Forum Opening Session
Monday, July 22, 2024

Forum Welcome
Forum Vice Chair DeDe Conner, Kentucky Department of Education, welcomed Forum members to the Summer 2024 Forum Meeting in Bethesda, MD; thanked them for their time, work, and commitment over the past year; and briefly reviewed the agenda for the week.

Recognition of Completed Projects
DeDe presented certificates to recognize the contributions of the members who developed the *Forum Guide to Technology for Teaching and Learning* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2024045.asp).

DeDe introduced Peggy Carr, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education (ED).

NCES Discussion on Revised Standards for Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity
Peggy first recognized the Forum's recent accomplishments and commended Forum members for their work, which culminated in publishing new resources on data literacy, student learning data during pandemic school closures and beyond, technology for teaching and learning, and course codes. She then focused the remainder of her time discussing revisions to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) *Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 (SPD 15): Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity*.[1] OMB initially developed SPD 15 in 1977 and has revised the standards one time previously, resulting in an update in 1997. The goal of these updated standards is to provide a common statistical framework to promote uniformity, comparability, and consistency across Federal information collections that include race and ethnicity.

In June 2022, OMB convened an Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) to develop recommendations for improving the quality and usefulness of federal race and ethnicity data. The ITWG relied on

- research conducted by federal agencies over the past decade;
- robust public comments in response to a January 2023 Federal Register Notice (more than 20,000), 94 listening sessions, 3 public virtual townhalls, and a tribal consultation; and
- new research and testing of potential alternatives by several federal agencies.

This research and input informed ITWG's recommendations for updating and improving SPD 15, which were submitted to OMB. Peggy reviewed the SPD 15 revisions, as follows, and showed examples of how the question format will differ to align with the new standards:

- collecting race and ethnicity together with a single question (includes "Hispanic or Latino" option);

[1] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/03/29/2024-06469/revisions-to-ombs-statistical-policy-directive-no-15-standards-for-maintaining-collecting-and

- adding a response category for Middle Eastern or North African, separate and distinct from the "White" category;
- updating inconsistent and outdated terminology; and
- requiring collection of detailed data on race and ethnicity beyond the minimum categories (unless agency determines benefit doesn't justify the additional burden or risk to privacy or confidentiality; requires exemption from the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs).

The ED Action Plan is due to OMB by September 28, 2025. The plan will describe how agencies intend to bring data collections and publications into compliance and will be available on websites at submission. All federal data collections must comply by March 28, 2029. Other data collectors (such as school districts and hospitals) may require additional planning but must meet the deadline.

ED Internal Committee has been established and will be focused on addressing three priorities:

- Internal and external outreach: ED is planning to develop guidance materials; conduct listening tours, brown bag sessions, and informational presentations; and author social media and blog posts.
- Develop ED Action Plan: The template that agencies will be required to use is in OMB clearance. ED's action plan will be submitted through the Statistical Official at NCES. Prior to submission to OMB, the plan will be reviewed in coordination with ED's chief data officer, evaluation officer, senior agency officials for privacy, and other agency officials, as appropriate.
- Evaluate research needs in conjunction with the new standards: ED will evaluate the impact on trend lines using bridge studies and crosswalks, differential stakeholder progress in implementation by the March 28, 2029, deadline, and other critical areas related to the detailed question format, privacy, and reporting granularity.

Peggy and Forum members discussed the following:

- The vision for the revised standards is to better reflect the people as a nation.
- An optional year to report to the new standards for major data collections could be useful. NCES will solicit comments from states and districts about their processes and tentative timelines as part of an upcoming package in the Federal Register.
- Reidentification of students and staff is a major challenge for local education agencies (LEAs).
- Consistency across all federal data collections, not just ED data collections but also the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and all other federal statistical agencies, will ease implementation. OMB's government-wide policy implementation group is charged with ensuring collaboration among the agencies and consistency in approaches.
- Using the new categories for the 2027 ED*Facts* collection would ensure that agencies have the requisite data for reporting the 2027-28 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).
- Crosswalks will be needed to bridge old and new data collections, and ED has a team that will be working on this.

