.

### Why Does Attendance Data Quality Matter?

High-quality attendance data serve as the foundation for understanding where students are during the school day. The quality of data, including attendance data, is contingent on the effectiveness of the practices and processes used to produce data. Accuracy, security, utility, and timeliness are all essential practices that contribute to an organization's commitment to high-quality data. The *Forum Guide to Building a Culture of Quality Data: A School & District Resource* (2004) describes in detail the attributes of quality data; high-quality attendance data are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Attendance data provide the information needed for schools to develop practices, programs, and policies to improve attendance rates and other student outcomes. These data also allow comparisons between schools, districts, and states—comparisons that are necessary for educators to identify relationships between student attendance and student achievement, grade-level progression, and high school graduation. Moreover, attendance data are often included in district and state reporting requirements.

Schools and districts depend on accurate attendance data for a number of other reasons as well. For example, staff need to know which students are under the school's supervision each day as a part of their general responsibilities to ensure student safety and account for student whereabouts. These data become critical in national, local, and family crisis situations.

### What Does the Attendance Taxonomy Do?

The attendance taxonomy provides a voluntary, common set of student attendance categories that can help schools, districts, and states collect, compare, and use quality attendance data. The taxonomy is exhaustive and its categories are mutually exclusive. Together, they are intended to document a student's attendance status at any given time. Through the use of this taxonomy, schools, districts, and states can produce high-quality attendance data that reflect most potential present and absent situations. Its 16 mutually exclusive categories enable staff to accurately record and understand student attendance status and the cause for student absenteeism.



The attendance taxonomy is designed to accommodate the needs of different education agencies while still allowing comparisons across schools, districts, and states. The taxonomy’s flexibility enables state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) to map their existing attendance codes to the taxonomy’s categories. For example, students might be considered “absent-excused” if in one district they are participating in a legitimate educational opportunity, such as a social studies fair, math field day, or debate club tournament; in another district, they might not be considered absent at all. Both districts could use the same category in the taxonomy to describe the student’s activity that day, while interpreting the category according to their own policies. When attendance data are comparable across districts, individual student attendance can be monitored even if the student transfers to a district with different attendance policies.

### Multiple Codes, One Taxonomy Category

The attendance taxonomy is designed to accommodate a wide range of coding schemes used by schools, districts, and states. For example, bus-related absences are coded by St. Louis Public Schools (MO) with the letter “Q”, and by Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN) with the letter “B.” Although each district uses different codes to meet their needs, these unique codes can be mapped to the same taxonomy category: “Absent – Transportation not available.”

The taxonomy enables users to analyze and compare absenteeism, average daily attendance (ADA), and other high-interest attendance statistics across districts and states. It also increases the understanding of data reported to community and policy groups, and its standard terms, categories, and definitions encourage stakeholders to arrive at a common understanding of the meaning of attendance data.

Data dictionaries function similarly to this taxonomy. According to the *Forum Guide to Metadata: The Meaning Behind Education Data* a data dictionary is “an agreed-upon set of clearly and consistently defined elements, definitions, and attributes” (2009 p. 15).<sup>5</sup> Agencies with a data dictionary can promote data quality by providing staff with training on how to use the dictionary. Agencies that do not have a data dictionary may find this taxonomy useful for developing one.

## Major Taxonomy Categories

The attendance taxonomy includes two major categories: Present/Attending and Absent/Not Attending. The terms “present” and “attending” are used interchangeably in this publication, as are the terms “absent” and “not attending.” Each major category is further broken out into more granular categories, or subcategories, that describe how the student spends their time when present or absent. The taxonomy includes 15 attendance categories, plus a temporary placeholder category of “absent-situation unknown.”

### Distinguishing Between Attendance Categories

#### Present - Disciplinary action, receiving instruction:

Restorative disciplinary actions that still allow students to receive instruction can help maximize student learning.

#### Absent - Disciplinary action, not receiving

instruction: Punitive disciplinary actions, such as suspensions, may remove students from the classroom and place them in an environment where no learning occurs.

<sup>5</sup> More information about data dictionaries, including their relationship to CEDS, can be found at <https://ceds.ed.gov/pdf/status-of-state-data-dictionaries.pdf>.





For the purposes of this document, Present/Attending and Absent/Not Attending are defined as follows:

- **Present/Attending:** A student is “present” or “attending” if they are attending an instructional program approved by the state, district, and/or school.
- **Absent/Not Attending:** A student is “absent” or “not attending” if they are not physically present on school grounds and not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location.

Three assumptions about instructional programs apply when considering attendance in the context of this taxonomy:

1. Each instructional program in which a student is enrolled, regardless of whether the program is single or dual enrollment, is responsible for recording attendance for the day or portion of the day.
2. The program is open and in session for the day or part of the day. Students are not counted as present or absent if the program is closed or not in session.
3. Students who have transferred out of the program, dropped out, completed and/or graduated from the program, or are otherwise not enrolled are not counted as present or absent.<sup>6</sup>

## Limitations of the Taxonomy

It is important to remember that statutes and practices that distinguish between student absences differ across states and districts. State and local laws, regulations, and policies determine what constitutes an absence, tardy, or truancy; the time unit for counting attendance (e.g., minutes, hours, periods, days); and whether an absence is excused. This taxonomy does not address these important issues, and this guide is not intended to change state and local attendance policies. Rather, this guide is intended as a resource, not an obligation or directive, to be used by staff who are responsible for attendance-related decisionmaking. Additionally, the taxonomy is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of different agencies.

The attendance taxonomy does not include all of the information that schools, districts, and states collect in order to monitor student attendance. For example, the taxonomy does not distinguish between attendance status at one time during the day, attendance during each class period, or attendance for a portion of the school day, such as when a student is absent for a doctor’s appointment during the morning but present in school during the afternoon. Depending on the specific needs of the agency, the taxonomy can be applied at any of these levels. Each agency must clarify how the taxonomy is used; in an elementary school, the specific present and absent categories may be used to account for a student’s whereabouts for the entire day, but in a high school, the categories may be used for each class period.

### Defining Unique Attendance Situations: One State’s Perspective

Minnesota uses a “continuing truant” category to monitor student nonattendance (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=260A.02>). Students are recorded in this category if they are absent without a valid excuse within a single school year for: (1) three days if the child is in elementary school; or (2) three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school. Other states may define this unique attendance situation based on different criteria. Additional resources that outline the Minnesota SEA and LEA requirements for collecting and reporting attendance may be found in statute 120A.22: Compulsory Instruction: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=120A.22>.

<sup>6</sup> For more information about student exit codes, see the National Forum on Education Statistics. (2006). *Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes* (NFES 2006–804). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Available online at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2006804.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006804.asp).



The absent/not attending categories in this taxonomy do not address whether an absence is excused or unexcused. Responsibility for distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences varies by state, and may be made by state or district policymakers. States and districts also vary in how they define what constitutes tardiness. Furthermore, some agencies consider excused absences when reporting school attendance rates and planning interventions, while others do not. To accommodate these variations, this guide focuses on why students may not be present in an instructional program. More detailed information on how to classify different types of attendance situations can often be found in SEA and LEA policies. It may also be helpful to supplement this taxonomy with an indicator of whether a type of absence is excused or unexcused. Regardless of whether an absence is excused or unexcused, it is important to remember that all absences reduce a student’s opportunity to learn.

Finally, the taxonomy does not guarantee the accuracy of attendance data. A school or district adopting this taxonomy will still need to develop policies and procedures for confirming and documenting students’ attendance status to ensure data quality.<sup>7</sup>

### Present Attendance Categories<sup>8</sup>

These categories describe how students spend their time when attending an instructional program approved by the state, district, and/or school.

- **Present - In school, regular instructional program:** The student is in class. This includes attendance at sites other than the school of record if the site is part of the student’s regular instructional program approved by the school, district, and/or state. Examples of other sites are institutions of higher education, vocational/technical centers, and special education centers.
- **Present - Nontraditional school setting, regular instructional program:** The student is engaged in the regular instructional program in a nontraditional school setting. Examples include hospital- or homebound instruction, as well as off-campus distance education.
- **Present - Disciplinary action, receiving instruction:** The student has been removed from the regular instructional setting for disciplinary reasons and is receiving instruction. In-school suspension typically falls within this category, but it also includes out-of-school suspension if instructional services are provided.
- **Present - Out of school, regular instructional program activity:** The student is involved in an activity outside of school that is part of the regular instructional program, such as a field trip or work-study. The student is under the direct supervision of school personnel or someone who has been designated to act in place of school personnel.
- **Present - Out of school, school-approved extracurricular or cocurricular activity:** The student is outside of school, participating in instruction that is related to, but not part of, the regular curriculum. Examples include school-approved extracurricular or cocurricular activities, such as a debate, an athletic competition, or a conference that has educational value.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about data quality, see the National Forum on Education Statistics. (2004). *Forum Guide to Building a Culture of Quality Data: A School & District Resource* (NFES 2005–801). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Available online at [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2005801.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2005801.asp).

