



Show Me the DATA

State Report Cards Must Answer Questions and Inform Action

Everyone deserves to know how their public schools are doing. This information helps people make important decisions, like parents choosing a school for their child or policymakers allocating funds to ensure that all kids have a great education. States are required by federal law to create annual report cards for the public with key data about how their students and schools are doing.

Can people easily find and understand these report cards?

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) decided to find out. In summer 2016 we took the following steps:

- Reviewed **51** report cards (all 50 states and the District of Columbia) to see what information states include on students throughout the state, how they display it, and whether they make it accessible and understandable to a broad public audience.
- Spent nearly **100** hours doing basic Internet searches and exploring state websites.
- Looked for more than **60** data points to better understand what information states share and how.

The answer is **NO**.

States are not communicating effectively with the public.

Clunky formats, obscure terms, and missing data prevent people from understanding the full picture of education in their state. We know that communities want more information at their fingertips to help them put test scores in context and make better decisions, and states should strive to meet these needs.

Finding and interpreting state report cards is confusing and frustrating.

Information was often scattered across complicated data spreadsheets and multiple websites, making it difficult to find and understand. Titles and descriptions were packed with jargon, obscuring what the data was actually showing. For example, across all states, report cards used more than five different terms to describe children from low-income families.

Information is hard to find and often outdated.



After 15 years, **only 4** state report cards **have all of the student performance information** initially required under the federal **No Child Left Behind law**.



10 states' most **recent state assessment data** is from the **2012-13** or **2013-14** school year.



19 states require **three or more clicks** from search engine results **to reach the state report card**.



45 states produce report cards in **English only** (and **provide no resources to have them translated** into other languages).

States do not provide some of the information that families and communities care about most.

Number of state report cards in which we could not find data for:



7

Teacher quality (And of the states that do include teacher quality information, only half provide comparisons between high- and low-income schools.)



36

Percentage of students who **enroll in two- and four-year college programs**



23

An additional measure of school quality beyond test scores (like school safety or chronic absence rate)



38

Student growth measures (learning progress from year to year)



51

Financial data transparency, including by funding source

States are silent on the performance of whole groups of students.

Number of state report cards in which we could not find data for:



13

Gender



23

Migrant status



6

Race and ethnicity



7

Students with disabilities



7

Low income



6

English language learners

This lack of transparency breeds mistrust between families and the education system serving their children.

State leaders have a significant opportunity under the federal [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) to chart a new course and create report cards that actually meet communities' information needs. All state leaders, not just the state education agency, are responsible for creating a clear picture of how schools are performing. Leaders (including governors, legislators, school board members, and state school chiefs) have not just a legal obligation but a moral imperative to provide useful information to their communities to help all students succeed.