

Don't Make Decisions in the Dark

Superintendents and Principals Need Quality Public Information That Informs Decisions, Empowers Action



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As a district superintendent or school principal, you need to be able to access and use high-quality data to make good decisions. Often these data are collected and stored locally, but information that is publicly reported by the state can provide additional value. State agencies are uniquely positioned to provide comparisons across schools and districts that can be used to improve instruction. Additionally, only the state can develop analytics using student data over multiple years and across sectors.

Every state is required by the federal government to make certain information about public schools and districts available to the public—including student achievement, accountability, and teacher quality.* When this publicly reported information is useful, trustworthy, timely, and easy to find, you can use it to make informed decisions that better support student learning.

The Power of Quality Public Reporting

Although public reporting in a few states is designed to serve your information needs, most states' efforts are geared toward compliance with state and federal laws. Consequently, most publicly reported information goes unseen, unused, or underused.

However, when publicly reported information is useful, trustworthy, timely, and easy to find, you have the tools required to take the following actions:

Understand student performance in context.

Comparable data across the state allow you to compare your school or district's performance with other schools and districts in the state, putting your own performance in context. These data can be used in coordination with locally collected data to provide a more comprehensive representation of student learning and achievement.

Advocate for the needs of your school and district.

Publicly reported information allows you to show where programs are working and where they need continued support and to identify challenges to be addressed.

Effectively allocate scarce resources.

When you have access to robust, comparable data, you can use that information to identify areas of need and consider equity across student subgroups, schools, and the district when making decisions about teacher allocations, funding, academic and nonacademic program availability, and more.

Empower others to be informed participants.

You can use publicly reported information to help parents be more engaged with their child's school. By communicating with parents and the public about school and district successes and challenges, you can promote and support informed public debate, community engagement, and bottom-up accountability.



Publicly reported information is focused on schools and districts and does not include any personally identifiable information that can be used to identify individual students.

*In addition, a state that receives Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility must report college-going and college-credit-accumulation rates. See *State and Local Report Cards Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended* for more information: www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/state_local_report_card_guidance_2-08-2013.pdf.

Key Questions You Could Answer with Quality Public Reporting

When states publicly report information in a way that is understandable and useful, you can more easily answer critical questions such as the following:

Are teachers in my schools and district effective at improving student learning?

Are resources being allocated equitably based on school and district needs according to student enrollment and characteristics?

Are students overall mastering content standards at the rate necessary to prepare them for success? Are results comparable among groups of students?

"In the digital age we live in, data resources are more important now than ever. Our communities deserve nothing short of successful models of quality education for our students. Accurate data are critical in building these models." —AASA President David Pennington, Superintendent of Ponca City (OK) Schools

What You Can Do

If you want better information there are a few ways to galvanize support. While the state education agency is responsible for publicly reporting information about public schools and districts across the state, you also can take actions locally, including the following:

- ✓ **Determine the questions you want answered** by publicly reported information and communicate that information to the state.
- ✓ **Find out from parents what questions they want answered** by publicly reported information and serve as their spokesperson to the state. Ask the following: Does the information help parents make decisions regarding their child's education and encourage parent involvement in their child's school?
- ✓ **Show parents how to easily access and understand publicly reported information** provided by the state. Ask the following:
 - ⇒ Can parents easily find publicly reported data on state education websites?
 - ⇒ Is the information easy to understand and clearly labeled?
- ✓ **Advocate to local school board members about the need** for quality publicly reported information to compare school performances, illustrate school achievements, and inform local decisions.
- ✓ **Ensure that data** collected at the school or district level **are accurate, trustworthy, and safeguarded.**

When publicly reported information is useful, trustworthy, timely, and easy to find, you will be able to use this information to inform your decisions and take action to improve student learning.

To see the Data Quality Campaign's full suite of public reporting materials, including the full primer, the infographic summary, the federal spotlight, and resources for parents and local school board members, go to www.dataqualitycampaign.org/PublicReporting.