About this checklist

What it is and why you should use it

A data quality checklist is a tool designed to help catch and fix data entry errors. The routine nature of working with data—everything from entry to review and sign-off—leaves a lot of room for both creating errors and missing those errors during review checkpoints. With data now being used daily to make decisions about students and teachers, it is critical that these errors are minimized. Checklists like the ones below are the most effective tool you can use to catch and prevent these errors.

Everyday Data Checklist

✓ *Basic checks that should happen every time you look at data*

	Confirm that the data, in general, are what you expected to them to be. *Example: aggregate numbers meet expected percentages*
	Compare data to prior year values to spot any significant changes where little or no change is expected. *Example: a change in a student's race*
	Perform randomized data "spot checks" against source materials to find single or systematic entry errors. *Example: missed entries that shift subsequent data into incorrect rows, columns, or fields*
	Identify invalid values. *Example: "Null" in a field that requires a numeric value, invalid codes, incomplete or blank fields, out-of-range or over-limit values*
	Check for invalid formatting. *Example: a date entered in incorrect format or non-letter characters in student name fields*

Review and Submission Checklist

✓ *Advanced checks that should happen every time you review data for approval or submission*

	Accuracy – Information reflects reality
	Determine whether or not information was recorded by someone with direct knowledge and/or by direct observation. *Example: administrative assistant records Black/African-American student as Hispanic/Latino based on last name "Martinez"*
	Confirm that information in this report matches the original collection documents or hard copies. *Example: student enrollment form lists last name as "Johnston" but record shows "Johnson"*
	Confirm that all flags and errors are fixed before approving, submitting, or otherwise using the data. *Example: submitted data accepted by system with flags for overlapping exit/entry dates*

Review and Submission Checklist (continued)

✓ *Advanced checks that should happen every time you review data for approval or submission*

	Completeness – All records that should be included are there
	Confirm that all blank entries are intentional non-values rather than omissions. *Example: no IEP status for student receiving special education services*
	Text fields include complete spellings and titles; no abbreviations, short hand, or nick names. *Example: student first name "Sandra" entered as "Sandy"*
	Inquire about any hard copies or handwritten forms that have arrived since this report was generated. *Example: report dated 9/4/2012, but 3 new students enrolled on 9/6/2012*
	Uniqueness – No duplication: one student, one record
	Use alphabetical sorting to check for duplicate records by first and last name. *Example: one record for Tyler Stevens and one for Taylor Stevens*
	Identify the source of every duplicate record warning in your weekly eRIDE report. *Example: a 3rd grade student transferred to a new district in October but has no exit date in her record*
	Compare current data with last year's data to identify students whose names have changed and look for duplicates of those students in other data sets. *Example: changed from "Perry" to "Parry"*
	Timeliness – Information collected is as close to the time of use as possible
	Verify that the information in the dataset or report is the same information that would be collected at source at this very moment. *Example: old report shows student age 6 who is now age 7*
	Check the timestamp for the dataset or report and confirm that it is the most up to date version available. *Example: enrollment records from December should not be used for decisions in January*
	For recurring events, ensure that the next report or data pull date is properly noted on all appropriate calendar(s). *Example: TCS deadlines noted only on data manager's calendar, not clerk's*
	Consistency – Information in other locations all reflect the same reality
	Compare data against other report information for verification. *Example: student enrolled in K-5 elementary reported as grade 7*
	Confirm program data with appropriate program managers. *Example: Title I program manager confirms data in SIS*
	Look at data over various time periods (annual, monthly), noting trends and any out-of-pattern anomalies. *Example: counts of students with LEP status increased sharply when new clerk was hired*