

The Forum Voice

Winter 2024

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LETTER FROM THE VICE CHAIR

Greetings, all Forum members! I hope you all managed to fit in some downtime and relaxation over spring break.

After 2 years of working together virtually, 2023 was the year we really came back to the world, wasn't it? We managed some significant tasks during those periods of quarantine, school closures, and social distancing, and we should be proud of how well we did it. But looking back at the most recent year, I can't help but be impressed at what we achieved once we could get back together in a real-world way, helping the education data community with the expertise we bring and the resources we deliver. We were, to say the least, very busy! And it looks like this year will be just as eventful for us.

What was our greatest achievement? I think many of us weren't sure how feasible it would be to return to large-scale, in-person events after 2 years of teleconferences, but we certainly pulled it off! For 3 days in August, we

gathered in Bethesda for the 2023 Summer Forum Meeting, and with guests from across the U.S. Department of Education (ED) joining us, we explored the concerns we'd been addressing with our working groups and resources and started laying our path for 2024.

"Data quality" was a key theme in the work we did last year. We continued to prioritize quality educational data as an area of focus, and our resources have been well used to support those efforts in education agencies—our courses on data quality, as well as data ethics and data visualization, have been incorporated into training curricula by the Kentucky Department of Education and Loudoun County Public Schools in Virginia.

Beyond training, take a look at the list of resources we delivered in the past year:

- *Forum Guide to Data Quality*
- *Forum Guide to Discipline Data*
- *Forum Guide to Understanding the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Classification System*
- SCED Version 11 and resources

We've also got resources on the way covering data literacy, technology in the classroom, and working with student learning data during and following pandemic interruptions.

As for resources in earlier stages of development, we've got a full queue there, as well. We already have working groups pooling their expertise to prepare guides on artificial intelligence (AI) in education, college and career readiness (CCR) data, educator workforce data, student mobility data, and the next version of SCED. And we've revived the Communications Subcommittee to continue improving the ways we help the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) achieve its goals and bring Forum resources to those who need them.

So, a busy year lies before us, and I'm sure we'll be productive as ever. As we get started, I wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for everything you bring to the Forum from your agencies, careers, and personal experiences. I look forward to seeing you and collaborating with you in July at the 2024 Summer Forum Meeting.

DeDe Conner
Kentucky Department of Education

SPOTLIGHT ON FORUM RESOURCE DISSEMINATION

Forum members contribute valuable perspective and experience to the development of the Forum's resources on issues that affect schools, school districts, and state education agencies (SEAs). Promoting and disseminating these free Forum products to staff of a member's agency and to subject matter experts within the member's home state through relevant state and local activities, networks, and professional meetings is a responsibility of all Forum members. Throughout 2023, Forum members shared practical and effective ways they use and share Forum publications, courses, videos, and supplemental materials.

Loudoun County Public Schools (VA) (LCPS) has embedded the Forum's [Data Ethics Course](#) into the district's Student Data Privacy Course, which is required for all staff. This course helps staff understand the importance of keeping student data safe, how student data are put at risk, and how to find resources related to protecting student data. The Forum's [Data Visualization Course](#), designed to help education agencies communicate data meaning in visual formats that are accessible, accurate, and actionable for a wide range of education stakeholders, is embedded in the LCPS Data Analytics professional learning course. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) also uses and disseminates Forum resources. The Data Ethics Course is required for all new employees on the data services team as part of their new employee training, while the Data Visualization Course is a prerequisite for those who work with or request data visualizations. KDE's data governance team shares the Forum's [Data Quality: Improving Education Data Course](#) to help data stewards understand the importance of having a culture of high-quality data. Additionally, as new [Forum publications](#) are released, KDE promotes them within the agency and to districts through KDE's data governance team and communication channels.