- A uniform approach for all data collections could be useful. If only one collection requires more granular level of detail, state education agencies (SEAs) and LEAs will need to collect those data.
- Broad and consistent messaging to the public will help address issues and encourage buy-in at the local level.
- The various implementation committees at each agency (including ED) and the OMB are intended to ensure consistency across the federal government.
- Once ED develops its action plan, it will be submitted to OMB for approval and will be made publicly available.
- Federal agencies may request an exemption to the requirement to collect more detailed data beyond the minimum categories, if the agency
    - determines that the potential benefit of the detailed data would not justify the additional burden;
    - there is additional risk to privacy or confidentiality; or
    - collecting different detailed data categories than the ones listed in SPD 15 would provide more useful or accurate data for the collection's specific context and intended uses.
- ED is preparing a charter to guide its work with internal and external stakeholders. Technical assistance for SEAs and LEAs to implement the new standards correctly may include blog posts, train the trainer toolkits, and outreach materials.
- Some states and districts already collect more granular race and ethnicity data, while others do not.
- There are difficulties to collecting more granular race and ethnicity data. In some cases, data may need to be suppressed or aggregated to ensure privacy.
- Use cases need to be compelling and should address how the revised categories can benefit schools and students.
- Reidentification via observation is challenging and can be uncomfortable to conduct for LEAs.
- Some districts may benefit from a phased-in approach, such as only requiring the new categories for newly enrolled students before conducting a full reidentification of all students. However, maintaining two different datasets could result in complications.
- Peggy encouraged Forum members to submit comments to the Federal Register for data collections that will use the new categories. All input is welcome, such as
    - what ED should consider as it implements the new standards;
    - what types of resources SEAs and LEAs need to make the change; and
    - whether reidentification or adoption moving forward should be pursued.
- Forum members encouraged ED to be clear about the code sets that will need to be used and the level of detail required for reported data.
- More detailed race and ethnicity categories help people feel better represented, particularly in racially and ethnically homogenous states and territories.

Peggy thanked the Forum for their feedback, which can help ED plan for a successful implementation of SPD 15.

Forum Joint Session

Monday, July 22, 2024

Recognition of Completed Projects

DeDe presented certificates to recognize the contributions of the members who developed the *Forum Guide to Data Literacy* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2024079.asp).

Joint Session: Forum Working Group Panel Discussion

DeDe, Will Goodman, Boise School District (ID), and Raymond Martin, Connecticut State Department of Education, delivered a panel presentation on three Forum resources that are being developed.

DeDe provided an update on the development of the *Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Data About the Educator Workforce*. The Educator Workforce Data Working Group was created to discuss the data crucial to education agencies when they are recruiting, hiring, and placing teachers, as well as those data needed to support, evaluate, and retain educators. Valid, high-quality, and timely national or state level data are crucial to decisions about programs, policies, and funding. The forthcoming resource identifies common types of educator workforce data, describes how SEAs and LEAs communicate about educator shortages, discusses solutions to and lessons learned in addressing workforce data-related challenges, and provides case studies from SEAs and LEAs. The working group identified several best practices, including considering how concepts are defined and how this influences the nature of the data collected, using trends in vacancies and staffing data to inform and collaborate with teacher preparation programs, and ensuring the interoperability of multiple data systems.

Will provided an update on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education Working Group. The working group is developing *Introduction to Artificial Intelligence: A Forum Guide for State and Local Education Agencies* to help staff and leadership at SEAs and LEAs understand AI, recognize current and potential uses of AI in education, and consider key issues for its application. The resource is intended to provide a foundational introduction to AI in education, with the goal of helping LEA and SEA staff understand how to use AI responsibly. The resource offers examples from agencies that have developed frameworks and policies for using AI responsibly and provides case studies from states and districts that have implemented AI. The primary audience for this resource includes LEA and SEA staff and leaders who use or are considering using AI, with a specific focus on AI-powered applications and tools used in education settings.

Raymond provided an update on the Student Mobility Data Working Group's creation of a new Forum resource. The working group is developing the *Forum Guide to Student Mobility* to provide information and best practices that will help SEAs and LEAs manage data related to students who frequently change schools, with a focus on actions to minimize student learning disruptions and enable the provision of supports. The document focuses on best practices that SEAs, LEAs, and schools can learn from as they begin or continue to develop questions, definitions, and measures related to student mobility, to chart a path to understand and support students who have experienced mobility. The primary audience for this resource includes SEA and LEA staff that collect or use data on student mobility, as well as educators and others

working to ensure that disruptions to mobile students' education are minimized and targeted supports are provided to students and the schools that serve them.

