



Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education

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Traditional definitions of common education data elements do not always match the operational needs and circumstances of virtual education. For example, how is student attendance measured in a virtual setting? Does seat time matter? Class attendance? Class location?

The *Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education* is intended to align, modify, and develop definitions of these and other "traditional" education data elements to better meet the information and reporting needs unique to the virtual/distance education learning environment. As such, it provides recommendations for collecting accurate, comparable, and useful data about virtual education in an elementary/ secondary education setting. Its goals are to:

- ✓ identify components common to many education information systems that are necessary to meet the information needs of policymakers, administrators, instructors, and parents involved in virtual education;
- ✓ highlight specific data elements relevant to the delivery, management, and oversight of virtual education;
- ✓ identify commonly accepted data element definitions that may need to be modified to more accurately reflect the unique circumstances and information needs of virtual education;
- ✓ present policy considerations related to managing information about virtual education; and
- ✓ illustrate how complex issues related to virtual education data may play out in a real-world setting.

This publication was written primarily for staff in state and local education agencies, including policymakers, data management professionals, curriculum coordinators, and technology coordinators. Software developers and other vendors, staff in private schools, and the parents of children schooled at home may also find it useful. In addition, any organization or individual incorporating virtual education into an education data system will find this information valuable.

This publication is available electronically at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006803.asp. Instructions for ordering print copies are also available on the National Forum on Education Statistics website.

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