<sup>8</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000600>



## Absent Attendance Categories<sup>9</sup>

These categories describe how students spend their time not physically present on school grounds and not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location.

- **Absent – Noninstructional activity recognized by state, district, or school:** The student is out of school and involved in a noninstructional activity recognized by the school, district, and/or state. Examples include such civic activities as involvement with the National Guard, service as a legislative page, jury duty, or participation on an election board. Note that “recognized activities” are not necessarily considered “excused” absences.
- **Absent – Illness, injury, health treatment, or examination:** The student is out of school because of personal physical or mental illness or injury, including health-related appointments. This may include more unusual situations, such as quarantine.
- **Absent – Family activity:** The student is out of school because of a family vacation or other activity. This also includes family time related to a parent being deployed to, or returning from, military duty.
- **Absent – Family emergency or bereavement:** The student is out of school for unexpected family reasons. Examples include lack of child care for a student with child(ren), care for a sick relative, and bereavement for a family member.
- **Absent – Religious observation:** The student is out of school observing a religious holiday or participating in religious instruction.
- **Absent – Student employment:** The student is out of school for employment purposes. This does not include work-study or school-related employment.
- **Absent – Transportation not available:** The student is not in school because transportation is not available. For example, roads have been closed due to flooding. This category includes school-provided transportation and the student’s personal transportation.
- **Absent – Disciplinary action, not receiving instruction:** The student has been removed from the regular instructional setting for disciplinary reasons and is not receiving instruction. This may include either in-school or out-of-school suspension if instructional services are not provided. It does not include expulsion since expelled students are not enrolled in school.
- **Absent – Legal or judicial requirement:** The student is out of school due to a legal obligation to attend judicial proceedings, required appointments, or trial or hearing dates. Or, the student is serving time in jail or is in the custody of the court and is not receiving instruction.
- **Absent – Student is skipping school:** The student is willfully not attending school without parent or school approval.
- **Absent – Situation unknown:** The student is not present and the reason for the absence is not known. “Situation unknown” is a default category to be used only until the correct attendance category is determined.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000599>



## Related Attendance Data Elements

Schools, districts, and states may collect additional data that are related to attendance, such as the location where and date when a student is in attendance. These additional data may be useful for tracking and analyzing attendance at the individual student, student subgroup, or school/district levels. The following CEDS elements may be useful in defining and categorizing these additional attendance data.

- **Attendance Status:** Attendance status is defined as the status of a person’s attendance associated with an Attendance Event Type, Calendar Event Date in an organization-person-role context.<sup>10</sup> Attendance status options include
  - present;
  - excused absence;
  - unexcused absence;
  - tardy; and
  - early departure.
- **Number of Days in Attendance:** The number of days a person is present when school is in session during a given reporting period.<sup>11</sup> This applies to an enrollment period record. Separate records using this element definition could capture attendance for regular enrollment, an out-of-school program or other program requiring attendance records.
- **Student Attendance Rate:** The number of school days during the regular school year (plus summer, if applicable, if part of implementing the restart, transformation, or turnaround model)<sup>12</sup> the student attended school divided by the maximum number of days the student could have attended school during the regular school year.<sup>13</sup>
- **Attendance Event Date:** The date on which an attendance event takes place.<sup>14</sup>
- **Attendance Event Type:** The type of attendance event.<sup>15</sup> Attendance event type options include
  - daily attendance;
  - class/section attendance;
  - program attendance; and
  - extracurricular attendance.
- **Responsible District Type:** The type of responsibility the district has for the student.<sup>16</sup> Responsible district type options include
  - accountability;
  - attendance;
  - funding;
  - graduation;

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<sup>10</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000076>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000202>

<sup>12</sup> For more information on these models, see the School Improvement Grants; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA); Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended (ESEA). Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/2010-27313.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000271>

<sup>14</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/001649>

<sup>15</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000601>

<sup>16</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000594>



- individualized education program (IEP); and
- transportation.
- **Responsible Organization Type:** The type of responsibility the organization has for the student.<sup>17</sup> This may be used to specify responsibility when the organization is not a school (Responsible School) or school district (Responsible District). Responsible organization type options include
  - accountability;
  - attendance;
  - funding;
  - graduation;
  - individualized education program (IEP); and
  - transportation.
- **Responsible School Type:** The type of services/instruction the school is responsible for providing to the student.<sup>18</sup> Responsible school type options include
  - accountability;
  - attendance;
  - funding;
  - graduation;
  - individualized education program (IEP); and
  - transportation.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/001467>

<sup>18</sup> <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000595>

# Chapter 4: Common Challenges to Collecting Attendance Data and Best Practices for Addressing Challenges

Attendance is a key data point in supporting student outcomes, and improving the quality of attendance data involves many considerations. Clear attendance policies and taxonomies, effective stakeholder engagement and communication, and adequate information and communication technologies all play an important role in ensuring that high-quality attendance data are collected, reported, and used to improve student outcomes. These data can help schools, districts, and states demonstrate the outcomes of attendance; identify opportunities to improve student attendance; and design, implement, and assess interventions. Although the need for high-quality attendance data is clear, state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) may face challenges to improving the quality of their attendance data and data practices. This chapter discusses attendance data practices in different types of educational programs and environments, explores some of the challenges SEAs and LEAs may face in ensuring high-quality attendance data, and suggests best practices for overcoming these challenges.


## Attendance Across Grade Levels

Attendance may have different implications based on grade levels, and key differences exist between collecting attendance data in kindergarten, elementary, and secondary education settings. For example, elementary school students are typically with the same teacher all day, while middle and high school students may change teachers at multiple times throughout the day. It can be efficient to mark elementary students absent or present for the whole day, but it may be more appropriate to capture older students' attendance each time they change classrooms. Unlike most elementary and secondary schools, kindergarten programs have a variety of schedules, even within the same district, which can make it difficult to analyze and compare kindergarten attendance data across programs.

Some elementary schools have moved away from recording attendance once per day to better account for student attendance and whereabouts throughout the day. Once-per-day attendance records do not account for early departures, partial days, or tardiness. Furthermore, students may miss significant amounts of instruction time but still be marked as present for the day. Elementary schools may use one or more of the following approaches as an alternative to recording attendance once per day:

- **Class period attendance.** Some elementary schools have begun recording attendance based on the length of instruction time in a subject or class period (also called secondary scheduling). While this practice is not yet widespread, it can be beneficial for schools that want to use attendance data to assess student outcomes; for example, determining if attendance during mathematics periods results in better assessment scores. While this results in more comprehensive attendance data, some schools may find this method too time consuming for elementary grades.
- **Arrival and departure times.** Other elementary schools record school arrival and departure times. This information provides schools with precise knowledge of when students are in attendance on school grounds,





which can help promote school safety. In addition, student information systems (SISs) that track arrival and departure times can often produce detailed reports on student attendance, which can be useful for data analysis.

- **Twice-per-day attendance.** Schools that want to record attendance more often than once per day, but do not want to create recordkeeping burdens, may choose to record attendance twice per day.

## Attendance in Virtual Learning Environments

Students are increasingly engaged in virtual education, which uses information and communications technologies to offer educational opportunities that transcend traditional limitations of time and space with respect to students' relationships with teachers, peers, and instructional materials. Students enroll in virtual education programs for a variety of reasons. For example, families may decide to enroll their student in a virtual education program because it provides the best learning environment for their student's needs. Virtual learning does not always occur within the traditional timespan of the school day, so it can also be useful for students who face attendance-related challenges in face-to-face environments. This group may include, but is not limited to, students who are homebound, students who are pregnant, students who must work during regular school hours, elite athletes who travel to train and compete, and others who cannot attend school during normal school hours.


Any instructional program approved by a school, district, and/or state—regardless of whether it is delivered in-person or virtually—must comply with local, state, and federal regulations, including attendance statutes. Consistent attendance policies, definitions, and measures can help establish the importance of attendance in virtual learning environments and ensure that virtual attendance data are accurately collected and reported. By clearly communicating virtual attendance policies to parents, students, teachers, and other parties, SEAs and LEAs can help all stakeholders understand, value, and promote attendance in virtual learning environments.

Virtual learning measures often focus less on traditional attendance and more on student engagement with course content or competency attainment. For example, New Hampshire's statewide virtual education program measures course content completion, not course log-ins. Metrics such as minimum log-in time requirements, specific task completion for a given time-period, or minimum lesson/unit completion requirements may be more important in virtual learning environments than traditional attendance metrics. Despite this shift toward measuring student engagement and competency, many SEAs and LEAs need to report attendance data for virtual education programs. Reconciling face-to-face and virtual attendance metrics can be difficult, and schools and districts may find that they have difficulty reporting virtual attendance using systems that record metrics based on seat time, such as Carnegie units. The *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education Data* (2016) can help SEAs and LEAs as they consider the impact of virtual education on established data elements and methods of data collection, including attendance data.

