Data Entry Standards

What are data entry standards?

- Data entry standards refer to the consistency with which data are entered into a database.

Why do we need these?

- If data are entered into a database in different ways, it will make it more difficult to generate reports. Data might get "lost" or be unaccounted for.
    - For example, consider the name: *Long Beach High School*. This could be entered into the "school" field as:
        - ✓ Long Beach High School
        - ✓ Long Beach High
        - ✓ Long Beach HS
        - ✓ LBHS
    - Each of these entries for the *same school* would be represented as *four different schools* by the database.
    - If you needed to report on how many teachers from Long Beach High School attended a particular training, you would need to be sure you were counting each way the school was entered.
    - What happens if you are not aware of all the different ways this school has been entered?
        - ✓ Data might not get counted!

What can we do to ensure our data are entered in a standardized format?

- First, where drop-down menus are available, have one person enter the options ahead of time, in one consistent manner.
- Create reference documents, or "cheat sheets" for all those who will be entering data into the system, or are responsible for the reporting of numbers.
    - This document should list all schools, districts, organizations, training topics, etc., that you, as a site, deal with.
    - List these items in the manner in which they are expected to be entered into the database.
    - Only enter items as they are shown on your reference document.
    - Pre-load drop-down menus (where available) with the standardized names. Instruct all data entry personnel to choose from the drop-down menu rather than type their own "version" into a field.
    - ***Train*** ALL data entry personnel on the importance of data entry standards, as well as the use of your site's approved reference documents.
    - Keep data entry personnel to a minimum, if possible.
    - Even if only one person is responsible for all the data entry, this person should still create a reference document for others to use in his/her absence.