

Executive Summary

At the request of the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs surveyed principals and teachers who participated in the Student-Teacher Data Linkage or Roster Verification process in the 2010-11 academic year. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of how the roster verification process is being implemented at the building level, what teachers and principals see as the biggest issues or challenges, and how the process can be improved.

In February 2012, a web-based survey was sent to all principals who had participated in roster verification in the spring of 2011 and to a random sample of teachers who had participated in roster verification in the spring of 2011 and received classroom-level value-added data. This survey asked questions related to the 2010-11 process. The February surveys yielded 181 valid principal and 273 valid teacher responses (27% principal response rate and 23% teacher response rate). Respondents were generally representative of the entire sample based on district typology. However, since modifications to materials and training had been made for the 2011-12 process, a follow-up survey was sent in late May 2012 to the 216 teachers who completed the first survey and indicated they were actively involved in roster verification. The purpose of the second survey was to gauge if and how teachers perceived differences in the 2012 process relative to the 2011 process. The May 2012 teacher follow-up survey yielded 97 valid responses (45% response rate).

Key Findings

Are teachers actively participating in the roster verification process?

The Ohio Department of Education's business rules for student-teacher data linkage require that teachers verify their own class rosters as well as the number of months enrolled and percentage of instructional responsibility for each student. Principals then review and approve the information entered by teachers before submitting the data through BFK•Link, the web-based system used for linkage in Ohio. It is important to note that all teachers surveyed had received value-added data for 2010-11, so all should have been actively involved in verifying their rosters and instructional responsibility.

- 80% of the teacher survey respondents indicated they were actively involved in the roster verification process in the spring of 2011.
- Approximately two-thirds of the responding principals reported that virtually all of their teachers who received teacher-level value-added reports verified their own class rosters in the spring of 2011. Twenty percent of principals reported that none of their teachers verified their own rosters. The most frequent reason principals gave for not involving teachers in the process was the lack of time. Principals reported having little or no time to adequately train their teachers. Others stated that they made the decision to complete the process themselves because the linkage process occurs during the busiest time of the year for teachers.

Do teachers and principals have adequate training and technical assistance to support correct implementation of the roster verification process?

- 85% of principals reported receiving training on how to conduct the linkage process and virtually all of them found the training helpful.
- Principals who contacted Battelle for Kids for technical support during the process were pleased with the technical assistance provided to them and reported their questions were answered quickly and sufficiently.

- Approximately half of the teacher respondents indicated that they were provided linkage training; most of them received the training from their building principal or another district administrator. Those teachers who received training reported that it was helpful.
- When asked about their biggest issues or challenges with the linkage process, many teachers reported a lack of training and guidance on how to complete the process correctly.
- Training clearly makes a difference in how teachers perceive the accuracy of the linkage process. Among teachers who had received training, 63% reported that the linkage process accurately captured what was happening in their classroom; for those teachers who had not received training, only 28% thought the process accurately captured what was happening in their classroom.

What are issues with linking students to teachers for the purpose of accountability?

- Accurately assigning percentages of instructional time for students in co-teaching situations is clearly the biggest issue regarding roster verification from the perspective of both principals and teachers. Although 80% of teachers reported sharing instructional time for at least some of their students, only 66% of these teachers thought that the percentage of instructional time attributed to them for shared students was an accurate reflection.
- Another issue for teachers regarding accurate accounting of instructional responsibility is the inability to factor in both teacher and student absences. Teachers do not think it is fair to hold them accountable at the same level for the academic growth of students who have excessive absences and students who attend school regularly.
- Some teacher respondents perceived that their building principal made decisions about how to divide instructional responsibility among teachers without consulting them or changed the information that teachers had supplied, rendering the teachers' percentage of instructional responsibility incorrect from their perspective.
- Student mobility is a factor in teacher and principal views on linkage. Both principal and teacher respondents in schools with higher mobility rates were more likely to report that the process was difficult to complete. These teachers and principals were also less confident that the linkage process accurately captured what was happening in their classrooms and were less confident that the linkage process improves the accuracy of the teacher-level value-added data than those in buildings with lower student mobility.
- There was no change from the 2011 to 2012 linkage process in the level of teacher confidence that the process improves the accuracy of teacher-level value-added data, although fewer teachers regarded the 2012 process as difficult.

What are critical components of a good roster verification process as viewed by teachers/principals?

- Teachers want the ability to factor in both teacher and student attendance as part of their percentage of instructional responsibility.
- Respondents requested a more efficient method for accurately documenting student enrollment and withdrawal dates. Moreover, both teachers and principals would like the system to allow for more precise information by indicating both the month and day of enrollment or withdrawal rather than simply the month of enrollment.
- There is a need for clear guidelines and open discussion among principals and teachers regarding the process of allocating percentages of instructional responsibility among teachers in co-teaching situations. Principals should communicate the rationale for any changes they make after teachers have verified their rosters and instructional responsibility.
- Both principals and teachers requested a longer window of time to complete the process. Principals requested that the verification window be extended into early June, as they would have more time to focus on the task after students are dismissed for the summer.
- Since roster verification occurs only once per year, some type of yearly training or a refresher course for both teachers and principals, as well as clear, step-by-step guidance should be provided annually.