

# Disconnects in Perceptions of Data Use Threaten Recovery.

## STATE LEADERS MUST ACT NOW.

State leaders are grappling with generation-defining challenges as they work to fully understand and address the impact of the pandemic on students and communities. As leaders turn their attention to the upcoming school year, data continues to be a critical tool for informing recovery efforts. State and local leaders will need to work together and use data to tackle pressing issues, which include:



### Understanding and responding to disrupted post-high school pathways.

Faced with concerns about their health and safety and the reality of an uncertain economy after graduation, students are reimagining their post-high school paths and the credentials they need to achieve their goals. Students and their families are examining their choices for four-year college degrees and other credentials that many industries value, such as technical certifications and apprenticeships. As parents and students grapple with what this new reality means for their futures, state leaders are working to understand the changing composition of their state's workforce and the evolving needs of the key industries in their state. Everyone from students to governors needs access to robust and timely information about pathways to inform choices and ensure that individuals and systems get back on track.



### Measuring and mitigating unprecedented levels of unfinished learning.

Despite the best efforts of teachers and schools, far too many students lost valuable learning time over the last year. Students who were on grade level in September 2020 might need to make up months of unfinished learning, while other students face much larger gaps. Teachers and school leaders are working to figure out how to measure (through assessments and other online learning data) and address unfinished learning at this scale. And state leaders need good data to make decisions quickly about how best to allocate resources so that schools have what they need to get students back on track.



### Enrolling and re-engaging students.

Students and families juggled many challenges and competing priorities this year. Barriers like unreliable internet access or lack of devices made remote learning difficult or impossible for many students while other students disengaged for financial or other personal reasons. And districts have simply lost track of many students. To identify and re-engage these students, school and district leaders will have to dig into enrollment, attendance, and engagement data to understand which students they lost last year and how to re-engage them this fall.

**Decisionmakers at all levels, from state policymakers to parents, must have access to data and use it to effectively address these and other challenges. However, the Data Quality Campaign's (DQC) 2021 public opinion polling uncovered considerable disconnects that inhibit efforts to use data to address the current moment and beyond.**

The disconnects uncovered in DQC's 2021 polling include:

- Principals and teachers have opposing perceptions of teachers' capacity to use data, making it unlikely that teachers will get the level of support they need to use data most effectively in the classroom.
- Parents support state assessments and value the information generated by them (e.g., student growth). However, principals trust locally designed assessments more, creating a potential barrier to parents getting the data they need.
- Parents and principals can't find the data they need to answer their emerging questions about students' post-high school transitions.

- State report cards continue to lack data that will keep parents and families informed. Parents and principals want disaggregated data and think state leaders are responsible for publicly reporting that information.

If state leaders do not address these disconnects now so that leaders at all levels can make decisions grounded in evidence, the challenges will not only persist but also worsen. How can teachers use data effectively to help them re-engage students if they don't have the time or training that they need? How will leaders have an accurate understanding of the pandemic's disparate impact on students without transparent, disaggregated data? These types of disconnects pose significant barriers to an effective, equitable recovery.

Conducted by The Harris Poll, DQC's sixth poll of parents and first poll of principals uncovered these disconnects in perceptions about data—disconnects that must be addressed. Following is more information about the poll findings to help state leaders better understand these disconnects and the concrete actions they should take to address them.

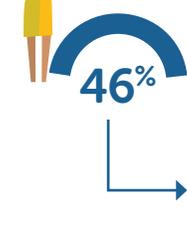
## Most principals think teachers have the capacity to use data to support students, but teachers disagree. As educators work to address unfinished learning, teachers need the right supports to effectively use data.



of **principals** feel confident that their teachers and staff have the capacity and skills to use data to support the academic needs of students in the coming school year. But teachers have consistently reported lacking the time and training they need to use data effectively. [DQC's 2020 teacher poll](#) found that:



of **teachers** do not feel that their principals ensure that they have the time they need to use data effectively.



did not receive trainings or resources about how to assess student learning and progress during spring 2020 school closures.

of those teachers would like that kind of support in the future.

