

GRADUATE FOLLOW UP APPROACHES AND RESOURCES

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE

The National Student Clearinghouse, a nonprofit organization, is a trusted source for postsecondary and secondary student degree, diploma, and enrollment verification. This resource has been used to support data matching and follow-up requirements for state and federal reporting in addition to tracking and assessing the educational achievement of former students.

The use of StudentTracker, a resource through the National Student Clearinghouse, can accurately track the postsecondary enrollment and degrees of former students nationwide. Using data provided via the National Student Clearinghouse, a school district might answer key question such as:

- Where did my program's former participants enroll in college?
- How long did their educational efforts persist?
- Did they transfer between colleges?
- Did they receive a college degree? If so, which degree?
- Where did they graduate from college?
- What was their college major?

More than 3,300 colleges and universities, enrolling over 96% of all students in public and private U.S. institutions, participate in the Clearinghouse. These institutions permit the Clearinghouse to make their information available, in full compliance with FERPA, to educational organizations, such as outreach programs, for the betterment of education.

The Nebraska Department of Education has entered into a state-level agreement that provides free access for all public schools in Nebraska to StudentTracker information. In the past, in order to access StudentTracker information, districts were required to enter into an agreement directly with the National Student Clearinghouse. However, this is no longer the case. Now, the Nebraska Department of Education provides StudentTracker information directly to school districts via the NDE portal.

To access this information, enter the NSSRS Validation section of the NDE portal. Next, locate the "Data Downloads" tab in the blue options ribbon at the top of the page. Beneath the "Data Downloads" tab, you will find the "Student Clearinghouse" option. Selecting the "Student Clearinghouse" option provides an overview of the National Student Clearinghouse, the StudentTracker system, as well as external links for more information. At the bottom of the page you will find links to Excel data file(s) which contain the student match information from the National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker for your school district. The year represented by the link indicates the academic year in which the students contained in the file graduated from high school with a diploma (only students graduating early or on-time are included in the file). Details explaining the data elements included in the Excel file(s) is also provided.

For more information about the National Student Clearinghouse, visit: <http://www.studentclearinghouse.com>

For more information about the StudentTracker resource, visit:
http://www.studentclearinghouse.com/high_schools/studenttracker/



OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO MAIL AND TELEPHONE SURVEYING

Low response rates are perhaps the single greatest challenge to conducting follow-up information on students. Initial response rates of less than 40% are common for the first round of a follow-up survey effort. Consider taking a number of steps to increase responses, such as:

Mail Survey

- Mailing a postcard two weeks prior to the survey to check for invalid addresses and prepare students
- Provide a postage-paid, addressed response envelope along with the survey
- Offer a sweepstakes prize eligible to all students responding by a given date
- Include a coupon for free or reduced merchandise redeemable at a local business
- Send a reminder postcard to non-respondents a week following the deadline
- Call non-respondents
- Mail a second survey, along with a letter explaining its importance

Phone Survey

- Ask if there is a good time to call back in the event the person is not there
- Request forwarding information from the person answering the phone
- Use state or national databases to track students who may have moved within or outside the state

Internet Survey

Consider using the Internet as a way of increasing student survey responses. Survey development can often be performed in-house – for example, by offering students credit for designing a survey website. Publicizing the site prior to student graduation and offering some form of perk – for example, providing students with an alumni page to update their friends on their activities – can serve as an alternative to traditional mail and phone survey efforts. There is a free online survey tool located at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com>.

Please visit the NCE Secondary Accountability website for sample survey questions:

<https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/Accountability/Secondary/index.html>