## Community Collaborations

Chronic absenteeism is a community issue. Students who are chronically absent often face barriers that cannot be solved by school interventions alone. Community-based interventions that involve school staff, parents and/or guardians, judicial personnel, and social service agencies may be needed to effectively turn around patterns of student absenteeism and truancy by addressing the root causes. Community organizations can be particularly effective at supporting the linguistic and cultural needs of international and immigrant students and families.

Community schools have been proposed as an effective strategy for improving academic achievement and student well-being. Community schools serve twin purposes: They are educational institutions that provide public education



to children living in the local community, and they also serve as the home base for a wide range of resources, including health and social service agencies and organizations. By providing a wide range of services, these schools foster partnerships and collaboration between schools, organizations, families, and communities. Due to the wide variety of programs and services these schools offer, community schools may be open beyond normal school hours and provide community services during the morning, afternoon, and evening, as well as on the weekends. Research has shown that community schools may reduce chronic absenteeism in very low-income neighborhoods (Nauer et al. 2014).

### **Improving Student Attendance Through School-Community Collaboration**

The community of Montrose, Colorado, designed an innovative program that addresses student attendance by including the community in efforts to reengage students. Local schools partner with nonprofits and community programs to employ attendance advocates who facilitate improved student engagement through targeted case management. Advocates use school-based student engagement teams and link students and families with community resources. The advocates currently support 424 students who are at high risk for chronic truancy, absenteeism, or expulsion in grades 1-12. Restorative justice practices are used for discipline support to increase student accountability for truancy, absenteeism, and counterproductive behaviors.

### **School Attendance Review Boards**

In California, local school attendance review boards (SARBs) are composed of parents, representatives from the school district, and members of the community at large, including representatives from law enforcement, social services, probation, mental health, various youth agencies, and the district attorney's office. SARB membership is identified in a state statute (Education Code Section 48321). SARB members meet regularly to combine their expertise and resources, diagnose problems, and make directives to alleviate the circumstances that contribute to the specific habitual truancy or chronic absenteeism problem.

### **Community Alternatives to Juvenile Justice**

The Metro-Student Attendance Center (TN) aims to mitigate student attendance issues through prevention and intervention. Operated by the Davidson County Juvenile Court, in partnership with Metro Nashville Public Schools and the Metro Nashville Police Department, the Center conducts court hearings outside of the county courthouse in a building dedicated to juvenile court cases. The Center also connects families with social service agencies and community-based organizations. More information can be found at <http://juvenilecourt.nashville.gov/metro-student-attendance-center/>.

### **Engaging Stakeholders in Data Use**

The Puget Sound Educational Service District in Washington is working with community organizations through a system called the Student Success Data Partnership. Through this Partnership, data are shared and used to better understand what factors, in both schools and the community, are tangibly improving student achievement and success. More information can be found at <https://www.psesd.org/learning-and-teaching/student-success-link/>.



## Challenges to Collecting Attendance Data

### Overlapping and/or Nonexhaustive Taxonomies

Every school maintains student attendance records, but not all record systems clearly distinguish between attendance codes. Record systems may be designed so broadly that staff cannot distinguish between different types of attendance situations, while others may be designed so narrowly that it is difficult and time consuming for staff to pinpoint an attendance category. Ideally, the number of codes will be adequate to account for every student attendance scenario, yet not so lengthy as to be unmanageable. If codes are too broad, the information will not be useful. For example, “present” and “absent” cover most attendance situations, but they do not differentiate between whether an absence is due to illness or truancy. The level of detail can be tailored to provide meaningful information that meets the specific needs of the school or district. For example, in most cases a code for absent due to illness would be sufficient for data analysis and reporting. However, in the event of a pandemic outbreak such as the flu, it may be helpful to use a more detailed code, such as absent due to flu symptoms.

Above all, attendance codes must be easily understood. If it is difficult for staff who collect and/or report attendance data to judge which code to use, the information provided will be unreliable. Attendance codes that are not exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and easy to understand may result in incomplete or inaccurate attendance data.

### Collecting Standardized Data Under Nonstandard Conditions

Attendance data collection can be complicated by several factors. Variations in the unit of time used to track attendance—whether by the minute, hour, class period, half day, or full day—can create complications. In some schools, students are counted as “in attendance” if they are present at any point in the school day, while in other schools, “in attendance” requires students to be present in school for at least 51 percent of the day’s minutes. In elementary grades, attendance data may be collected once or twice per day, whereas in secondary grades, attendance may be collected during each school period. Conflicts between vendor-created SISs and school data collection systems may also present challenges. For example, SISs may collect attendance data based on a half-day unit of time, but state or local policy may require a full-day measure. Such differences can complicate collective and comparative data reporting and analysis.

Certain attendance situations may be more difficult to track than others, such as when students spend a portion of their day or week at a special education center, take a class at a postsecondary institution or private school, participate in a vocational class, or temporarily attend a juvenile correctional facility. This may result in students being counted as present in more than one setting at the same time. Students enrolled in virtual courses may also be difficult to track, since attendance in an online setting may be defined differently than attendance in a physical classroom. To prevent complications, SEAs and LEAs have found it useful to identify unique or unusual attendance situations and determine ways that attendance can be translated, or mapped, to align with more traditional measures of attendance. Unusual attendance situations may include these:

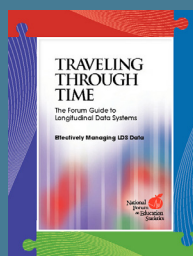
- **Dual enrollment.** Students enrolled in more than one instructional setting may complicate attendance data collection, reporting, and analysis. Policies with clear criteria that govern when a student “belongs” to a program can ensure that attendance data are collected and monitored appropriately with minimal errors.
- **Multiple locations.** Student attendance may be counted twice if the responsibility for attendance data collection is shared across locations; additionally, attendance data reporting may not reflect all of the locations where a student is physically present and in attendance during the day or week. Attendance policies that establish when a specific school or organization is responsible for a student can help reduce confusion.

- **Alternative instructional programs.** Students enrolled in an alternative school by their district may need to be considered separately when analyzing attendance data. Other program types, such as independent study or temporary homeschooling, may also affect the collection of attendance data.
- **Virtual attendance.**<sup>19</sup> Virtual learning environments may develop their own attendance policies and metrics. SEAs and LEAs often find it useful to map virtual attendance policies and metrics to established measures.
- **School calendars.** States and districts may use different calendars for attendance. Some schools may be approved to operate on a different calendar, such as when a school starts or ends the school year on days that deviate from the state calendar. Operating on different calendars can complicate certain attendance measures, such as attendance benchmarks based on the percentage of school days missed.

## Data Management

Agencies that lack clear policies and procedures for entering, verifying, and validating attendance data may compromise data quality. Data quality suffers when staff are not aware of attendance policies or the agency lacks consistent terms, definitions, rules, and procedures related to attendance. For example, some LEAs have not designated specific staff at the school and district levels who are responsible for attendance data, and instead attendance data collection may be delegated to any number of front office staff. This lack of clear accountability can lead to communication difficulties when there is no single person who can answer questions about attendance data or provide authoritative information on how the data should be collected and recorded. In addition to assigning responsibility for attendance data to specific staff, agencies can help to encourage data quality by confirming that staff have the time, training, and freedom from distractions needed to effectively manage attendance data. A strong data governance program that details staff responsibilities and procedures for attendance data can help improve data quality.

### What is Data Governance?



Data governance is both an organizational structure and process that assigns data-related responsibilities to staff who collaboratively and continuously improve data quality through the systematic creation and enforcement of policies, roles, responsibilities,

and procedures. More information on data governance can be found in *Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems, Book III: Effectively Managing LDS Data*, available at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2011805.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2011805.asp).

## Communication

Clear communication among staff and between SEA, LEA, and community stakeholders is essential to overcoming attendance data challenges. Staff may not always understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring data quality. Inaccurate, sporadic, or inconsistent communication between staff at the school, district, and state level can cause confusion between responsible staff. Problems also arise when staff members fail to promptly communicate with parents and guardians about their student's attendance status, for example, when verifying a student's enrollment or gathering information on the reason for a student's absence from school.

<sup>19</sup> For more information about virtual education data, see the National Forum on Education Statistics. (2015). *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education* (NFES 2016–095). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Available at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2016095.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016095.asp).



## Electronic Attendance Systems

High-quality data are typically the result of using an electronic SIS to track attendance. Although electronic systems have been widely adopted, some schools may continue to rely on manual paper systems or handwritten attendance tallies. Data quality is at risk when any data are transferred from handwritten notes. For example, in schools where teachers are not able to enter attendance data directly into an electronic system and must instead submit paper attendance rosters to their school office staff for manual data entry, the timeliness of the data may be negatively impacted due to delays during attendance data entry. In addition, timely contact with parents may suffer in schools without automated data systems. Data quality problems make attendance data less useful for reporting and can delay interventions.

