Using Data to Meet ESSA Goals

INTRODUCTION

Education data matters. As states work to share better information with parents, students, teachers, and communities, how education data is collected, accessed, shared, displayed, and kept safe matters more than ever. Passage of the federal education law—the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—in 2015 shifted control of education back to states, while requiring them to provide better data to parents and the public about how the state, schools, and their students are performing academically. Access to and effective use of data is front and center in the ESSA plans of each state—and it is now up to states to move beyond compliance as they implement these plans and share the data they have promised with stakeholders in their communities.

Unless state leaders—heads of state education agencies, members of state boards of education, governors, and legislators—keep a relentless focus on using data to improve outcomes for students, states will struggle to meet the goals laid out in ESSA. These state leaders play a key role in ensuring that state and local priorities are implemented, using their public voices to promote the value of education data, and being transparent about successes and challenges. By clearly stating their priorities and making information easy to find and use, state leaders can ensure that parents and educators have the information they need to promote student learning.

The Data Quality Campaign's Four Policy Priorities to Make Data Work for Students provide an important framework to organize action that supports student achievement. To ensure that people have the information they need to answer questions and take action, states must

Measure What Matters. Be clear about what students must achieve and have the data to ensure that all students are on track to succeed.

Make Data Use Possible. Provide teachers and leaders the flexibility, training, and support they need to answer their questions and take action.

Be Transparent and Earn Trust. Ensure that every community understands how its schools and students are doing, why data is valuable, and how it is protected and used.

Guarantee Access and Protect Privacy. Provide teachers and parents timely information on their students and make sure it is kept safe.

Now is the time to act. On the following pages we take a look at how states are making progress toward the goal of sharing better information, examine best practices and barriers to success, and identify areas stakeholders should keep watching to ensure that states are using data to support student achievement.

Measure What Matters

Data is not about checking a box. The information required in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will not support improved student success if it is viewed only as a compliance exercise. States have an opportunity not only to collect and share better data but also to think through how to use that data to ensure better outcomes for students. To meet this goal, states plan to collect, link, and share meaningful information that tells a more holistic story of student and school progress. States are increasingly focused on collecting and sharing data that provides meaningful information to everyone involved in children's education and helps them do better for students.

Parents and teachers want data that reflects a broader picture of student achievement.

▸ **91 percent** of parents are interested in receiving information about their child's social-emotional learning.

▸ **95 percent** of teachers use a combination of academic data (test scores, graduation rates, etc.) and nonacademic data (attendance, classroom behavior, etc.) to help them understand their students' performance.

While some states have taken steps to give parents and teachers the information that they want, ESSA requires every state to take action to ensure that all families have a more complete picture of student outcomes.

▸ In 2017, **28 states** reported a measure of student growth on school report cards. Measures showing student progress over time add context to proficiency data by shining a light on schools that are moving student learning farther, faster.

▸ That same year, **22 states** provided context for high school graduation rates by reporting postsecondary enrollment on state report cards. This total is five more states than DQC found in a previous analysis.

▸ In their ESSA plans, **32 states** committed to including more than just accountability indicators on their state report cards, which will provide a more complete picture of school and student performance.

To ensure that all families have a more complete picture of student outcomes, states must commit to a sustainable vision for how data comes together across sectors to give parents answers to their questions.

▸ States can look to leaders such as Kentucky, Maryland, and Washington to see how to develop high-quality, sustainable cross-agency data governance bodies that prioritize critical questions and ensure that they can answer those questions.

▸ In 2018, only three states—**Colorado, Indiana,** and **Tennessee**—passed laws to ensure that educators and policymakers have the data they need to serve the unique needs of students in foster care and students experiencing homelessness, who are highly mobile and often served by different state agencies.

LEARN MORE

▸ *Roadmap for K–12 and Workforce Data Linkages*

▸ *Roadmap for Foster Care and K–12 Data Linkages*

▸ *Roadmap for K–12 and Postsecondary Data Linkages*

▸ *What Parents and Teachers Think About Education Data*

▸ *Roadmap for Cross-Agency Data Governance*

TAKE ACTION: The robust indicators that teachers and families demand are not possible without quality data linkages and data governance structures. Make sure your state links and governs key data systems so it can Measure What Matters.

TIME TO ACT

2018

Make Data Use Possible

State leaders must facilitate local data use. Through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states have made commitments to turn around and continuously improve schools, and meeting those commitments is not possible without data. As more states and districts embrace a culture of continuous improvement, leaders must ensure that the right conditions are in place for data to be used in service of student learning; otherwise, ESSA goals cannot be met. States have made progress, but policymakers must do more to directly support local leaders' data use and to ensure that teachers have the time and training they need to use data effectively in the classroom.

Teachers want data—but barriers persist.

▸ **86 percent** of teachers think that using data is part of being an effective teacher.