### Action Steps

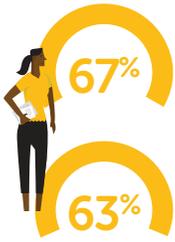
Students have experienced unprecedented interruptions in their learning over the last year and a half, and they need teachers who can effectively identify and meet their unique learning needs. Teachers need not only the right data but also the right conditions to use that data effectively. State leaders must:

- ✔ **Work with districts to make teacher data use a more seamless part of the school day.** Too often teachers have to dip into personal time to apply student data to their lesson plans and teaching practices. Teachers need dedicated time to use data during the school day and support from their administrators to prioritize data use throughout the school year.
- ✔ **Support the development of data literacy skills in educator preparation programs.** Teachers have many demands on their time and shouldn't be left on their own to develop their data literacy skills. Teachers should begin developing these skills during their initial teacher training so that they enter the classroom with a strong foundation and feel confident in their ability to use data effectively from day one.

### Resources

- 📖 [Parent and Teacher Opinions of Education Data](#)
- 📖 [Data Literacy 101](#)

Parents support state assessments and value the information that comes from them. However, principals trust locally designed assessments more, creating a potential barrier to parents getting the data they need.



of **parents** said that student growth data is helpful information to have about student learning over the past year.

said they want to know which academic standards their children are struggling to master.

In addition to valuing the data that comes from state assessments, parents also support the tests themselves.



of **parents** trust that state assessment results accurately reflect their child's knowledge.

said in [DQC's 2020 parent poll](#) that they were supportive of resuming the administration of state assessments in 2021 to better understand how well schools and students are meeting academic standards.

But principals are out of step with parents when it comes to how they view state assessments:



of **principals** said that assessments designed by their teachers provide a more accurate picture of academic performance than annual state assessments.

### Action Steps

Parents and principals need data from state assessments, like student growth data, to fully understand and address the impact of the pandemic on students' learning. This data is most valuable when based on state assessments because the assessments are already required, aligned with state standards, and comparable across schools and districts. But a disconnect between principals' and parents' trust in these tests could threaten the quality, availability, and use of this critical information. State leaders must make sure that decisionmakers at all levels not only have access to the data they need about student learning but also trust that information and feel confident using it to make decisions. To do this, state leaders must:

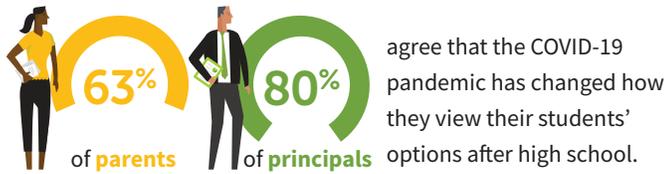
- ✔ **Make data about student progress transparent and available to the public.** In the absence of 2019–20 assessment data, states should measure and report skip-year growth. In this approach, states would use assessment data from the 2019 and 2021 annual assessments, and the resulting growth data will capture student progress over the 2019–20 and 2020–21 academic years combined. The data can then be compared to previous two-year bands (e.g., growth from 2017–18 and 2018–19 combined) to help leaders understand change over time.
- ✔ **Get assessment data back to local leaders, educators, and families in a timely and easy-to-use manner.**
  - Give local leaders and educators timely access to assessment data so they can effectively use it to make decisions. One of the major barriers to using assessment data is that decisionmakers don't get it until well into the next school year, when it's too late to be useful. Making sure people have the data as early as possible and in formats that help them use and understand it will support more informed instructional and resource decisions and reinforce the value of the data. State leaders can look to Massachusetts, [which is providing districts with early access to 2021 state assessment data](#). State leaders also created new tools to help district leaders analyze and understand the data.
  - Make sure state assessment data is shared with parents in a format they can find, use, and understand. This work includes translating test score reports, making sure the data is presented in context so parents understand what the data means for their child, and including action steps so parents know what to do with the data to support their students.

### Resources

- 📄 [Measuring Growth in 2021: What State Leaders Need to Know](#)
- 📄 [Response From Civil Rights, Social Justice, Disability Rights, Immigration Policy, Business, and Education Organizations to the U.S. Department of Education's Updated Guidance on Key ESSA Provisions in 2020–21](#)
- 📄 [The Consumer's Guide to Data](#)

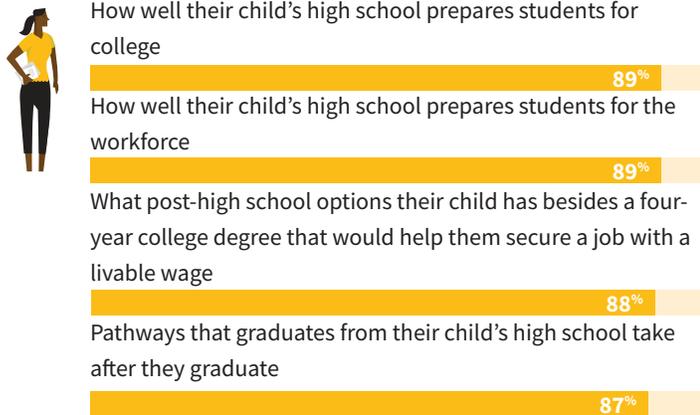
**COVID-19 has changed how parents and principals think about their students' post-high school options, but they can't find all of the data they need to answer their questions. It is essential that parents and principals have easy access to the right data so they can support students through the recovery.**

An uncertain economy means changes to education and career pathways.

