



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



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

Today's public education agencies are being held accountable for student achievement to an unprecedented extent. The current focus on student outcomes—particularly the attention given to graduation and dropout rates—has highlighted the importance of collecting accurate data at the student level. In reviewing the existing literature about dropout and graduation rates, members of the National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) determined that there was a real need for a common format for reporting when students transferred, completed high school, dropped out, or otherwise changed their enrollment status.

*Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes* presents an exhaustive and mutually exclusive exit code taxonomy that accounts for all students enrolled (or previously enrolled) in a school or district at any single point in time. It is intended primarily for data managers and accountability directors at state and local education agencies, as well as school administrators responsible for collecting student enrollment and exit data. In addition, researchers and policymakers will find the guidebook useful for making fair comparisons among schools and agencies on issues related to student enrollment, retention, and completion.

Chapter 1 defines exit codes and reviews their use in an education agency. It discusses the need for a taxonomy that accounts for 100 percent (not 90 or 110 percent) of enrolled students, and explains how the taxonomy was developed. Chapter 2 presents the taxonomy, including a detailed explanation of each category and subcategory, and describes how existing state exit codes fit into the taxonomy. Chapter 3 discusses special challenges to tracking students. For example, testing the taxonomy against existing state exit codes revealed some variation in how states classify the enrollment status of students. Key issues identified were the classification of homeschooled students, incarcerated youth, and students enrolled in General Educational Development (GED) programs. Chapter 4 highlights effective practices for tracking students. Chapter 5 focuses on issues that distinguish between graduates and completers, which is critical given the wide range of completion options available to students across the nation and the interest in producing graduation rates and dropout rates that are comparable across states.

This publication is available electronically at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2006804.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2006804.asp). Instructions for ordering print copies are also available on the National Forum on Education Statistics website.

*Accounting for Every Student: A Taxonomy for Standard Student Exit Codes* is a product of the National Forum on Education Statistics. The project was sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, under the auspices of the National Cooperative Education Statistics System. For more information about the National Forum on Education Statistics, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/forum>.