

EDUCATION DATA Squad

NEWSLETTER



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WELCOME WARREN F. PATTERSON II



Warren Patterson joined the West Virginia Department of Education as chief information officer in 2016. He is responsible for leading the Department's strategic technology initiatives including data governance and policy, technology allocation and information technology advancement.

A believer in the concept that technology is the great equalizer, his driving initiative includes continued support of the One-to-One program, which provides each student in the state a personal, portable computer for use throughout the day. Additionally, he guides and supports the distribution of other technology tools into classrooms so all students have what they need to explore and learn. Warren also oversees the data security needs of the Department to ensure that student and staff data remain accurate and secure.

Prior to joining the Department, Warren was a manager, software developer and business owner serving a variety of clients, including medical data analysts, municipalities and industrial clients. In previous positions, he was granted software patents and developed hardware-linked software, as well as scientific software to collect and analyze data.

Warren holds a Master of Science degree in computer science from Middle Tennessee State University, a Master of Arts in experimental psychology from Western Kentucky University, and a Bachelor of Arts from West Virginia Wesleyan College.

END-OF-YEAR CERTIFIED COLLECTIONS

End-of-Year Certified Collections As the academic school year in West Virginia enters the last few months of instruction, and we move toward those midsummer due dates for end-of-year (EOY) data collections, now is the right time to outline and strengthen your district's EOY data collection process. Outlining the process allows for preparation, ownership, and understanding that, although you can't foresee all issues that may arise, you have provided a strong preliminary base for success. Early planning and preparation allows you to assign resources to issues and develop workable timelines for personnel in your district.

Upcoming EOY certified data collections due before June 30

- EOY enrollment
- Special education exit report
- Discipline (including IDEA discipline)
- Average daily attendance
- Limited English proficiency (LEP) status
- Full academic year (FAY) status

The Data Governance Team is working to update and improve the instructions for these collections. We would welcome any suggestions (or hands-on help) you might be willing to offer. For questions or to assist with updating the instructions, contact the WVDE Data Governance team, by phone at 304-558-7881 or by email at zoomwv@help.k12.wv.us.

THE COST OF DUPLICATING STUDENT DATA IN WVEIS

The education data housed in WVEIS is a lifeline for every stakeholder making decisions about education in West Virginia. These data assist stakeholders as they explore the facts and make decisions regarding funding and resources allocation, basic demographic characteristics of the student population, research questions relating to student outcomes, and student learning. Yet, despite the critically important nature of the data and the necessity of ensuring accuracy, problems often arise due to student data duplication. In other words, many of our students appear more than once in WVEIS. This typically occurs when students move from one West Virginia school and/or district to another and are assigned new WVEIS IDs instead of keeping their original IDs. This might not sound like a huge challenge, but during past validation processes, many issues were brought to light because of multiple student WVEIS IDs.

The problem with duplicates

There are several major issues with multiple WVEIS student IDs. First and foremost, when a new student record is created for a transferring student, the staff at the new school have no way of seeing the student's prior information. This lack of insight into a student's previous experiences can hinder the new school's staff from responding quickly to any needs or resources the student might need. Although paper-based records may come with the student when they transfer, ensuring that staff have quick and easy access to electronic records in WVEIS – particularly any IEPs and other special education information – is critical for providing seamless support for student success.

Information about assessment accommodations and IEPs is tied to the student's ID. Since our statewide system moves information when a student is transferred, information like the student's accommodations and IEP become orphaned along with the original ID. Other applications, like the Homeless data collection, will also have any tagging referenced to the original ID and not to the new/duplicate ID.

Another significant challenge of duplicate student records is found in the reporting of assessment growth. When there are multiple WVEIS IDs, assessment growth cannot be calculated correctly because the student took an assessment the prior year under one ID and the new student ID does not properly reflect that student's educational history. When this occurs, growth cannot be calculated since no history is associated with the new (and incorrect) student ID.

When it comes to reporting data, duplicate records render a single student view unfeasible. This makes it difficult to get a clear picture of your students or their educational needs. As you can imagine, this can lead to less than ideal situations when making decisions about student needs and continuous improvement across many areas. If you are unable to connect and correlate the information for all students, then the district loses the ability to monitor educational goals and needs that may need to be addressed.

So what are the cause and remedy?

The main root of the problem is human error. Staff who are responsible for registering new students should take care to search for any in-state transferring students in the statewide unassigned pool to ensure that they are picked up with their original ID numbers.