The Forum team can draft materials for members who are delivering presentations on Forum resources to the education data community. For example, Maureen Margevich, Washington County Public Schools (MD), and Chandra Haislet, Maryland State Department of Education, presented on the *Forum Guide to Data Quality* at the Maryland Assessment Group 2023 Fall Conference. Additionally, the following Forum members presented on Forum working group projects at the 2023 NCES STATS-DC Data Conference:

- DeDe Conner, Kentucky Department of Education; Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education; and Susan Williams, Virginia Department of Education, presented on the *Forum Guide to State Education Agency Support for Local Education Agencies in Civil Rights Data Reporting*;
- DeDe Conner, Kentucky Department of Education, presented on the *Forum Guide to Data Quality*;
- Scott Gausland, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Peggy Jones, Pasco County Schools (FL), presented on the forthcoming *Forum Guide to Data Literacy*;
- Bradley McMillen, Wake County Public School System (NC), and Ellis Ott, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (AK), presented on the *Forum Guide to Discipline Data*;
- Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (MO), presented on the *Forum Guide to Technology for Teaching and Learning*; and
- Jon Wiens, Oregon Department of Education, presented on the forthcoming *Forum Guide to Student Learning Data During Pandemic School Closures and Beyond*.

During the summer Forum meeting, members shared many ideas to promote Forum resources. To help implement these ideas, the Forum reconvened the Communications Subcommittee in fall 2023. The subcommittee will support the work of the Forum by discussing potential approaches and strategies for disseminating Forum resources, improving member knowledge of existing Forum resources, and addressing the NCES Strategic Plan. At the subcommittee kickoff meeting on December 6, 2023, members shared several ways they use and share Forum resources in SEAs and local education agencies (LEAs), including

- updating agency protocols to align with best practices information in Forum resources;
- presenting on Forum resources at conferences and inter-agency meetings;
- referring colleagues to Forum resources;
- sharing Forum resources with relevant agency departments; and
- referencing Forum resources in online platforms for professional associations.

The Forum can assist members by developing customized presentations with talking points on Forum resources. Members who wish to present on Forum resources can email Ghedam at Ghedam.Bairu@ed.gov for assistance.

SUPPORTING THE NCES STRATEGIC PLAN

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally. NCES recently implemented a strategic plan to guide its work. The Forum's work directly supports goal 3 of the strategic plan, to "foster and leverage mutually beneficial partnerships with practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and government agencies at all levels." To meet this goal, NCES has continued supporting existing groups to foster partnerships and build capacity, including the Forum.

At the August 2023 summer Forum meeting, NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr expressed her appreciation for the Forum's support of NCES, and invited members to think about how the Forum could contribute to the NCES strategic plan and, together, continue to build partnerships. She also emphasized the importance of SEA and LEA participation

in NCES data collections and encouraged Forum members to participate in data collections and share ideas for improving response rates. Since the 2023 meeting, the Communications Subcommittee has been reconvened, in part, to explore and support opportunities that foster and leverage the Forum’s mutually beneficial partnership with NCES; help increase awareness and use of NCES data, products, and services in SEAs and LEAs; and identify and promote strategies for improving SEA and LEA participation in NCES surveys.