### Understanding Student Information Systems

Staff and administrators who collect and use attendance data need to understand how attendance data quality is related to and impacted by other data elements. For example, if student data are not connected across SIS modules, it may not be clear when a student is absent due to disciplinary reasons, such as suspension, and discipline data may not be reflected in chronic absenteeism data calculations. Furthermore, if the SIS does not have data quality checks in place, data discrepancies may not be detected.

## Attendance as an Accountability Measure

Because attendance is critical to student outcomes and achievements, attendance data are sometimes used in school accountability programs or program evaluation studies. This can lead to an increased focus on attendance, which in turn may lead to an increased focus on data quality. However, when attendance rates impact public perceptions of school quality or school funding allocation decisions, it is important that agencies do not highlight attendance achievements while overlooking opportunities for improvement. Moreover, schools play an integral role in supporting student attendance, and need to be proactive in resolving school-imposed barriers to attendance. For example, schools that use out-of-school suspensions as a disciplinary tactic may be contributing to the school's chronic absenteeism rate.

By accurately reporting attendance data, schools, districts, and states are better able to identify individual students, groups, and schools that need additional support to succeed. SEAs and LEAs can work together to ensure that schools and districts have the needed resources to investigate individual student barriers to attendance, develop specific strategies that best support chronically absent children, and help the families of chronically absent students connect with appropriate community resources. SEA and LEA partnerships can also benefit from system-level implementation of policies and practices that encourage regular school attendance and support a welcoming school climate.

## Recommendations for Addressing Challenges Based on Best Practices

### Build a Culture of Quality Data and Data Use

A strong, commonly shared commitment to data-informed decisionmaking is critical to supporting high-quality data practices. A culture of data quality encompasses both effective data collection and verification procedures. Clear and efficient data collection, reporting, and verification procedures can improve the quality of attendance data and support effective and equitable decisionmaking that best meets student needs. Establishing a plan for consistent attendance data collection, management, and reporting, providing staff with training, and integrating discussions of attendance data into regular decisionmaking processes can help build a culture of quality data and data use.

### Review and Improve Attendance Policies and Procedures

SEAs and LEAs may find that it is useful to review attendance policies prior to each school year to confirm that they meet the needs of students. Policies that are punitive in nature, such as an out-of-school suspension for students who are truant or chronically absent, may not be the most effective method for supporting student learning and achievement. Attendance policies may need to be updated to take into account specific needs, such as accommodations that are included in a student's individualized education plan. Review of attendance laws and policies enacted at the state level can also help inform policy revisions at the local level and ensure that local and state policies are aligned.

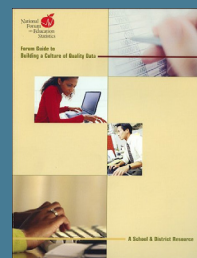
### Establish a Comprehensive and Manageable Taxonomy

Establishing a taxonomy that covers most attendance situations with minimal confusion is key to improving attendance data quality. Attendance taxonomies that are exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and easy to understand promote the collection of high-quality attendance data. If a taxonomy does not account for most attendance scenarios, it often results in a loss of information about absences. An exhaustive taxonomy, such as the taxonomy included in chapter 3, accounts for most attendance scenarios without relying on an "other" category. A mutually exclusive taxonomy provides only one possible category for each attendance scenario. Clearly distinguishing taxonomy categories minimizes overlap in attendance scenarios and dual-coding of a single attendance situation.

The taxonomy included in chapter 3 is an exhaustive, mutually exclusive set of categories that document a student's attendance status at any given time. It is exhaustive by accounting for the majority of possible attendance scenarios that may arise in a K-12 education setting. The taxonomy's mutually exclusive definitions ensure that attendance situations

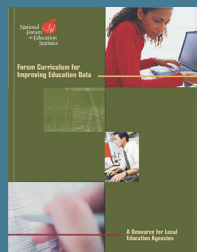
### Building a Culture of Quality Data

The Forum has developed two resources to aid SEAs and LEAs in building a culture of high-quality data:



The *Forum Guide to Building a Culture of Quality Data: A School and District Resource* describes how to establish or improve a culture of data quality, including specific roles and responsibilities for principals, teachers, office

staff, school board members, superintendents, data stewards/coordinators, and technology support personnel.



The *Forum Curriculum for Improving Education Data: A Resource for Local Education Agencies* builds on the Forum Guide by providing lesson plans, instructional handouts, and resource materials for training K-12 school and district staff in developing this culture.

These resources are available through the Forum website at <https://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp>.





can be clearly recorded in only one category. Measuring attendance in nontraditional or multiple site settings requires clearly defined and commonly applied attendance categories, as well as effective communication among staff at each site. In addition, it is often necessary to specify the units of time that are used for attendance tracking.

### Engage and Communicate with Stakeholders

Attendance data are used for many different purposes. At the school level, attendance data provide up-to-date information on student whereabouts as well as information on individual students who may be at risk of falling behind or dropping out. At the district and state levels, these data may be used to identify groups of students or schools that need targeted interventions. Attendance data reports and other information can also help schools and districts work with community groups to better serve students. Given the widespread interest in attendance issues, it is important for SEAs and LEAs to understand who uses student attendance data and for what purposes, to engage stakeholders in discussions and planning related to attendance, and to maintain communication with stakeholders.

Strategies for engaging stakeholders include the following:

- **Identify key stakeholders.** Before engaging stakeholders, it is essential to understand who collects, reports, and uses attendance data and reports, and how these data and reports are then used by stakeholders. Staff who understand how attendance data are used, and by whom, are better able to provide the high-quality data needed to design successful interventions.
- **Plan attendance policies with input from stakeholders.** By involving a wide range of stakeholders in planning decisions, officials can develop more reliable and useful attendance data practices and systems. For example, gathering a representative group of local, district, and state staff who collect, report, and use attendance data in a variety of education settings could help inform the development of new policies. Careful planning at the district level, coordinated with state and federal reporting requirements, can produce clear specifications for attendance data systems. Moreover, by aligning school and district attendance data definitions, measures, and reporting procedures with state and federal requirements, LEAs can help ensure attendance data meet the needs of a variety of agency stakeholders. Engaging data management staff, data users, teachers, administrators, and parents in defining attendance data policies can nurture a mutual understanding of the importance of high-quality attendance data.

#### School Attendance and Student Engagement in District 27J

In recent years, Colorado's Adams County District 27J has consciously shifted its focus and resources away from truancy intervention, instead working to educate parents and students about the importance of good attendance habits. Truancy court referrals have decreased by 84 percent since 2013, allowing resources to be redirected to prevention and early intervention efforts. Court involvement is now reserved for families with elementary and/or middle school students, where safety or access to agency support are concerns. As part of its shift toward preventing and addressing absenteeism, the district now provides school leaders with frequent attendance reports, tracking indicators of a school's attendance "health." While these reports include numbers and names of students approaching chronic absence or truant status, they also celebrate positive attendance accomplishments. Data accuracy has also been improved through increasing the training of office staff and prioritizing teacher attendance-taking accuracy. Finally, the district has recognized personal outreach to parents as being one of the most powerful attendance improvement strategies. The district is working to increase its capacity to quickly communicate with parents when a student is absent, to increase parent utilization of the student information database, and to increase teacher communication about the impact of attendance on student academic performance.

- Communicate the importance of better attendance data.** It is important to consider how to communicate with stakeholders about attendance improvement initiatives. Data management staff, data users, parents, and others are better equipped to support and promote initiatives when they understand the importance of high-quality attendance data, how data are used in effective decisionmaking, and how data can contribute to the development of attendance interventions. Partners in state agencies and other organizations can also help promote the importance of attendance and quality attendance data for all students at all grade levels. It is important to remember that parents and guardians are crucial stakeholders in student attendance. Talking points, scripts, and sample emails can help improve attendance-related communications between school staff and families. When key stakeholders share a common understanding of the importance of high-quality attendance data, it is easier for them to work together to improve attendance data quality.
- Report data in a manner that is most useful to stakeholders.** Reports that convey factual, timely attendance data and balance conciseness with thoroughness can help stakeholders use data appropriately. Moreover, feedback provided by stakeholders on the design and content of attendance reports, dashboards, or other products can be used to improve the usefulness of the information shared in these products. SEAs that do not currently report attendance rates by district, school, and student subgroups may want to consider making such reports available to the public.<sup>20</sup>

#### Engaging State Media

The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction recently invited reporters to attend a webinar on chronic absenteeism in the state. News articles and local media coverage helped spread the message of how important addressing chronic absenteeism is to student success.

