



Forum Guide to Education Indicators

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The *Forum Guide to Education Indicators* provides encyclopedia-type entries for 44 commonly used education indicators. Each indicator entry contains a definition, recommended uses, usage caveats and cautions, related policy questions, data element components, a formula, commonly reported subgroups, and display suggestions. The document will help readers better understand how to appropriately develop, apply, and interpret commonly used education indicators. More specifically, this document strives to:

- describe the appropriate role of indicators as tools for measuring educational status and progress;
- recognize standard definitions and calculations for education indicators; and
- identify common misuse of education indicators.

During the early development of this *Guide*, the task force identified hundreds of performance and context indicators used throughout the United States to assess educational inputs, processes, and outcomes. Among these many indicators, however, a core group was commonly used at all levels of the education system. This document focuses on those commonly used education indicators. More specifically, all of the indicators in this document were selected because they met one or more of the following criteria. These education indicators:

- help develop a picture of the elementary/secondary education system by measuring system inputs, processes, or outcomes;
- are commonly accepted and frequently used in some form;
- produce valid and reliable information;
- provide measures that identify trends and inform policy and practice in a timely manner; and
- can be derived from typical elementary/secondary administrative record systems.

The *Forum Guide to Education Indicators* will benefit anyone with an interest in elementary and secondary education. However, individuals who develop or directly use education indicators will obviously find it most useful. The *Guide's* primary audience includes policymakers, legislators, school board members, superintendents, and the research and evaluation specialists who support them. In addition, the Forum hopes this *Guide* will also be useful to a much wider audience of teachers, principals, parents, members of the media, and even business people—in short, anyone who may ask, or be asked, “How good are our local schools?”

This publication is available electronically at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2005802.asp. Instructions for ordering print copies are also available on the National Forum on Education Statistics website.

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