



Tool H: Worksheet: Defining Terms for Data Requests and Analyses

Defining Terms for Data Requests and Analyses Worksheet

The worksheet presents common challenges you might encounter in defining key terms like “access” or “enrollment” precisely enough for data analysis. Unclear definitions of these terms can skew your results or upend your data analysis. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Speak with your state’s data managers to anticipate these and other potential challenges, and work through them.

INDICATOR	CHALLENGES TO DEFINING KEY TERMS IN WAYS THAT SUPPORT SOUND ANALYSIS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	WHAT DEFINITIONS WILL WORK IN YOUR STATE?
<p>ACCESS TO ARTS EDUCATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many state data systems lack data elements that indicate whether a course was offered. Some courses are offered for only one semester or term out of the year – for example, dance may be offered only in the second half of the school year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define a course as having been offered if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A teacher was assigned to it as of a fixed date in the calendar. At least one student earned a grade or some other mark of completion. Confer with partners about whether to give semester-long and yearlong arts offerings the same weight. 	
<p>ENROLLMENT IN ARTS EDUCATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students enroll in arts courses at neighboring schools, skewing school enrollment counts. Students switch out of arts courses in mid-semester, creating unstable enrollment counts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confer with partners about whether to remove those students from the analysis – assuming such cases are rare. Select a single, consistent point for defining enrollment. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who were enrolled as of X date. Students who received a course grade or some other mark of completion. 	

INDICATOR	CHALLENGES TO DEFINING KEY TERMS IN WAYS THAT SUPPORT SOUND ANALYSIS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	WHAT DEFINITIONS WILL WORK IN YOUR STATE?
<p>ARTS TEACHERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many states, all elementary teachers have general certifications that include arts among many other disciplines, obscuring differences among instructional quality in schools. • Some art teachers travel from school to school, limiting their time at individual schools and making it possible to double count them in district- or state-level analyses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore possibilities for identifying elementary arts specialists who fill a dedicated arts teaching position in the school budget. • Confer with partners about what weight you should assign to teachers who do not teach full time at a single school. Also, take care to collect individual teacher IDs to avoid double counting teachers. Many privacy protections for students do not typically cover teachers. 	

Working with your state’s data managers or other data partners, consider other key terms that you need.

INDICATOR	CHALLENGES TO DEFINING KEY TERMS IN WAYS THAT SUPPORT SOUND ANALYSIS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	WHAT DEFINITIONS WILL WORK IN YOUR STATE?



INDICATOR	CHALLENGES TO DEFINING KEY TERMS IN WAYS THAT SUPPORT SOUND ANALYSIS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	WHAT DEFINITIONS WILL WORK IN YOUR STATE?