



Equip your messengers

GET SMART ABOUT COMMUNICATING KEY TOPICS

Why Data Matters

Data is usually talked about only in the context of accountability and portrayed as something separate from day-to-day learning. That leaves parents, educators, and even state leaders with a limited, or even skewed, understanding of data’s value in education. Everyone who has a stake in education—especially families and educators—needs the right data in the right format at the right time to serve our students along their unique journeys.

Include the value of data when you talk about your state or district’s education goals. By proactively talking about data as just one part of what success looks like, you can demonstrate how it is actually being used by people and change its perception from blunt instrument to instrumental tool.

To get started, keep in mind:

- Data does not exist in a vacuum. It’s essential to meeting education goals.
- Behind every data point is a student—talk about people, not systems.
- Data is more than test scores. It is a whole host of information that creates a fuller picture of student and school performance.



Talking about the Value of Data

These messages will help convey the value of data to meeting your state or district’s education goals. Each place has a specific context, so add detail about your own state/district efforts.

We have ambitious goals for the students in our state/district, and we need information to make sure we’re meeting them.

We want to be sure we’re using our resources wisely and getting every student ready for life after high school.

TIP Reinforce your state’s education and workforce goals.

People empowered with information can better support student success.

Data in the hands of parents and teachers helps them identify where kids are excelling and where they may be falling off track.

TIP Remind people about something specific your state/district is doing to get useful data to teachers and parents.

We need information to know what is—and isn’t—working for all of our students.

Information helps personalize learning for individual students, and it shines a light on inequalities affecting whole populations of students. We need data to ensure that we’re meeting all of our students’ needs.

TIP Talk about specific state/district strengths, and don’t be afraid to also talk about where data has illuminated weaknesses that must be addressed.

When it comes to helping students succeed, data is just the beginning of the conversation.

Data alone does not drive decisions. It is most powerful when teachers and parents have information that helps them answer their questions and take action.

TIP Highlight real examples of teachers and school leaders in your state who have used data as the jumping-off point to make changes that support student learning.

Student privacy is always a priority.

Using students’ information and keeping it safe go hand in hand—we take our responsibility to protect students’ information seriously.

TIP Your commitment to safeguarding students’ information should be a key part of talking about data. Don’t let people wonder about what you are doing to keep student data safe.