

Families Deserve Meaningful Access to Data

When families have access to data about education and workforce pathways, they will be empowered with the tools they need to support their child through the transition from high school into whatever comes next.

High school students have a lot of big questions to answer as they make decisions that affect their journeys through high school and into their next step: Am I on track for graduation? What are the in-demand careers in my area? What further education, training, or credentials do I need for my desired career? What institutions provide that education or training? What are my financial aid options? The list goes on.

Right now, students and their families are struggling to find answers to these questions because information is hard for families to find, use, and understand. Without meaningful access to data, parents and caregivers are left to help their children make big decisions based on a hodgepodge of information. Access to data will help

93 percent of parents

said that easier access to information would help them feel more confident about their ability to support their child's post-high school decisionmaking.*



families understand the complex web of options available to their child after high school, help their child make informed decisions about what path makes the most sense, and support their child to take steps forward on their child's chosen journey into college or a career.

Meaningful access to data is possible, but it will require change.

Most states have a powerful tool that *could* answer families' questions but doesn't yet. For decades, states have invested in statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs) that connect individual-level data over time from early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce data systems. But right now, even in states that do have information about education and career pathways that could help families answer their questions, that data is often hard to find, static, outdated, or presented in a way that is not meaningful to the average data user.

The Data Quality Campaign's (DQC) [new vision](#) provides a roadmap for state leaders to transform SLDSs so that they enable the kinds of access to information that families need to make decisions about education and workforce options.

What is an SLDS?

Statewide: Connects information from multiple state agencies, including at least early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce data systems.

Individual level: Includes data that is specific to individual people (may contain identifiable information or be anonymous).

Longitudinal: Captures data from the same population over multiple years.

*Source: Data Quality Campaign, *Disconnects in Perceptions of Data Use Threaten Recovery, States Must Act Now.*, August 2021, <https://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/disconnects-in-perceptions-of-data-use>.

Changing SLDSs so that they enable access to data will help families support their child to:

- Use information about course taking, careers, and school options to begin planning for their future early in high school;
- Chart their course into high-quality careers using data about needed skills, job options, and available training programs;
- Access data about admissions requirements, outcomes, and financial aid eligibility to identify college programs and apply for admission; and
- Use data to understand the availability of benefits and other services that will simplify and support the transition between high school and college.

Changing SLDSs so that they provide access to data will mean parents and caregivers can also:

- Hold their governments accountable for college and career outcomes through clear information about how well different groups of students fare;
- Understand how schools in their community help students transition from K–12 into college and career; and
- Ensure that all members of their community can navigate the patchwork of education and career preparation programs available to them.

Families have an urgent need for tailored access to information to support their child as they make decisions about their futures.

More robust SLDSs will provide families access to data and tools to help them understand their child's options after high school, help their child make informed decisions about the future, and support their child to move forward on their chosen path into college or a career.

Data Checklist

Families should have access to data that is:

- ✓ Specific to questions that families are trying to answer;
- ✓ Timely;
- ✓ Easy to use;
- ✓ Translated into languages other than English;
- ✓ Secure; and
- ✓ Collected over multiple years.

For more on DQC's new vision that provides state leaders with a roadmap to make meaningful access to data a reality for families, visit www.dataqualitycampaign.org/data-access.