#### Plan for Nonstandard Data

Data systems may need to be updated to account for attendance data that do not align with traditional time-based measures of attendance, such as Carnegie Units, “seat-time,” or time receiving face-to-face instruction. For example, schools that use student progress metrics, such as competency-based assessments, in addition to Carnegie Units may find that it is useful to create a system for mapping these new metrics to Carnegie Units.<sup>21</sup>

SEAs, LEAs, and schools may also need to consider other nonstandard attendance situations when analyzing attendance data, including how attendance is tracked for homebound students, dual-enrolled students, and students who attend school for only part of the day. It is important that data users understand any nonstandard data, especially if the data are used to analyze trends in attendance data over time. In schools where the unit of time used to track attendance—whether by the minute, hour, class period, half day, or full day—is recorded at different intervals, it can be useful to collect data at the smallest reasonable level and aggregate up to calculate based on blocks of time.

<sup>20</sup> For more information about reporting and presenting data, see the National Forum on Education Statistics. (2016). *Forum Guide to Data Visualization: A Resource for Education Agencies* (NFES 2017-016). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Available at [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2017016.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2017016.asp).

<sup>21</sup> For more information about virtual education data, see the National Forum on Education Statistics. (2015). *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education* (NFES 2016–095). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Available at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2016095.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016095.asp).

## Invest in Student Information Systems (SIS)

Purchasing or upgrading an SIS to meet current needs can be a valuable financial investment. Many states have policies that determine whether SIS purchases are an SEA or LEA responsibility. In some states, there is a statewide SIS, while in other states, purchasing an SIS is a local decision.

Some SISs may have a “common” data page, where any staff may record and review general notes on a student. This feature may be useful if multiple staff intervene or contact students and their families regarding the student’s absences. Agencies with inadequate technology may benefit from upgrading their existing SIS, purchasing a vendor-created system, or building a new system to more accurately collect and manage data. LEAs that purchase a new SIS need to ensure that the system meets state reporting requirements and rules, and may have to provide these requirements to SIS vendors. SEAs can help LEAs in this process by providing documented business rules, which enable vendors to build SISs that meet state reporting requirements. When different SISs are used throughout a state, SEAs and LEAs often find that it is useful to work with SIS administrators to confirm that data can be collected in a standardized manner. State guidance and statutes on data systems, such as those used in Minnesota, can help districts develop appropriate data systems (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=125B.07>).

### Aggregating and Disaggregating Attendance Data

*Data aggregation* refers to combining individual data values into summary data. For example, a school may combine information on each student’s daily attendance into an overall school total.

*Data disaggregation* refers to breaking down data into smaller groups. For example, a school may decide that it is more useful to see daily attendance by class period rather than the aggregated total.

When assessing SISs, it can be useful to consider whether the systems are capable of collecting secondary students’ attendance/absence data at the class period level for schools and districts, with the ability to aggregate and disaggregate these data for reporting. Data validation reports and data quality dashboards can ensure that attendance data used for reporting purposes are of high quality. Several states have incorporated chronic absenteeism into dashboards and early warning systems. If attendance data are used as part of an early warning system, ensure that data reports are generated in real time.

SEAs and LEAs may also need to consider the costs associated with high-quality attendance data collection and reporting activities when planning their budgets. These costs include technology purchases and upgrades, staff salaries, and training. It is important to budget for staff training whenever changes are made to the SIS so that staff have the knowledge and expertise needed to collect and report high-quality attendance data.

### Student Information Systems: An SEA Perspective

The West Virginia Department of Education’s efforts to provide new and different ways of viewing and using chronic absenteeism data motivated improvements to their state SIS. West Virginia is mandated by state legislature to maintain a statewide, centralized data system, the West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS). WVEIS has evolved and now has a web-based interface. Absence data are recorded daily in WVEIS and schools and districts can produce real-time reports to find out which students are absent. District dashboards are updated with attendance data to show trends in absenteeism and to allow filtering by student characteristics. Through the statewide system, the SEA is able to assist LEAs with chronic absenteeism reporting requirements.

## Use Communication Technology Systems

Many options are available to improve student attendance communications. For example, districts may use an automated system to notify parents each time a student is absent. These systems can generate letters, emails, and/or phone messages to notify families when students are chronically tardy or absent. Daily correspondence or enabling parent access to their student's attendance data through a data portal can also serve to notify families of a student's daily attendance status. Other strategies, such as having an attendance intervention triggered after a certain number of absences, may also be useful. No matter which type of communication system is used, proactive communication with families is helpful in addressing attendance issues.

Publicly available policies, such as those posted on a school or district website, can be used to explain the use of automated communication technologies for attendance purposes. These policies can include information about when staff may use automated technologies to communicate with families and explain how families may opt in or opt out of receiving attendance notifications. All automated communication systems should be compliant with all applicable Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations and policies.

## Checklist of Best Practices and Recommendations

- ✓ Build a culture of quality data and data use
- ✓ Review and improve attendance policies and procedures
- ✓ Establish a comprehensive and manageable taxonomy
- ✓ Engage and communicate with stakeholders
- ✓ Plan for nonstandard data
- ✓ Invest in student information systems
- ✓ Use communication technology systems

### Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: An LEA Perspective

To reduce chronic absenteeism, the Rochester School District in New Hampshire established a series of steps that are triggered when a student begins accumulating absences. After five days of absences, parents receive an automated call each day until they respond to the school and confirm that they are aware that their student has been absent for more than five days; the same process reoccurs at 10 days of absences. This ensures that all parents and students are treated the same, and consistently receive notification when their student has exceeded a uniform number of absences. The steps increase in severity as the number of absences rises and include letters, meetings with the principal and assistant superintendent, referral to a discipline committee, and police department interventions. School teams are convened when a student misses eight half days, and these teams determine whether to establish an individual intervention plan. Parents are involved in intervention plans; the LEA has seen attendance improvements after educating parents of elementary-age students on the importance of attendance. The LEA also reports attendance data to the school board monthly.

# Chapter 5: Acting on the Data - Tip Sheets for SEA and LEA Stakeholders

## Attendance Data in Action

Collecting and reporting detailed attendance data can help schools, districts, and states identify patterns in the frequency of student absences and understand the reasons why students are missing school. Staff can then use this information to develop, implement, and assess the outcomes of attendance interventions. This chapter includes tip sheets for state and local stakeholders who have prominent roles related to the collection, analysis, and use of attendance data. These tip sheets summarize the key responsibilities, considerations, actions, outcomes, and motivations for a wide range of stakeholders.

### SEA Stakeholders

The role of state education agency (SEA) staff may vary, depending on state statutes and perspectives regarding the balance between centralized oversight and local control. SEAs play a critical role in setting policies that promote attendance and the collection of high-quality attendance data. By assisting local education agencies (LEAs) in understanding the importance of quality attendance data collection and entry, and providing information to policymakers, SEAs are directly involved in actions that lead toward increased services provided to districts and schools and, ultimately, improved student attendance. This includes supporting districts by providing leadership, technical assistance, strategies, guidance, tools, and data to improve attendance, especially for student populations showing high levels of chronic absenteeism.

Tip sheets for the following SEA stakeholder groups are included in this guide:

- Data management and governance staff
- Data use and sharing staff

### LEA Stakeholders

The strength of LEA data collection practices is a major factor in ensuring high-quality attendance data. LEAs employ critical staff members for gathering detailed attendance data, understanding the reasons for student absences, and using data to determine the success of attendance interventions and improvement efforts for individual students, small groups, and school systems. It is important for LEAs and SEAs to collaborate to improve attendance in schools. By working together, LEAs can provide SEAs with the data necessary to help them make comparisons across states, regions, and the nation. In addition to the required data, LEAs may be able to provide additional attendance data details that can benefit SEAs as they use data to understand and address student attendance.

Tip sheets for the following LEA stakeholder groups are included in this guide:

- Teachers
- School office staff
- Principals and/or designated school officials
- Central office staff
- Superintendents



## SEA Tip Sheet – Data Management and Governance Staff

### Responsibilities

SEA data management and governance staff are typically in charge of student attendance data at the state level. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Collecting data reported by LEAs
- Building data systems and developing resources to support data collection and management
- Monitoring local compliance with federal and state laws, policies, and regulations
- Providing resources and technical assistance to LEAs to help them apply state and federal regulations to local practices
- Confirming that attendance data are of high quality and developing processes to improve data quality
- Understanding attendance data and explaining data definitions, collection processes, and formats
- When needed, advocating for changes to existing laws or policies on student attendance to ensure the proper protection and use of data

### Things to Think About

- What is your state’s current attendance data quality, and how could it be improved?
- How do you ensure that student attendance data in your system are of high quality? What specific guidelines exist, and where are they found?
- What federal and state policies, statutes, and legal requirements govern the collection and reporting of attendance data? How does your SEA ensure compliance?
- Does your SEA regularly assess data governance policies to be sure that data are available for appropriate use at the state, district, and local levels?
- How are attendance data reported by LEAs to your SEA? How often, during which time frames, in what formats, using what systems, and with what level of detail are data reported? How are different approaches, such as the use of different SISs, reconciled by the SEA?
- What standards and procedures, such as validity checks and reports, has the SEA established to help LEAs ensure data accuracy, consistency, and uniformity, and resolve data inconsistencies and errors?
- When and how should your SEA request that LEAs begin reporting new attendance data elements?
- What training, if any, is in place at the local level to ensure that data systems are properly used, specific procedures are followed, and data reported are accurate and of high quality?

