Supporting Students While Learning at Home

Individual Student Data and the COVID-19 Crisis

Recovering from the COVID-19 crisis will take coordinated action across multiple critical issue areas from policymakers, elected officials, researchers, advocates, and other education leaders. To support these efforts, the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) has compiled a series of resources on key issue areas states must address as they map their paths forward. Leaders can refer to these resources to learn why these issues matter to their education goals, how to prioritize actions now and down the line, and where to find additional guidance.

Why Does Using Data to Support Individual Students Matter Right Now?

School closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have left educators and families with the responsibility of rapidly learning how to support students while they are at home. This fundamental shift in the way most students receive instruction makes it critical for educators and families to be able to use data to meet students where they are and tailor instruction to their needs. While access to information on individual students is always important, teachers and parents who are supporting students at home need data to understand questions such as the following:

- Where is my student right now academically?
- What resources and materials does my student need to meet their learning needs?
- What has my student learned while at home?
- What is my student academically prepared for in the fall, whether schools re-open and students return in person or they begin the school year remotely?

As parents, teachers, and others involved in supporting students look to the next school year, they must have resources that enable them to tailor interventions to individual students, whether students are learning in the classroom, online, or some combination of both. State leaders can help by giving those closest to students the tools and training to understand how to best leverage their time and resources to give students exactly what they need.

What Actions Do States Need to Take to Support Student Learning and Recovery Efforts?

Supporting individual student data use will require states and districts to enable access to the right information and the right tools—and to ensure that educators and parents have the skills to use them. In the short term, state leaders should support data literacy training and make timely and actionable data available to educators and parents. In the longer term, state leaders should address their state’s data access needs, create professional development that supports ongoing data use, and take steps to build integrated data systems that link data across sectors.
**Near-Term Priorities**

- **Prioritize access to student data.** Parents and teachers are taking on unprecedented responsibilities due to the transition to online learning. For this reason it is essential that they have access to easy-to-understand and actionable data to support student learning at home. Right now, states should use their resources and support districts to improve data access by taking the following steps:
  - Ensure that districts turn on parent portals in existing data systems to give families access to student data at home, and provide user guides for how to interpret the information.
  - Get timely data into existing tools for teachers and school leaders to access during online instruction.

- **Tailor professional development to data needs during online learning.** States should move quickly to deploy training for teachers on using data to support online instruction. In DQC’s latest teacher poll, 46 percent of teachers reported that they did not receive training on assessing student learning remotely either before or during school shutdowns. More than three-quarters of those teachers said that they would have found such training helpful and would like to have it in the future. Providing data literacy training is crucial during online learning so teachers are confident about using data to tailor instruction for each of their students. Training should be designed to address teachers’ current data needs, such as assessing student learning at home and tracking student progress toward academic standards.

**Long-Term Considerations**

- **Address the unmet data access needs of parents and educators.** States and districts can take steps to improve or create secure data tools. These tools take time to develop, but they help connect schools to families and center conversations on individual student success. States should take steps now to identify needed improvements in data access so that people have the information they need to support students regardless of where students receive their instruction. This action may look different in each state and might include the following steps:
  - Review existing tools to ensure that the information included is helpful and understandable to parents and educators.
  - Support districts in building learner profiles to get timely and actionable data to educators, parents, and students.
  - Review existing data privacy and security practices to make sure that they are strong and transparent.

- **Embed data literacy into ongoing professional development.**
  Data literacy training is not just a short-term strategy to address immediate learning needs created by the pandemic; it should be a consistent aspect of professional development as educators continue to support student success, whether through online learning or in traditional school settings. States must ensure the following:
  - Teacher preparation programs fully integrate data literacy training into coursework so all teachers are ready on day one to support student learning with data.
  - Teacher training prepares educators to use data specifically for online learning.

- **Improve data access for everyone who plays a role in supporting individual students.** Students rely on academic and other supports from individuals beyond parents and teachers, such as afterschool providers, health care providers, and counselors. When all of these people have access to individual student data, students get the support that they need to succeed. States and districts should invest in tools that enable data to follow students (e.g., student data backpacks) so that it is readily accessible to everyone who plays a role in their education. States can support this work by encouraging interoperability strategies to support the flow of priority data within and among schools and platforms. This flow could include creating or adopting a common data language and creating processes for data collection and sharing that allow data to move quickly between platforms so it can be used in a timely manner to meet students’ diverse needs.

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1 Online survey conducted within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of DQC: April 27–May 8, 2020, among 750 full-time teachers in the United States, all of whom were currently employed teaching grades K–12.
Resources

States can refer to the resources below for clear, actionable information related to data use to support individual students.

**Roadmap for Educator Licensure Policy Addressing Data Literacy** is a resource from DQC that lays out 10 key data literacy skills, including the ability to use data to tailor instruction to individual students, that states can prioritize in teacher education programs.

“**Data Literacy 101,**” from DQC, includes roadmaps, infographics, and examples of what it looks like when teachers and administrators have the tools and skills they need to access and use student data safely and effectively to determine how to best support students.

**Advancing Personalized Learning through Effective Use and Protection of Student Data,** by the National Association of State Boards of Education, details how state and local education leaders can safely engage with various tools and digital platforms to use data to meet parents and students where they are.

“**Measuring for Learning,**” a resource from the US Department of Education’s Office of Education Technology, details the numerous ways technology can transform assessments, as well as how teachers can use this data to improve their instruction.

**Beyond One Classroom: Parental Support for Technology and Data Use in Schools,** from the Future of Privacy Forum, details how school leaders can create trusting environments and engage with parents as partners in data use.

The Data Quality Campaign is a nonprofit policy and advocacy organization leading the effort to bring every part of the education community together to empower educators, families, and policymakers with quality information to make decisions that ensure that students excel. For more information, go to [www.dataqualitycampaign.org](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org) and follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com) (@EdDataCampaign).