

# Data Works FOR STUDENTS



Baseline  
Goal: 57%  
Spring Data:  
3-5 Math Pro  
Baseline: 51%  
Goal: 53%  
Spring Data: 60%  
3-5 Math Pro  
Baseline: 51%  
Goal: 53%  
Spring Data: 60%



**Leadership • Culture • Engagement • Systems**



# Delivering on the **POWER OF DATA**

When equipped with the right skills and tools, everyone who plays a role in education can have a strong impact on students and their communities. **Parents** can be their child's champion along the path to success. **Teachers** can be sure that their students are really learning what they are teaching. **Principals and district administrators** can use data to manage schools, allocate resources, and communicate with their communities. **Policymakers** can create the conditions for success in states and throughout the country. Education data are a powerful tool, but only if they are securely in the hands of the people who need the data, when they need the data.

To deliver on the power of data to support student success, state and local policies must foster strong **leadership**, a supportive **culture** for improvement throughout the school and community, family and community **engagement** throughout the learning process, and **systems** that provide useful tools for district staff and parents. These four aspects of effective education data use have had a dramatic impact on students in schools across the nation.



# Effective Data Use IN ACTION

## LEAD

The leaders of Virginia's **GOOCHLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS** have developed a culture that is founded in balanced, complete data and ensures that every student's learning is a priority. They created a vision for their schools, in collaboration with their teachers, administrators, and families, that addresses the needs of the school community.

"Most strategic plans talk about the Standards of Learning or the summative federally required tests we give at the end of the year, but what our families told us was that they didn't care about that," said Superintendent James F. Lane. "They wanted to make sure that they knew, and we knew, that their children were making a year's worth of progress. They wanted to make sure the kids were excited about school, that teachers were happy teaching in the classroom, that our schools were recognized when they were successful."



"Our strategic plan is more than something that was accomplished and then put away. It's really something that drives every decision that we make, from the budget, to programming, to day-to-day operations."

*James F. Lane, Superintendent,  
Goochland County Public Schools*

The district prioritizes individual growth over traditional achievement scores, allowing students to take ownership of the progress they make and ensuring that parents have a clear roadmap for their child's growth, both past and future. Instead of relying on only a single standardized test score, Goochland uses multiple assessments and continuous reflection so that

teachers are better equipped to individualize instruction for students. The district seeks feedback on school climate and parent engagement from students and families to help ensure that it continues to adapt to the needs of the school community.

# SUPPORT

In 2010, **TACOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS** in Washington was facing an unacceptable graduation rate of 55 percent. Every high school within its borders had been declared a dropout factory, and the community felt voiceless.

When developing a culture of data use within a school district, the support of stakeholders is crucial. Parents and the community must see the effort as a friendly tool to support ongoing improvement paired with accountability processes that connect relevant data to measurable goals and outcomes.

In 2012, Superintendent Carla Santorno and her team put in place a plan of action that would forever change the face and legacy of public education in Tacoma. Superintendent Santorno and her team created a “safe space” for community members to dig into less than perfect results and data at open school board meetings. Santorno and her team then re-evaluated the existing plan for the district and identified data-driven goals for student academic success, safety, early learning, and community partnerships.

The district was able to set and work toward these goals because it had the information it needed to measure progress. Since then, Tacoma Public Schools has seen increases in student achievement, partnerships, and community support—the community has a voice again, and students are on track for success. Graduation rates have climbed for four consecutive years and are up 23 percent since 2010. Additionally, participation in college-level courses has increased more than 20 percent in two years, and more than 90 percent of 11th and 12th graders take the PSAT and SAT college entrance exams.

“If you get [teachers] invested in getting their own data, in getting their own results to them in a time that can change their instruction, then you’ve gone a long way toward getting them to use it in an exemplary way.”

*Carla Santorno, Superintendent,  
Tacoma Public Schools*



# USE SYSTEMS



“It takes one unit of effort to build a technical tool and three to four times that amount to build your users.”

*Andrew Statz, Executive Director of Accountability,  
Madison Metropolitan School District*



# ENGAGE

Five years ago leaders in Virginia's **HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS** realized that they were not meeting the needs of all of their students. While school achievement and graduation rates



were notable in the aggregate, students with disabilities had higher disciplinary rates and lower graduation rates than their peers.

Under the leadership of Superintendent Patrick Kinlaw, Henrico County Public Schools began providing parents of special education students with access to districtwide data, allowing them to compare school-

by-school performance across a wide range of data points. Through surveys specific to parents of students with disabilities, Henrico measures parent engagement and community buy-in and shares this information with teachers and administrators. The district has seen increases in the number of parents who feel informed about their child's progress.

Henrico's engagement strategy has been paired with an individualized instruction strategy, with the combined program resulting in the discipline of students with disabilities decreasing by 32 percent and graduation rates for students with disabilities increasing by 12 percent. Because leaders prioritized

"We've gotten requests from other localities who've come and looked at our page. Or our parents have sent them, 'look what this county does, they give me all of this information. I can look across 72 different schools, specifically at students with disabilities, and see how they're doing.' And this should be available everywhere . . ."

*Dr. Bondy Shay Gibson,  
former Deputy Superintendent for Instruction,  
Henrico County Public Schools*

using information to understand student needs, students with disabilities and their families now have access to clear and concise data to engage families as active partners in using data to understand student progress, ensuring that they are informed advocates in each student's education.

School districts that use data effectively work hard to ensure that data are useful and high quality and that data are available quickly enough to be relevant for timely and proactive decisionmaking. The **MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT (MMSD)** in Wisconsin worked intentionally to empower the people working closest with students with the tools to make the best possible decisions for them.

The district uses an early warning system as part of a school improvement plan to check in with regular school-based leadership team meetings on how students are doing and how to intervene in real time to help students who are falling off track. The district has used the data to shine light on areas where it was not meeting expectations and created targeted action plans to improve the student outcomes.

But systems are only as strong as the people using them. When it launched its school improvement plan, MMSD created training for its school-based leadership teams throughout the entire district and professional development for principals, which includes topics like how to better use the early warning system data. After one year of using data as a tool to support students who needed extra help, reading growth among third graders improved by 7 percentage points and among fifth graders by 11 percentage points. In the next year, the district plans to expand access to this information to increase family and community engagement with the data, in hopes to empower even more active participants in the education community.

# See More Successful Strategies for **EFFECTIVE DATA USE**

When students, parents, educators, and policymakers have the right information to make decisions, students achieve their best. State and local data policies can ensure that everyone working for students is set up for success.

For more on the successful strategies these districts are using to implement effective education data use to support students, visit [dataqualitycampaign.org/success-stories/data-flashlight-awards](https://dataqualitycampaign.org/success-stories/data-flashlight-awards).



The **Data Quality Campaign** is a national, nonprofit organization leading the effort to bring every part of the education community together to empower educators, parents, and policymakers with quality information to make decisions that ensure students achieve their best. For more information, go to [www.dataqualitycampaign.org](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org) and follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@EdDataCampaign).

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