To counteract the problems outlined above, the WVDE recently implemented an industry solution called data deduplication. This is a blend of human insight, data processing, and data edit checks to help identify potential duplicates. This process involves analyzing WVEIS data to identify potential duplicate records, and unravelling these through data edit checks.

Deduplication rules also need to be implemented locally based on the unique data issues of each district in order to create a tailored and effective deduplication strategy. The rules should take into account decisions about how strict the district wants to be with deduplication. When a new student enrolls from another West Virginia school or district, check to see if the student has a current WVEIS number. This check will ensure cleaner data for the districts for reporting. Rules should also demonstrate the understanding that deduplication has educational implications that impact students throughout the district and state.

For questions about duplication of student data, please contact the WVDE Data Governance team, by phone at 304-558-7881, or by email at zoomwv@help.k12.wv.us.

E-MAIL ETIQUETTE: FORWARD HALT

In many places around the state, staff may have at one time been told that it is okay – or even desirable – to automatically forward work emails to a private, personal email address through webmail services like Gmail, Yahoo, AOL, and so on. With such forwarding, messages sent to the work account will automatically be sent to the personal account, making both professional and personal messages available in one inbox. Some folks may have chosen to set up automatic forwarding for the sake of convenience, so they could check their messages from anywhere or to avoid having to check multiple accounts. Others may have been instructed that doing so was standard practice.

Whatever the reason, one message should now be carried across the state and shouted from the heights of Spruce Knob and the depths of the Potomac at Harper's Ferry and every elevation in between:

Do not do that.

Forwarding work email to a personal webmail service is a large security risk. It may also be a violation of acceptable use policies for state-supported technology resources and records retention requirements for public agencies, particularly if employees respond using the personal account rather than the state-supported work account. Further, mingling personal and professional messages in one inbox increases the chance that an employee might make a mistake when responding to a message or forwarding the information to a colleague.

Although it may seem relatively harmless, web-based mail services are not as secure as the Office 365 service provided through the state. How many times over the past couple of years have we heard about a cloud- or web-based service like Yahoo getting hacked? Some of these services also scan the messages users receive to glean information about users and "customize" the user experience based on that information.

Given that the information contained in educators' and administrators' emails may sometimes be of a confidential nature, school system employees should not set up automatic forwarding that sends their @k12 emails to a personal email account. Employees can easily check their @k12 email messages from any internet-connected device through the Outlook web app, eliminating the need to find a work-around for constraints on email accessibility you may have experienced in the past. Further, although no email system is entirely secure, the Office 365 platform supported by the state is much safer than web-based services like Gmail.

If you currently have automatic forwarding set up on your account, please disable the feature as soon as you can. And thank you for taking all reasonable precautions to protect information about our students and schools!

Fun facts: Spruce Knob in Pendleton County is the highest point (by elevation) in the Mountain State, standing 4,861 feet above sea level. The Potomac River near Harper's Ferry has the lowest elevation in our state, at only 240 feet above sea level. West Virginia has the highest average elevation of any state east of the Mississippi river (approximately 1,500 feet above sea level). Know an eighth-grader? Share these facts to help them get ready for the Golden Horseshoe test!

WHAT'S YOUR DATA STORY?

With the launches of ZoomWV, ZoomWV-e, the Early Warning System, and other data tools during the past year, district and school staff have had greater access to information than ever before. How is it working out for you?

Tell us how you are using the data tools and information to help your students, and you can be featured in an upcoming Data Squad Newsletter! Send your data story to zoomwv@help.k12.wv.us.

DO YOU NEED TRAINING?

We can offer training for district or school staff on various topics. We can help you understand your responsibilities for keeping students' information secure. We can help you learn to navigate and use ZoomWV or ZoomWV-e to make decisions that can help students achieve. We can even help you become a Zoom expert who can offer training to other staff! Whatever you need we can help! Contact us at 304-558-7881 or zoomwv@help.k12.wv.us

UPCOMING EVENTS

Student Success Summit, July 25-27 @ Morgantown Marriott Waterfront
West Virginia Statewide Technology Conference, July 18-20 @ Morgantown Marriott Waterfront
WVEIS Summer Conference, July 16-21 @ Morgantown Marriott Waterfront

NEVER ANSWER YES TO SAVE YOUR PASSWORD.

Saving your password is the same as not having one at all.

CONTACT US...

E-mail: ZoomWV@help.k12.wv.us
Telephone: 304.558.7881