Forum members engaged the presenters in a discussion that addressed

- algorithmic bias in AI and approaches that can be taken to minimize bias;
- steps to ensure data privacy and security when considering the use of AI tools;
- challenges to understanding the mobility of students who are homeless or in foster care and the benefits of interagency data sharing agreements;
- ways of monitoring and reporting education vacancies in states and districts; and
- best practices for tracking data on the employment of substitute teachers.

Forum Joint Session

Tuesday, July 23, 2024

Recognition of Completed Project

DeDe presented certificates to recognize the contributions of the members who developed the *Forum Guide to Student Learning Data During Pandemic School Closures and Beyond* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2024078.asp).

Joint Session: Cybersecurity in Education Agencies Panel Discussion

DeDe introduced Steven Hernandez, ED, and Will, who presented on cybersecurity best practices and lessons learned for SEAs and LEAs. Steven provided an overview of the current education sector threatscape. Social engineering and system intrusion have trended upward in recent years. Steven highlighted the ways that threat actors use roleplaying, impersonation, and research to build relationships with their targets and exploit their emotions. Threat actors also are leveraging generative AI. While external threat actors are responsible for most data breaches, the percentage of data breaches from internal threat actors is increasing. The motivation for cyberattacks usually is financial. Steven recommended that SEAs and LEAs focus on three actions to minimize the risk of an attack:

- multifactor authentication, with phishing resistant authentication required for privileged accounts;
- encryption for data at rest and in transit; and
- event log management, such as the requirements outlined in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) memorandum on *Improving the Federal Government's Investigative and Remediation Capabilities Related to Cybersecurity Incidents*.[2]

Steven offered several federal resources from ED, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA):

[2] https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/M-21-31-Improving-the-Federal-Governments-Investigative-and-Remediation-Capabilities-Related-to-Cybersecurity-Incidents.pdf

- ED:
    - Student Privacy Policy Office: https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/
    - Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center: https://rems.ed.gov
- FBI:
    - Internet Crime Complaint Center: https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx
    - Local field offices: https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices
    - InfraGard: https://www.infragard.org
- Secret Service:
    - Field offices: https://www.secretservice.gov/contact/field-offices
    - Electronic crimes task forces: https://www.secretservice.gov/investigation/cyber
    - *Preparing for a Cyber Incident*: https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2020-12/Preparing%20for%20a%20Cyber%20Incident%20-%20An%20Introductory%20Guide%20v%201.1.pdf
- DOJ's *Best Practices for Victim Response and Reporting of Cyber Incidents*: https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/speeches/attachments/2015/04/29/criminal_division_guidance_on_best_practices_for_victim_response_and_reporting_cyber_incidents.pdf
- NSA's *Top Ten Cybersecurity Mitigation Strategies*: https://www.nsa.gov/portals/75/documents/what-we-do/cybersecurity/professional-resources/csi-nsas-top10-cybersecurity-mitigation-strategies.pdf
- United States General Services Administration FedRAMP Program: https://www.fedramp.gov/training
- StateRAMP: https://stateramp.org/faqs/
- CISA:
    - Free Cybersecurity Services and Tools: Cyber Hygiene Vulnerability Scanning: https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/services/free-cybersecurity-services-and-tools-cyber-hygiene-vulnerability-scanning
    - Free Cybersecurity Services and Tools: https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/free-cybersecurity-services-and-tools

Will provided an overview of cybersecurity in the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) and Boise School District (ID) (BSD). He detailed various steps that the state and BSD have taken to improve their cybersecurity. For example, the Idaho Governor's Cybersecurity Task Force has included schools in its statewide efforts, and BSD provides training to all staff that is tailored to their role. Forum members were especially interested in Will's description of the Boise State University Cyberdome (https://www.boisestate.edu/cybersecurity/the-cyberdome/) which provides training for student workers and cybersecurity services to rural Idaho communities. Will emphasized that it is important for SEAs and LEAs to develop and test incident response plans. To illustrate the importance of conducting tabletop exercises, Will shared how his agency identified a failure in the agency's response processed. BSD found that none of the staff members knew the code or had a key to the safe containing the agency's emergency supplies, such as Magnetic Ink Character Recognition (MICR) toner and blank checks. BSD eventually found the key, but the vault was empty because it had been installed shortly before schools moved to remote learning at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. By

identifying this deficiency in testing, BSD was able to take action to improve its incident response plan and capabilities. Will also discussed other preparation and prevention steps, such as providing staff and student training and implementing multifactor authentication (MFA). He encouraged agencies to avail themselves of resources and support, including the Forum, the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), vendors, E-Rate, and other SEAs and LEAs.