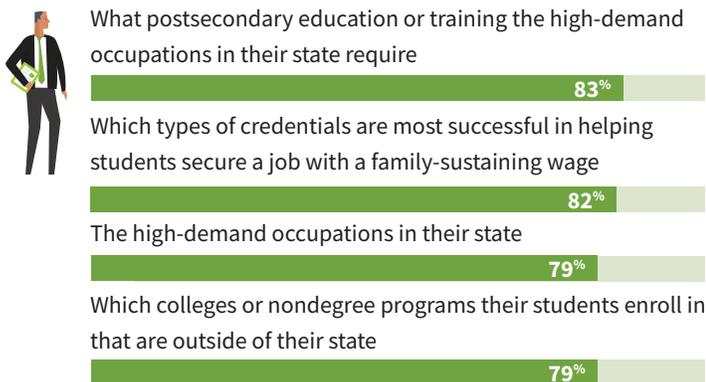


Parents and principals want new and different data to support students as they navigate their post-high school transitions. Most parents and principals agree that the following types of information would be valuable to have:

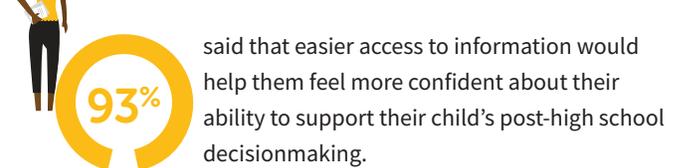
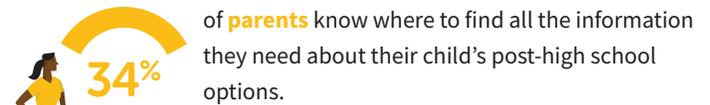
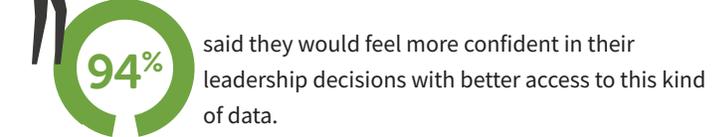
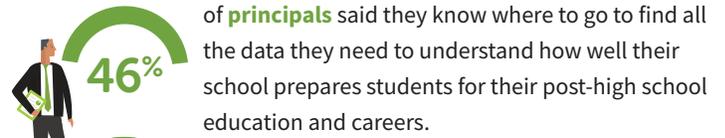
**Parents**



**Principals**



But few principals and parents know where to go to find this information:



## Action Steps

Currently, state data systems are not designed to meet this moment of recovery. State leaders must deliver the information that parents and principals need to support students' post high-school decisionmaking. To do this, state leaders must prioritize investment in their systems and people to:

- ✔ **Make sure the state's technical infrastructure can accommodate the increasingly complex information needs of leaders and stakeholders.** Leaders must ensure that the linkages between K–12, postsecondary, and workforce data systems are high quality, and they must invest in modernizing systems to meet current demands. The result should be that stakeholders at all levels have access to the tools and analytics that enable better decisionmaking. State leaders should take advantage of [federal funds](#), including new money from the American Rescue Plan Act, to make needed investments in their data systems and support related data activities.

- ✔ **Promote cross-agency collaboration.** This year, Maryland introduced the [Student Horizon Database and Scorecard \(Students Right to Know Act of 2021\)](#), and leaders in [Arizona](#), [Kansas](#), and [Missouri](#) introduced similar bills aimed at supporting high school students with information during their transition from K–12 to postsecondary opportunities. All four bills include directives to state agencies to work together to collect and report the data that students and families need to successfully navigate their post-high school transition.

## Resources

- 📖 [How Data Can Support Student Success from Early Learning to Workforce](#)
- 📖 [Roadmap for Cross-Agency Data Governance](#)
- 📖 [Clear Career Pathways Require Connected Data](#)
- 📖 [Grace's Path to Success](#)

As parents and principals struggle to find data about post-high school pathways, they should be able to turn to their state report cards for answers, but they can't.



of **parents** get information about their students' post-high school options from school leaders (e.g., counselors, principals, teachers).

