

An NCES number is a unique twelve-digit identifier code assigned to a school when it opens. The first two digits identify the state, the next five the local education agency, and the final five identify the school.

The NCES identifier will change under circumstances such as school mergers, dramatic grade span changes, or if the authorizing district (LEA) of the charter school changes. According to the [National Education Center of Education Statistics](#) (NCES), “NCES IDs are assigned to districts and schools indefinitely, making them useful for analyzing data over time.”

For NPE’s charter school closure report, we used the seven-digit code. For the analysis of charter closure numbers in the GAO report, we used the 12-digit code.

The NCES code does not change if a charter school becomes a public school as long as the charter’s LEA is the district. If, however, a charter closes voluntarily or involuntarily, and a new board and operator reopens it, generally the number changes.

You can read an example [here](#).

Based on the 2019 CSP dataset status coding, the Department considers charters that become public schools as “closed.” We agree. If a Starbucks closes and a Dunkin Donuts moves into the location, we would not ignore that closure because the building is still occupied by a coffee shop.

We also believe the surrendering of a charter when a different operator takes over and a new NCES number is assigned is a closure. We also saw examples of the CSP marking schools as closed under these circumstances.

We analyzed the differences between the seven and twelve-digit codes for identifying charter closures and found the differences to be small. While there may be some error in our reports of status, given the magnitude of the difference between our numbers and the GAO we do not believe that error resulting from the use of the NCES number will result in significant change.