Will concluded the presentation by highlighting the *Forum Guide to Cybersecurity: Safeguarding Your Data* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2020137.asp). This resource provides timely and useful best practice information to help education agencies proactively prepare for, appropriately mitigate, and responsibly recover from a cybersecurity incident. It provides recommendations to help protect agency systems and data before, during, and after a cybersecurity incident and features case studies from SEAs and LEAs.

Forum members engaged the presenters in a discussion that focused on

- different forms of phishing-resistant technology;
- criteria for identifying useful organizations and groups for LEAs to join for cybersecurity support;
- how to engage elementary and secondary students in cybersecurity efforts to protect their data; and
- steps agencies can take to prevent cybersecurity threats, such as prohibiting the use of debit payments for agency transactions.

Forum Closing Session

Wednesday, July 24, 2024

NCES Data Collections

Gail M. Mulligan, NCES chief statistician, delivered a presentation focused on SEA and LEA participation in NCES surveys. The goal of the presentation was to facilitate conversation and knowledge-sharing between NCES, SEAs, and LEAs around barriers to participation and the importance of response rates. Gail focused her presentation on data collections conducted in schools and data collected from schools, which is where NCES experiences some of its greatest challenges. Strong response rates are critically important to ensuring that NCES data are representative and of high quality. Gail identified several challenges to SEA and LEA participation in other forms of surveys:

- burden of participation;
- availability of data at the state level and from other sources;
- concerns about compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other student data privacy legislation;
- increased data collection requests, particularly from researchers;
- misalignment between state and federal data use agreement requirements; and
- unclear tangible benefits of participation.

To address these concerns, NCES is making a concerted effort to

- reduce burden for reporters at the classroom, school, and district levels;

- clarify how its approach to data privacy and use follows federal rules and requirements;
- develop mutually beneficial partnerships; and
- demonstrate how participation is pertinent and useful for all respondents.

Gail explained the complementary roles of NCES, SEAs, and LEAs, emphasizing the importance of working together at all levels to achieve the common goal of educating all students. She then provided concrete examples that highlight the value and relevance of NCES data collections. She concluded the presentation by encouraging Forum members and their colleagues to respond to data collections and surveys.

Forum members engaged Gail in a discussion that addressed

- opportunities for NCES to collaborate with PTAC to
    - communicate how NCES protects and secures data; and
    - address SEA and LEA questions about student data privacy protections at the federal level;
- how NCES can engage SEAs in messaging to LEAs about participating in NCES data collections; and
- limitations on obtaining data about adults via longitudinal data systems.

Recognition of Forum Officers
Gail presented certificates to recognize the contributions of the Forum officers and commended the Forum on its work.

Recognition of Completed Project
Gail presented certificates to recognize the contributions of the members that developed the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/sced.asp).

Standing Committee Progress Reports
Adrian L. Peoples, Delaware Department of Education, reported on the National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC). Jon Wiens, Oregon Department of Education, reported on the Policies, Programs, and Implementation (PPI) Committee. Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education, reported on the Technology (TECH) Committee.

Forum Election
Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education, presented the slate of proposed 2024-25 officers for a vote. The slate was seconded, and then the Forum voted to approve the following members as 2024-25 officers:

- Chair: DeDe Conner, Kentucky Department of Education
- Vice Chair: Allen Miedema, Northshore School District (WA)
- NESAC Chair: Will Goodman, Boise School District (ID)
- NESAC Vice Chair: Linda Roska, Texas Education Agency
- PPI Chair: Peggy Jones, Pasco County Schools (FL)
- PPI Vice Chair: Annette Severson, Colorado Department of Education
- TECH Chair: Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education
- TECH Vice Chair: Jeff Dase, Rock Island - Milan School District #41 (IL)

Closing Remarks

2024-25 Forum Chair DeDe Conner, Kentucky Department of Education, thanked the 2023-24 officers for their leadership of the Forum. DeDe urged Forum members to remain engaged in the Forum throughout the year, and reminded them to complete the meeting evaluation.