Principals look to multiple sources of data, including state report cards and other state-provided data tools, to understand how well their school is preparing graduates and inform the conversations they have with parents.

But as parents look to principals and principals look to report cards, too few states included robust information about post-high school pathways [on their latest report card](#):

- 📖 Only **14 states** reported postsecondary enrollment in two-year institutions.
- 🚩 Only **five states** reported military enlistment.
- ✂️ Only **five states** reported workforce participation.

## Action Steps

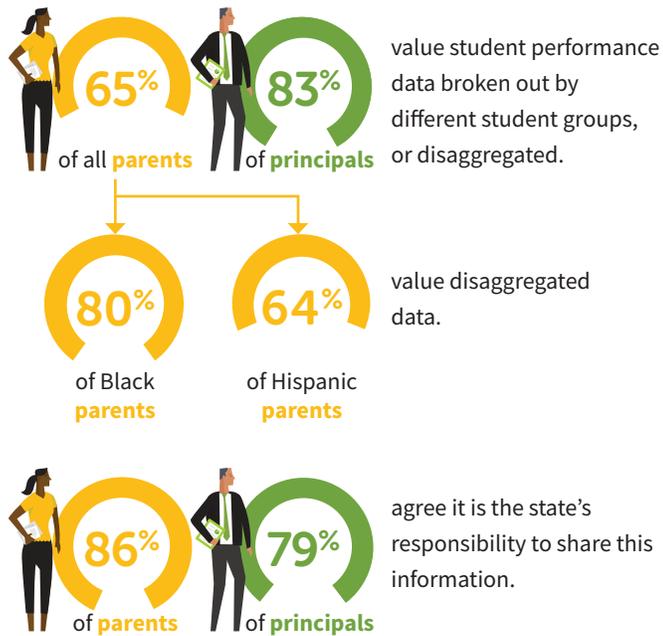
Report cards are a state's best and most public tool for communicating information about school quality and learning opportunities. However, report cards still don't have the variety of information or level of detail that parents and principals demand. Many state leaders continue to view them as compliance documents, missing critical opportunities to support local leaders and families by providing the data they want and need. To address this need, state leaders must:

- ✔ **Ensure that the data families and local leaders most want, like post-high school outcomes and pathways, is easy to find and use** on their state's report card. Leaders can look to [Kentucky's report card](#) for one example of how to do this.

## Resources

- 📖 [Show Me the Data 2021](#)
- 📖 [Making Sense of Credentials: A State Roadmap and Action Guide for Transparency](#) from Credential Engine

Parents and principals value student performance data broken out by different student groups (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status). Every state must include this information on their report cards, but most still don't.



But [according to DQC's 2021 review of state report cards](#), **19 states** still do not report graduation rates for each federally required group of students. Absent student assessment data, graduation rate was the only comparable, disaggregated indicator that all states could report this year.

This challenge is persistent for states. DQC's [2020 review of state report cards](#), the most recent year that state assessment results were available, found that **26 states** were still missing at least one required student group in their displays of disaggregated student achievement data.

## Action Steps

Data disaggregated by different student groups is the only way that leaders and communities can understand whether schools are effectively serving the needs of all students. State leaders have a responsibility to make sure that data is collected and shared in ways that are easy to find, understand, and use. Leaders must:

- ✔ **Include disaggregated data for all federally required student groups** on state report cards and consider including additional student groups that reflect the unique demographics of the state.
- ✔ **Use asset framing and person-first language** to ensure that the data has appropriate context and does not perpetuate destructive narratives about specific groups of students.
- ✔ **Provide context** to help users understand what the data means and how they can use it to support students and schools.

## Resources

- 📄 [Show Me the Data 2021](#)
- 📄 [Disaggregated Data: Not Just a Box Checking Exercise](#)
- 📄 [Why It Matters to Look at Students' Assets, Instead of Focusing on Deficits](#)
- 📄 [The Consumer's Guide to Data](#)

## About the Polls

**Principal methodology:** This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the Data Quality Campaign from May 5 to May 11, 2021, among 504 full-time principals and administrators in the United States, all of whom were currently employed teaching grades K-12.

**Parent methodology:** The surveys were conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the Data Quality Campaign from April 29 to May 5, 2021, among 1,514 parents of children ages 5-17 whose children attend school.