### Things to Do

- Ensure that attendance data policies, programs, and practices at the LEA and SEA levels meet state and federal policies and statutes, particularly with respect to privacy.
- Establish procedures to assess data quality for all reporting and informational uses.
- Encourage LEA staff to collect and maintain data in compliance with state policies, and to collect student absence reason data, even if these data are not required by the state.
- Coordinate and systematize data collection, entry, quality checks, and reporting processes and establish a calendar that staff at both the SEA and LEAs can follow.
- As part of state-level coordination activities, collaborate with LEA representatives and other stakeholders to review and improve attendance data policies, processes, and practices.





- Ensure that SEA and LEA staff pursue professional development and training opportunities to ensure comprehensive understanding of what data are collected and why, as well as how to ensure quality, privacy, and accuracy in attendance data.
- In addition to calendars, file layouts, definitions, and templates, provide other resources to assist with data collection, such as a summary of updates, frequently asked questions, statutes, definitions, clarifications, and attendance metrics for different school types (e.g., online schools and alternative schools).
- Provide staff with a confidential communication method for asking SEAs for support.

### **Outcomes (What's in It for Me?)**

- By offering critical guidance, support, and assistance to local staff, you will help ensure that attendance data are collected, managed, and reported appropriately and consistently at the local level across your state.
- Your data-related processes will promote data quality, transparency, accountability, and effective decisionmaking at the school, district, and state levels.

# SEA Tip Sheet – Data Use and Sharing Staff

## Responsibilities

SEA data sharing and use staff are typically responsible for highlighting the importance of attendance, creating initiatives that promote attendance, and developing and implementing programs. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Providing leadership, technical support, and tools to LEAs to help them improve attendance
- Reviewing policies and practices to determine whether they hinder or help student attendance rates and what changes may be beneficial, and helping LEAs apply state and federal regulations to local practices
- Reviewing attendance data submitted by LEAs and providing thorough feedback to LEAs on data accuracy and quality
- Creating and providing attendance data and reports to various stakeholders, including state boards of education, governors, legislatures, and the public
- Supporting the effective use of attendance data to develop, implement, and assess attendance interventions
- Ensuring that LEAs are informing parents and students properly and effectively about school attendance policies and procedures


### SEAs Supporting LEAs

SEAs may provide a wide range of support to LEAs to help improve attendance, including

- conducting comprehensive needs assessments;
- setting improved attendance rate goals;
- analyzing attendance data, including data disaggregation;
- providing planning templates;
- creating dashboards; and
- offering training and webinars.

## Things to Think About

- What measures and reporting procedures are in place to ensure that attendance data reports are accurate and protect student privacy?
- Do LEAs in your state report reasons for student absences to the SEA? If not, would the SEA be able to make use of those data?
- What special factors should be considered when analyzing and interpreting attendance data? Are there atypical or nonstandard data that need to be taken into account?
- Which office(s) or individual(s) at the SEA is (are) responsible for monitoring attendance data? How does your SEA ensure that attendance data are used appropriately?
- Who uses student attendance data, and for what purposes? What are the attendance data needs of different stakeholders, and what types of data would best meet those needs?
- Which attendance data reports, dashboards, and other SEA products are produced, and how are they shared with and used by stakeholders? Do these data products meet stakeholders' needs?
- How is your SEA involved in reviewing LEA attendance data? What is the purpose of data reviews, and what criteria are used to determine their frequency and thoroughness? What processes are used in data reviews, and how do they aid LEAs in implementing interventions or corrective actions?
- What criteria and standards does your SEA use to identify when attendance goals are met or could be improved? How is this information communicated to LEAs, and what types of support can your SEA provide to help LEAs meet attendance goals?

- 
- What initiatives and interventions to improve attendance currently exist within the SEA and LEAs?
  - How can your SEA help LEAs understand the importance of attendance data, encourage use of attendance data, and support the development of professional learning communities or peer mentoring networks among district staff across your state?

### **Things to Do**

- Collaborate with SEA and LEA staff to create effective and relevant data quality assessment procedures, reporting templates, and data sharing processes.
- Develop processes for LEAs to request new reports or modifications to existing reports.
- Ensure that data reports meet quality, accuracy, and privacy standards before publishing them.
- If your state does not currently report granular or disaggregated attendance data, consider making such reports available to the public.
- Encourage LEAs to collect student absence reason data, even if these data are not required for state reports.
- Identify staff, stakeholders, and partners who can help promote the importance of attendance. Ensure SEA staff responsible for attendance have access to relevant and appropriate information and data.
- Advocate for policies that promote attendance data use and ensure data privacy.
- Be transparent and intentional when discussing the impacts of attendance and absenteeism.
- Develop or enhance guidelines, resources, training, and technical assistance on analyzing and using student attendance data, ensuring data privacy and confidentiality, and implementing effective attendance monitoring and intervention programs.
- Develop workshops in conjunction with partnering agencies and districts to support attendance interventions for specific student populations.
- Conduct root cause analyses to explore the underlying barriers to student attendance.
- Recognize districts that are taking effective actions to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve attendance rates.

### **Outcomes (What's in It for Me?)**

- By disseminating information to stakeholders and policymakers through dashboards, report cards, and other public resources, you will help improve the understanding of student attendance rates across your state and in specific districts, schools, and student subgroups.
- Your analysis and use of attendance data for evaluative purposes will help promote the importance of student attendance and enable state and local staff to develop effective attendance interventions that address the root causes of attendance barriers and ensure that students are present for learning opportunities.

# LEA Tip Sheet – Teachers

## Responsibilities

Teachers are typically the first staff to know when students are not present in class, and are often the first to report student absences. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Promoting student safety by reporting accurate attendance data in a timely manner
- Updating attendance data as needed (such as when students are tardy) and working with office staff to ensure that correct attendance data are entered into the system
- Monitoring attendance data to determine whether there are patterns in the absences of students enrolled in your classes
- Contacting families when attendance issues arise, and subsequently making referrals to social workers, family community specialists, and counselors when there are concerns about attendance related to home situations

## Things to Think About

- How can you improve student engagement in your class to encourage student attendance?
- How can you improve your relationships with students to encourage attendance?
- How can you reach out to students and their families who are struggling with attendance? What types of assistance and support are available to help these students?
- When and how are teachers in your school expected to refer students experiencing attendance issues to school attendance staff?

## Things to Do

- Thoroughly understand the processes necessary to accurately report attendance data for your classroom.
- Obtain proper training on ensuring quality attendance data in your system.
- Refrain from reporting qualitative judgments on the reasons for student absences.
- Participate in student interventions by contacting families to discuss attendance.

## Outcomes (What's in It for Me?)

- Research indicates that consistent attendance has a direct impact on academic performance.<sup>22</sup>
- Accurate and timely attendance reporting will assist your school in complying with overall LEA requirements.
- Better relationships will mean better attendance for your students.
- By ensuring that data are recorded accurately and in a timely way, you will help support students' success.
- By better understanding the reasons for student attendance and absences, you will have a better understanding of students' personal situations and safety.

## Teachers and Attendance

Teachers are often the first staff to record attendance data, but other school staff may need to add information to the record to complete the attendance data collection process. Teacher attendance data tallies are often limited to marking students as “present” or “absent,” based on whether students are in attendance when the teacher records attendance. For example, a teacher in a physical classroom would mark a student who is not physically present as “absent,” even if the teacher is aware of the reason for the absence. After classroom attendance data are submitted to the central office, staff responsible for maintaining attendance records may note the reason for the absence, and whether the absence is excused or unexcused. This additional information provides more accurate and detailed attendance data.

<sup>22</sup>The References list at the end of this guide contains selected research on student attendance.



## LEA Tip Sheet – School Office Staff

### Responsibilities

School office staff in charge of student attendance data are typically responsible for ensuring that the data are of high quality—reliable, accurate, timely, and complete—so that they can be effectively used to improve student outcomes. You are often the first face that students and their families see when they come into a school, and you can help to establish a welcoming environment. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Accounting for every student, every day in compliance with state directives
- Ensuring student safety by maintaining timely attendance data
- Monitoring individual student attendance patterns to help maximize instructional time and increase the likelihood of student success
- Explaining and sharing information on attendance data definitions, collections, and formats

### Things to Think About

- What procedures are in place to monitor whether attendance data are being properly collected and reported? Is monitoring done at the school, district, and/or state levels?
- How are different types of absences monitored and tracked in your student information system (e.g., chronic absences, unexcused absences, and tardies)?
- Who uses your school’s student attendance data? What procedures are in place to ensure that attendance data are used and interpreted properly?
- What community agencies and organizations does your LEA work with for assistance with attendance issues? Does your LEA have established procedures for making referrals to these agencies?

