



Quality Data: The Role of Technology Support Personnel*

Responsibility

You maintain and secure the hardware, software, and network that allow staff to enter, store, secure, and transfer data.

Things to Think About

- Are the data and the hardware secure?
- Do you have the appropriate hardware and software to allow efficient data entry and storage?
- Are standard data definitions used in the software?
- Are the computer applications "interoperable" (i.e., able to interact with each other using a minimum amount of programming resources)?
- Are you and the data coordinator operating collaboratively?
- Do you have an effective help desk process in place?

Things to Do

- Ensure that effective security measures, including password protection, are in place. (See *Weaving a Secure Web Around Education: A Guide to Technology Standards and Security* [National Forum on Education Statistics 2003], which deals with system security in detail.)
- Work with the data coordinator and other staff involved with data entry to develop efficient editing and data verification procedures.
- Work with the data coordinator to provide technical assistance with professional development and dissemination programs. The assistance could take the form of a
 - CD-ROM with training information that can be duplicated;
 - website address, with frequently asked questions (FAQs) that can be distributed to trainees; and/or
 - a PowerPoint™ presentation.
- Provide a help desk and/or an online help area for data entry staff.
- When selecting computer applications, you might want to ask the following questions:
 - Does this application comply with our district data standards?
 - Can the application "talk" to other computer applications (i.e., interoperability) in the district?
 - Does the application use the same keystrokes to move around screens as our existing applications? Alternatively, can the new system be modified so that the same data entry keystrokes are used in both new and legacy systems?
- Develop an electronic audit trail so that people are able to determine potential flaws at each of the various stages of data collection.

Outcomes (What's in it for me?)

Your involvement in data entry and data collection, including training and professional development, does pay dividends in both the instructional program and the services you are able to provide to the district and schools. Through your involvement in these areas, staff will be more responsive when you request funding to improve the technology infrastructure.

*The suggestions in this Tip Sheet may apply to the information technology director, coordinator, technician, etc.