▸ **34 percent** of teachers report that there is so much data that they cannot determine what is most important, and **57 percent** share that they do not have time in the school day to access and use data.

Teachers expect school and district leaders to take action, so helping build local capacity is critical for states.

▸ **46 percent** of teachers say that principals are most responsible for ensuring that they have the proper amount of time to use data effectively to inform their teaching practice, closely followed by **44 percent** of teachers who feel it is a responsibility of district leadership.

States are stepping up to support data use by those closest to students.

▸ In their ESSA plans, **49 states** committed to providing districts and/or schools training or other assistance that supports the use and analysis of data to inform improvement.

▸ States introduced **24 bills** in 2018 to provide educators or school leaders with training on data privacy (12 bills), data use (11 bills), or both (one bill)—but the only law passed addresses data use for a specific program, rather than as a core teaching skill.

49 states have committed to providing training on data use and analysis

▸ In 2018, **10 states** passed laws that require the state to provide or report new data to school districts.

LEARN MORE

▸ *Administrator Data Literacy Fosters Student Success*

▸ *Teacher Data Literacy: It's About Time*

▸ *Mr. Maya's Data-Rich Year*

▸ *Ms. Bullen's Data-Rich Year*

TAKE ACTION: Without time, training, and support, teachers cannot use data to foster learning. Ensure that educators in your state have the data literacy skills they need to effectively use data to support student achievement.

dataqualitycampaign.org/timetoact18

Be Transparent & Earn Trust

State report cards can and should communicate state education priorities. States must use their report cards to communicate with families and communities—transparently sharing information about student academic progress and school quality. But as report cards include better information, states must be intentional about ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of these resources and how they can be used to promote student success.

While many parents already use information about school quality, some parents have difficulty locating it— or are not aware that such information exists.

▸ **58 percent** of parents indicate that they have looked at school and/or district report cards in the past 12 months. Of those that did not

- **40 percent** say they were not aware that the resources existed.

- **32 percent** say they did not know where to find the report cards.

58% of parents have looked at district/school report cards in the past year

40% of those that did not look at the report cards did not know they existed

When parents can find the information, it is often difficult to understand.

▸ In 2017, only **nine states** translated their report cards into languages other than English, and many school report cards were still written at a grade 15 (some college) reading level. Parents and community members cannot use information they have trouble understanding.

States can and must do better. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has pushed states toward this goal, and many are using the opportunity to improve how and what they share.

▸ In their ESSA plans, **19 states** described efforts to redesign their school report cards to be more accessible to the public.

▸ About one-third—**94 out of 300**—of the bills tracked in 2018 focused on updating public reports, including but not limited to state report cards.

LEARN MORE

▸ *Show Me the Data 2017: States Can Improve Report Cards This Year*

▸ *Scavenger Hunt: Does Your State's Report Card Answer Your Questions?*

TAKE ACTION: State report cards must provide important information for communities. Take stock of your state's report card to ensure that parents can find it, understand it, and use it to support their children and schools.

Guarantee Access & Protect Privacy

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) does not require data access, but states will not meet their goals unless those closest to students have access to the data they need. States are having robust conversations about protecting students' information—but a lot of work remains to be done to get student-level data in the hands of teachers and parents. While access for teachers seems to be improving, parents are critical partners who also need their child's data.

Teachers want and need student-level data but do not yet have the data that is most valuable.

▸ The vast majority of teachers **(91 percent)** report that they could make needed changes in their instruction and another **91 percent** say they could identify students who are not on track to be successful if they had access to longitudinal data about students' attendance history, classroom behavior, courses taken, and grades.

93%
of parents report that they need data such as grades and test scores to support their child

▸ But teachers report that the information that is most useful is not available in a one-stop, easy-to-use tool that facilitates efficient and effective data use. For instance, **27 percent** of teachers report having access to milestone progress; **49 percent** of teachers report having access to student growth, a measure included in accountability systems in all but two states.

To make data work for students, parents must also have access to their child's data.

▸ Most teachers **(86 percent)** say that data helps them communicate with parents about their child's performance, yet **75 percent** of teachers say that they want their school to do a better job getting parents information about their child's progress in school.

▸ Parents overwhelmingly **(93 percent)** report that they need data such as grades and test scores to support their child, and **94 percent** of parents report wanting a blend of academic (test scores, graduation rates) and nonacademic (school safety, class size) information to determine school quality. **Fifty-two percent** of those parents say they weigh academic and nonacademic information equally when they look at school quality.

LEARN MORE

▸ *What Parents and Teachers Think About Education Data*

▸ *Education Data Legislation Review: 2018 State Activity*

TAKE ACTION: Educators, schools, and districts cannot do it alone—states must take action to increase access. Explore state examples of pairing access with privacy guardrails to keep students' information secure.