### Things to Do

- Support the implementation of guidance and training on how to select, use, or analyze attendance data that meet your school’s quality standards.
- Organize your school’s data entry, quality checks, and reporting processes. Establish a calendar for all school staff to follow.
- Find dedicated, uninterrupted time for attendance data entry and reason reconciliation.
- Check data quality and accuracy regularly through edit checks/reports.
- Reach out to your SEA for data collection or reporting guidance.
- Communicate updated information on individual students’ attendance status to teachers in a timely manner.
- Produce scripts or templates to use when communicating with families about student absences.
- Foster a welcoming school climate and positive relationships with students and their families.

### Outcomes (What’s in It for Me?)

- Ensuring that data are recorded accurately in a timely manner will assist your school in supporting students’ success and complying with requirements.
- Your relationships with the families who attend your school will be stronger when they know that you care about their student’s well-being and academic performance, which can have a direct impact on the culture and climate of your school.
- By better understanding the reasons for student attendance and absences, you will have a better understanding of students’ personal situations and safety.



## LEA Tip Sheet – Principals and/or Designated School Officials

### Responsibilities

Principals and school leaders are typically accountable for school attendance. In fulfilling this responsibility, staff, parents, community stakeholders, and others will look to you for leadership and information on attendance policies, school attendance data, and interventions. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Maintaining appropriate record keeping and documentation that are aligned to local and state requirements
- Analyzing attendance data to detect attendance issues and challenges
- Sharing attendance information and reports with school and district staff
- Communicating information about attendance to stakeholders and involving parents and community members in addressing attendance issues
- Monitoring attendance data and plans to improve attendance for all students and developing attendance interventions

### Things to Think About

- How might student attendance data be used to understand and address education questions, issues, problems, and challenges?
- What processes and specific guidelines does your school have to ensure that attendance data are of high quality and conform to all privacy laws and regulations?
- Which data elements does your LEA collect? Do longitudinal data exist on student subgroups?
- What attendance data can be tracked at the school and district levels?
- What actions can be taken to address trends or patterns in attendance data?
- How many students are chronically absent? What are the root cause(s) of chronic absenteeism in your school?
- Are there any links between attendance and other factors, for example, behavior, disciplinary record, grade level, and/or transportation options?
- What interventions do students need to improve attendance? Are additional student support systems needed for the intervention to be successful?

### Things to Do

- Monitor compliance with attendance policies, and verify that attendance reports are accurate and protect student privacy.
- Conduct analytics and review disaggregated attendance data to identify and evaluate absence trends, including in the early grades.
- Use attendance data as an early warning indicator and to craft early intervention strategies that ensure parents are engaged in addressing student attendance issues.
- Develop a comprehensive attendance improvement plan that supports all students, and individual interventions for students in need of additional support.
- Identify all the end users of attendance data in your district and work with them to build support for processes that support high-quality data.
- Organize a venue or forum for stakeholders to discuss opportunities to improve attendance data policies, laws, and practices.





- Develop general guidance and training materials on how to
  - follow policies and best practices that relate to attendance data;
  - ensure data quality and protect confidentiality;
  - enter, select, use, and analyze attendance data; and
  - help chronically absent students through early investigation, intervention, and family engagement.
- Identify a staff member in your school who can serve as the attendance data owner/steward responsible for data collection.

### **Outcomes (What's in It for Me?)**

- Accurate and timely reporting will assist your school in complying with necessary requirements.
- Your relationships with the families who attend your school will be stronger when they know that you care about their student's well-being and academic performance.
- School climate and culture is impacted by how families feel about your school and their opinion about whether your school is a welcoming environment. A positive school climate and culture will improve positive perceptions of your school and increase attendance and enrollment.
- Attendance is an accountability measure, and consistent attendance will improve the status of your school and its perceived effectiveness.

## LEA Tip Sheet – Central Office Staff

### Responsibilities

LEA office staff who oversee attendance data collected within the district are typically responsible for ensuring that the infrastructure, training, and culture of education programs are conducive to high-quality data collection and reporting. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Monitoring attendance data
- Ensuring that data are consistently entered into the SIS across the district

### Things to Think About

- How might student attendance data be used to understand and address education questions, issues, problems, or challenges?
- Which data does your LEA collect? Does your LEA have a data dictionary that can be easily referenced and used by staff?
- Has your LEA established absence reason codes, and are they more or less detailed than required by state policy?
- Does your LEA use valid aggregation methods to ensure data comparability?
- How can your LEA ensure consistent attendance data practices and procedures across your district? What barriers may prevent schools from following consistent attendance practices and procedures, and how can your LEA help schools overcome these barriers?
- What attendance data policies and/or procedures are followed regarding
  - data collection via a student information system (SIS);
  - the frequency of data collection;
  - meeting state reporting requirements;
  - verification that data quality procedures are followed;
  - notifying families of attendance issues or when threshold triggers are met;
  - providing interventions to individual or groups of students when triggers are met;
  - making attendance-related referrals to community agencies and organizations; and
  - assessing the effectiveness of attendance policies?
- What training, support, and technology resources can your LEA provide to help school staff follow data quality procedures regarding attendance data collection and reporting?
- Are attendance data consistently used to inform plans to address attendance issues?
- What community agencies and organizations does your LEA work with for assistance with attendance issues? Do you have established procedures for making referrals to the agency?

### Supervisor of Attendance Responsibilities: One State's Approach

In California, the responsibilities of the supervisor of attendance include the following five duties pursuant to California Education Code Section 48240(b):

1. Raise the awareness of school personnel, parents, guardians, and caregivers, community partners, and local businesses of the effects of chronic absenteeism and truancy and other challenges associated with poor attendance.
2. Identify and respond to grade level or pupil subgroup patterns of chronic absenteeism or truancy.
3. Identify and address factors contributing to chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy, including suspension and expulsion.
4. Ensure that pupils with attendance problems are identified as early as possible to provide applicable support services and interventions.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented to reduce chronic absenteeism rates and truancy rates.



## Things to Do

- Provide the processes, procedures, resources, and tools necessary to meet district and state reporting requirements and train staff in their use.
- Review the depth and breadth of attendance data training that is available, and provide general guidance, training, timelines, and rules on how to select, analyze, and use student attendance data and ensure student privacy.
- Communicate to all teachers, staff, and school leaders the district and state’s attendance policies and procedures, the importance of timely, accurate attendance data as it pertains to student outcomes and business processes, and the consequences for not collecting accurate attendance data.
- Ensure that schools are informed of laws and regulations pertaining to attendance, accounting expectations, and data privacy.
- Assess whether your LEA has a research agenda that addresses student attendance, familiarize yourself with research studies on student attendance data, and share case studies that demonstrate how attendance data have been or can be used appropriately.
- Develop policies and procedures for data requests that
  - determine what student attendance data will be used for;
  - ensure that requested data are appropriate to investigate the question or issue;
  - compel requestors to provide a copy of any reports that use your LEA’s data; and
  - require requestors to sign a data agreement stating that their conclusions do not reflect the position of the LEA.
- Advocate for policies or laws that promote the use of attendance data while protecting data privacy.
- Share how attendance data are used in your district’s decisionmaking processes.
- Consider what features and improvements can be made to your district’s electronic attendance monitoring and reporting system to make it modern, robust, and capable of reporting required data to the SEA.
- Create scripts or templates for school office staff to use when communicating with families about student absences.

## Outcomes (What’s in It for Me?)

- Accurate and timely reporting is required for compliance with state and federal requirements, and will inform policy and law changes accordingly.
- By improving student attendance, families will see that your LEA has a positive influence on not only the district, but their lives in general.
- Your work will ensure that schools in your district have aligned their attendance data with district and state requirements.



