ICPSR 32661

High School Exit Examinations (HSEE), 1977-2007 [United States]

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User Guide

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HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM (HSEE) DATABASE

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There are two data files housed within this archive: a main data file (hsee_main.dta) and a linked data file (hsee_linked.dta). The HSEE data contained in the main data file are arrayed into 17 columns. Each column contains a variable, and each row contains information about a particular graduating class in a particular state. Variable names are given above the first row and missing values are indicated by a period.

Variables in the main data file

class: A numeric variable indicating the graduating class associated with a given test.

state: A two-letter abbreviation identifying the state.

test: A binary indicator (1 = HSEE testing policy in place for a given state-class; 0 = otherwise).

name: A string variable that gives the name of the HSEE testing policy in place for a given state-year.

align: A string variable indicating the grade level to which the HSEE test is aligned.

diff: A string variable indicating whether the test was "easy" or "difficult".

admin: A string variable indicating the grade level in which the HSEE is first administered.

subj: A string variable listing the subjects tested under the HSEE policy.

pass: A string variable giving pass rates for first-time test takers in each subject tested.

legis: A string variable identifying the legislation that first authorized the HSEE.

These variables were derived from a variety of primary source materials, including public records, legal archival resources, newspaper reports, and communications with officials in state education agencies (see Warren and Kulick (2007) for more details). In order to make these materials available to future users, we created a separate linked data file that (1) provides a full bibliographic reference for each piece of source material; (2) gives the three-digit unique identifier that is associated with it; and (3) provides the name of the file that houses the actual document. The unique identifier 001, for example, is associated with a report published by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development in 2004, entitled "High School Exit Exam Information." According to the link, this report can be found in a PDF named 'ak04a_akdeed.pdf'.

In the main data file, variables with the prefix "i_" identify the source material that was used to fill in a value for a given cell. The variable named i_admin, for instance, lists the unique identifier for the pieces of source material that were used to determine the grade level to which different HSEEs are aligned.

i name: Identifier variable for name.

i align: Identifier variable for align.

i_diff: Identifier variable for diff.

i admin: Identifier variable for admin.

i subj: Identifier variable for subj.

i_pass: Identifier variable for pass.

i legis: Identifier variable for legis.

Variables in the linked data file

ref: A string variable giving the full bibliographic reference for the source material.

id: A numeric variable giving the unique identifier for the bibliographic reference.

state: A two-letter abbreviation identifying the state.

file: A string variable giving the file name for the source material.

Coding

Because most of the variables are strings, there were few coding decisions involved in the creation of the main data file. The only exception is the variable indicating the difficulty of the HSEE (e.g., diff), which distinguishes between "minimum competency" tests and "more difficult" examinations. If any component of the HSEE assessed curricular materials that are typically introduced during or following the ninth grade, we categorized the exam into the latter category. All other state HSEEs were classified as minimum competency. A similar two-tiered coding approach was used in Warren et al. (2006), Warren et al. (2008), and Dee and Jacob (2007).

Source documents

As noted above, each piece of source material is contained within a separate PDF. The prefix of the PDF identifies the state and year in which the document was produced, and the suffix identifies the organization and/or author. A ll of the PDFs are archived within the file named "doc32661-all.pdf" or Source Material.

References

Dee, Thomas S. and Brian Jacob. 2007. "Do High School Exit Exams Influence Educational Attainment or Labor Market Performance?" In *Standards-Based Reform and the Poverty Gap*, edited by A. Gamoran. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

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Publications that have used these data (in alphabetical order)

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