NEW FORUM RESOURCES

- ***Forum Guide to Data Quality***
The Forum’s Data Quality Working Group developed a new resource that provides best practices from districts and states for maintaining quality data as agencies regularly review and revise their methods for working with data. The *Forum Guide to Data Quality* is intended to help education agencies seeking to improve or further develop their policies and practices related to data quality.
- ***Forum Guide to Discipline Data***
The Forum’s Discipline Data Working Group developed a new resource to help education agencies collect, manage, report, and use discipline data. The *Forum Guide to Discipline Data* discusses the importance of discipline data and how these data have changed over time, provides key considerations for data management and staff training, and identifies data reporting and use best practices.
- ***Forum Guide to Technology for Teaching and Learning***
The Forum’s Technology for Teaching and Learning Working Group developed a new resource that will help education agencies appropriately select, responsibly manage, and effectively support the use of educational technology. The *Forum Guide to Technology for Teaching and Learning* specifically focuses on the policies, processes, and best practices involved in the planning, selection, implementation, management, support, and evaluation of educational technology.
- ***Forum Guide to Understanding the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Classification System***
The *Forum Guide to Understanding the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) Classification System* provides information on the development process, code structure, and element descriptions, and offers best practices for SCED implementation and use for both new and existing users. Additional information on SCED use, including case studies, is available in the companion publication, *Forum Guide to SCED Uses and Benefits*.
- ***SCED Version 11 and related resources***
The SCED Working Group published SCED Version 11 in June 2023 as sortable, downloadable files and updated the [SCED Master List](#) and [SCED Finder](#). The working group develops a new version of SCED—a voluntary, common classification system for prior-to-secondary and secondary school courses—annually, with input from SCED users and subject matter experts in local, state, and federal education agencies to ensure that SCED course codes remain up-to-date and accurate.
- ***Forthcoming Forum Guide to Data Literacy***
The Forum’s Data Literacy Working Group developed a new resource that will help education agencies promote data literacy among agency staff and stakeholders such as parents, community members, students, and others. The forthcoming *Forum Guide to Data Literacy* discusses how data literacy needs vary among stakeholders, identifies the best practices that agencies are using to assist different audiences with understanding education data, and describes considerations for each audience to engage with data more fully.
- ***Forthcoming Forum Guide to Student Learning Data During Pandemic School Closures and Beyond***
The Forum’s Student Learning Data During Pandemic School Closures and Beyond Working Group developed a new resource to review how SEAs and LEAs changed their approaches to collecting and using student data during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they are working to create a path to student learning recovery. The

forthcoming guide details the ways agencies are using student data across multiple areas to identify individual and group learning needs and create effective plans for learning recovery and improvement.

CURRENT WORKING GROUPS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

Current Forum working groups and subcommittees address specific issues and are developing new resources.

- **AI in Education Working Group:** This working group will develop a new resource that will help education agencies understand how AI works, recognize current and potential uses of AI in education, and consider key issues for its application.
- **CCR Data Working Group:** This working group will update the 2015 *Forum Guide to College and Career Ready Data* and help education agencies effectively collect, integrate, report, and use CCR data.
- **Educator Workforce Data Working Group:** This working group will develop a resource to help education agencies identify the types of workforce data that are most useful for understanding immediate teacher shortages and monitoring educator supply and demand, as well as best practices for using these data.
- **Student Mobility Data Working Group:** This working group will develop a new resource to provide best practices that will help SEAs and LEAs manage data related to students who frequently change schools, with a focus on ensuring that data are transferred in a timely manner to minimize student learning disruptions and enable the provision of supports.
- **SCED Working Group:** The working group is planning the development of SCED Version 12.
- **Communications Subcommittee:** The subcommittee has been reconvened to discuss potential approaches and strategies for disseminating Forum resources, improve member knowledge of existing Forum resources, and address the NCES Strategic Plan.

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

2023 FORUM MEETINGS AND SESSIONS

- **New Members Orientation**
The Steering Committee hosted a virtual meeting for new Forum members and mentors on July 10, 2023. The virtual meeting helped newly appointed members to learn about the Forum and allowed new members, mentors, Steering Committee members, and members appointed since the last in-person summer Forum meeting in 2019 to connect with one another before the August Forum meeting.
- **August 2023 Forum Meeting**
The 2023 Summer Forum Meeting took place in Bethesda, MD on August 7-9, 2023. NCES Chief Statistician Gail M. Mulligan and Past Forum Chair Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education, welcomed members to the meeting. Joint session presentations addressed several timely topics in education data: Allen Miedema, Northshore School District (WA), Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (MO), and Jon Wiens, Oregon Department of Education, presented on current working groups; Steven Hernandez, Chief Information Security Officer at ED, and the Privacy Technical Assistance Center team led separate sessions that addressed cybersecurity in education agencies; and NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr provided an update on NCES projects and activities. Standing committees met to discuss topics of interest to committee members, including data privacy, data literacy, AI and education, educator workforce data, and other new and important issues in the field of education data. Notes for all joint sessions, standing

committee, and Steering Committee meetings are available on the Forum website at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/meeting_notes.asp.

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

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

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