## LEA Tip Sheet – Superintendents

### Responsibilities

Superintendents typically assume accountability for district-wide attendance. In fulfilling this responsibility, school and district staff, parents, community stakeholders, and others will look to you for leadership and information on attendance policies, data, and interventions. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Establishing local procedures to collect, maintain, and validate student attendance data, in alignment with applicable local, state, and federal policies
- Monitoring district attendance data
- Ensuring that policies meet state and federal reporting requirements and support positive student learning outcomes
- Advocating, when needed, for changes to existing laws or policies on student attendance to ensure the proper protection and use of such data
- Encouraging a collaborative environment between departments to support a holistic, intentional approach to effectively addressing attendance issues
- Understanding who is responsible for student attendance, for attendance data, and for addressing issues that may impact attendance
- Communicating with and reporting to the school board and, when needed, advocating for attendance interventions and improvements

### Things to Think About

- How is attendance in your district measured and recorded (e.g., daily, twice daily, or by class period)?
- How robust is your attendance monitoring and reporting system? Does it include useful capabilities and features, such as the ability to
  - disaggregate data;
  - identify chronic tardiness or class-period absences;
  - review data for individual students;
  - identify outliers in the data; and
  - implement flexible triggers to identify when interventions are needed?
- Does your district have policies and procedures for notifying families of student absences?
- Has your district established policies and/or procedures for when students receive attendance interventions?

### Things to Do

- Consider what features and improvements can be made to your district's electronic attendance monitoring and reporting system to make it modern and robust.
- Monitor attendance data and consider what changes may be needed as a result.
- Assign responsibility for helping schools collect high-quality attendance data to appropriate LEA staff.
- Share how attendance data are used in your district's decisionmaking processes.
- Report publically on attendance data to your school board.

### Outcomes (What's in It for Me?)

- Research indicates that higher attendance has a direct impact on higher academic performance.<sup>23</sup>
- Establishing active response attendance policies will ensure that the local board, parents and the public understand that educational community matters.

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<sup>23</sup>The References list at the end of this guide contains selected research on student attendance.



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## Appendix A: Sample Letter to Parents

This attendance letter template explains the importance of consistent attendance for all students across all grade levels. The template can be customized to connect families with school staff and inform families of the school, district, and state attendance policies. A .docx version of this template is available for download and customization on this NCES Forum web page: [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2017007.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2017007.asp).

There are many reasons why students may not be consistently in attendance. Communication guides and templates tailored to the student, such as a “nudge” letter that compares a particular student’s attendance to others in the same grade at the school or district wide, may be more effective than a standard attendance letter template. Creating templates and talking points for different communication methods, such as email, post cards,<sup>24</sup> phone messages, and text messages,<sup>25</sup> may also be useful.

For additional examples of communication templates, scripts, and talking points, see the *Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism* web page created by the State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/attendance/default.aspx>.

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

We at [*Insert school name*] are committed to supporting student achievement and success. We want to ensure that all students fully benefit from their educational experience. One of the ways we can help students succeed is by promoting consistent attendance.

When students are absent, they miss critical opportunities to learn from and to contribute to the [*Insert school name*] learning community. Research shows that consistent attendance is essential to student learning and success. Consistent attendance improves academic achievement and supports social and emotional development. Children at all grade levels benefit from consistent attendance.


Every school day matters in a child’s education. Nationwide, roughly one in seven students are chronically absent from school, meaning they were absent 15 or more days. That’s 14 percent—or over 6 million—of the nation’s students. The negative effects of too many absences—also called chronic absenteeism—can cause your student to fall behind in school. Just two absences per month can add up over the school year to a month of missing school.

It’s clear that consistent attendance is critical to students’ success, but we understand that it can sometimes be difficult to ensure that your student is in attendance every day. We at [*Insert school name*] are here for you and your student, and we have a number of resources that can help improve your student’s attendance.

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<sup>24</sup> For more information about encouraging attendance through postcards, see Rogers, T., Duncan, T., Wolford, T., Ternovski, J., Subramanyam, S., and Reitano, A. (2017). *A randomized experiment using absenteeism information to “nudge” attendance* (REL 2017– 252). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=440>.

<sup>25</sup> For more information about encouraging attendance through text messages, see Bergman, P., and Chan, E. W. (2017). *Leveraging Technology to Engage Parents at Scale: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial*. Retrieved April 19, 2017, from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2989472>.



[Insert contact information for school staff responsible for supporting student attendance, such as a guidance counselor, attendance interventionist, or social worker, and programs or services available to help families improve student attendance.]

While consistent attendance is critical to your student’s learning and development, we understand that students may be absent from school due to illness, family emergencies, important cultural events, or other reasons. If your student is going to be absent or late to school, please contact [insert attendance secretary’s name] at [insert attendance secretary’s phone number]. [Insert additional school and district policies and expectations for reporting when a student will be absent or tardy].

At [insert school name], we have established the following rules on attendance to ensure that students are attending school consistently. [Insert school policies and procedures on excused and unexcused absences, tardies, etc. excerpted from your Student Handbook. Provide a link to your handbook for additional information.]

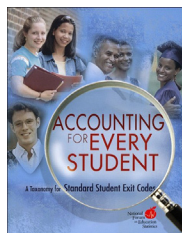
Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring that your student attends school regularly and fully benefits from the educational opportunities we provide. We look forward to your student’s attendance at [insert school name].

Sincerely,

[Insert principal’s name]

## Appendix B: Related Resources from the National Forum on Education Statistics

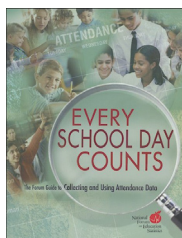
The National Forum on Education Statistics has produced best practice guides for the education community on a range of topics. Visit <http://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp> to access these and other free Forum resources.



### **Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes (2006)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2006804.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006804.asp)

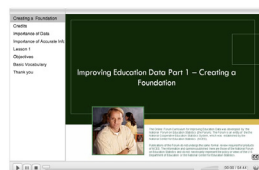
This “best practice” guide presents an exhaustive and mutually exclusive exit code taxonomy that accounts, at any single point in time, for all students enrolled (or previously enrolled) in a particular school or district.



### **Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data (2009)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2009804.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2009804.asp)

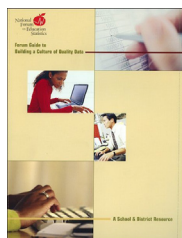
This Forum guide offers best practice suggestions on collecting and using student attendance data to improve performance. It includes a standard set of codes to make attendance data comparable across districts and states.



### **Forum Curriculum for Improving Education Data: A Resource for Local Education Agencies (2007)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2007808.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2007808.asp)

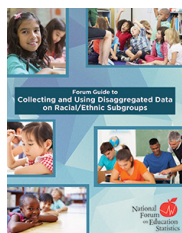
This curriculum supports efforts to improve the quality of education data by serving as training materials for K12 school and district staff.



### **Forum Guide to Building a Culture of Quality Data: A School & District Resource (2004)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2005801.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2005801.asp)

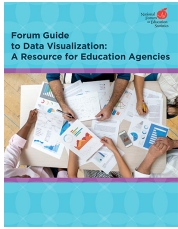
There has been a growing awareness that effective teaching, efficient schools, and quality data are linked. A “Culture of Quality Data” is the belief that good data are an integral part of teaching, learning and managing the school enterprise.



### **Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Disaggregated Data on Racial/Ethnic Subgroups (2016)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2017017.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2017017.asp)

This publication identifies some of the overarching benefits and challenges involved in data disaggregation, recommends appropriate practices for disaggregating racial/ethnic data in districts and states, and describes real-world examples of large and small education agencies disaggregating racial/ethnic data successfully.



### **Forum Guide to Data Visualization: A Resource for Education Agencies (2016)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2017016.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2017016.asp)

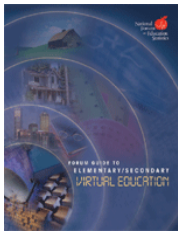
The purpose of this publication is to recommend data visualization practices that will help education agencies communicate data meaning in visual formats that are accessible, accurate, and actionable for a wide range of education stakeholders. Although this resource is designed for staff in education agencies, many of the visualization principles apply to other fields as well.



### **Forum Guide to Education Data Privacy (2016)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2016096.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016096.asp)

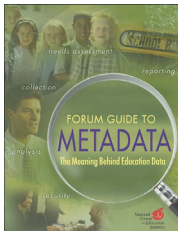
This publication presents 11 case studies designed to assist schools and education agencies in protecting the confidentiality of student data when using online instructional apps, responding to requests for student contact information, sharing student data within schools, sharing data among community school partners, using student data in presentations and training materials, and using social media.



### **Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education Data (2015)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2016095.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016095.asp)

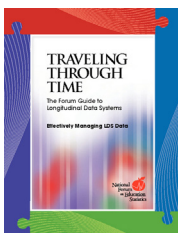
This publication provides information on the impact of virtual education on established data elements and methods of data collection and addresses the scope of changes, the rapid pace of new technology development, and the proliferation of resources in virtual education.



### **Forum Guide to Metadata: The Meaning Behind Education Data (2009)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2009805.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2009805.asp)

This document offers best practice concepts, definitions, implementation strategies, and templates/tools for an audience of data, technology, and program staff in state and local education agencies.



### **Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems, Book III: Effectively Managing LDS Data (2011)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2011805.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2011805.asp)

This document, the third installment of a four-part Forum Guide series on longitudinal data systems (LDS), addresses the management of data.