DQC 20 YEARS

Two Decades, One Mission

Celebrating 20 Years of the Data Quality Campaign's Impact

OUR MISSION

We advocate to change the role of data to ensure that data works for everyone navigating their education and workforce journeys.

OUR VALUES

- **People deserve data.** Everyone should have the data they need to answer questions and take action to support student success.

- **We do nothing alone.** We believe that together we can move further faster.

- **No ivory-tower thinking.** We listen and apply what we learn to our work.

- **We are realistic visionaries.** We stay grounded in what is happening now in states, districts, schools, and classrooms, while always looking ahead.

- **We practice what we preach.** We urge people to use data, be transparent, and communicate— and we do the same.

OUR BIG IDEA

We envision a world in which data is used to drive systemic change, economic mobility, and student success. To make this vision a reality, families, educators, communities, and policymakers must have the information they need to foster successful journeys through education and the workforce.

"The orientation of the Data Quality Campaign team toward service to folks on the ground and real partnership with them is incredibly valuable and impactful."

—*Jen Alexander, Executive Director, PIE Network*

DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS,

As the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) celebrates our 20th anniversary, I've been reflecting on how far the conversation about data has come since 2005—and the heart, persistence, and partnership it took to get here.

Twenty years ago, I was on a data island at the New York City Department of Education. I, like so many other state and district data leaders, needed an organization like DQC that could provide a national picture of education data efforts and drive the field toward best practices. I know firsthand what it was like to go it alone, attempting to understand what happened to students after they left high school without the thought leadership and visionary guidance of an organization like DQC. Like many, I eagerly watched the growth of DQC in real time. And now, as the leader of DQC two decades later, I am proud to push our work forward knowing that no state, district, or advocate will need to go it alone again.

Leading DQC has consistently reaffirmed for me that change happens when we bring people together across sectors, perspectives, and priorities. DQC began with a bold idea: that people could and should be able to use high-quality K–12 data to make decisions. Since then, DQC has galvanized the field around the importance of access to longitudinal data across not just K–12 but the entire education and workforce spectrum. Together we have built a national community that sees data not as an information technology project but as a tool to illuminate possibilities and answer pressing questions about pathways through school and work. Every time I meet a state leader who can ask and answer questions about what works and for whom or a student who can access clear information about their education and career options, I'm reminded of why this work matters.

As we mark this milestone anniversary, I want to recognize the entire DQC team and Board of Directors—past and present—whose brilliance has built and sustained this organization. Behind the numbers in this report are a committed group of people who have helped move the needle toward data access, and together they've created a culture of curiosity, integrity, and purpose that continues to define who we are. In particular, I am grateful to DQC's founder, Aimee Rogstad Guidera, whose vision launched the movement that we continue to build upon today.

Looking ahead, the next chapters of DQC's story will be written in a rapidly changing world. And we're ready for the challenge. Across the past **two decades** and beyond, our **one mission** remains constant: to ensure that data works for people. Thank you for being part of this journey. Your collaboration, courage, and belief in what's possible have powered DQC's first 20 years. Together, we'll continue to push the field forward, answer the hard questions, and drive toward a reality in which data helps everyone see—and reach—their full potential.

With deep gratitude,

Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger
President and CEO
Data Quality Campaign

20 Years of DQC

In 2005, 10 advocacy and constituency organizations recognized the urgent need for a national, collaborative effort to advocate the use of high-quality data in education. These education and policy leaders launched the Data Quality Campaign (DQC), and two decades later, DQC has transformed the role of data in education. We provide thought leadership and guidance to state, federal, and local leaders as well as advocates, researchers, and practitioners; bring together actors from across the field to solve problems; and share what we've learned.

In the wake of the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), DQC championed state K–12 education data systems to help everyone better understand what was driving student outcomes. With success, people across the field wanted more—and DQC advocated the enhancement of state data ecosystems with data that allowed people to truly understand education and workforce pathways. Two decades later, DQC continues to drive the field toward one goal: **access to data should never again be a barrier to supporting individuals as they navigate their journeys through education into the workforce**.

DQC OVERVIEW

2005
YEAR FOUNDED

3 STRATEGIC PLANS to guide our work since 2010

1 VISION FOR DATA ACCESS

10 FOUNDING PARTNERS

Achieve, Inc. • Alliance for Excellent Education • Council of Chief State School Officers • The Education Trust • National Center for Educational Accountability • National Center for Higher Education Management Systems • National Governors Association Center for Best Practices • Schools Interoperability Framework Association • Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services • State Higher Education Executive Officers

4 POLICY AGENDAS
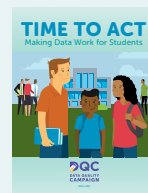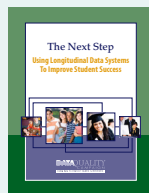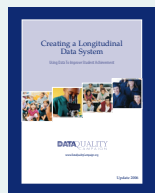
TEAM DQC

77 FULL-TIME STAFF MEMBERS
committed to DQC's mission since 2005

8.5 Years AVERAGE TENURE
of current senior leaders

29 DATA CHAMPIONS that have served on DQC's Board of Directors

17 members of the newly launched STATE DATA LEADERS NETWORK

50+ NATIONAL POLICY & ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
that DQC regularly partners with

DQC'S POLICY WORK

Worked with leaders and advocates in all **50** STATES, DC, & PUERTO RICO

Put boots on the ground in at least **22** STATES, DC, & PUERTO RICO

Produced **10** consecutive years of the *DATA FOR ACTION* STATE SURVEY

with a **98%** response rate

Tracked **2,616** STATE BILLS focused on education data since 2014

DEMONSTRATING THAT POLICY DRIVES DATA:

NEARLY EVERY STATE has passed legislation to improve data governance or transparency as identified and advocated by DQC for more than 20 years.

AT LEAST 48 STATES AND DC have codified student data privacy.

COMMS @ DQC

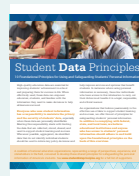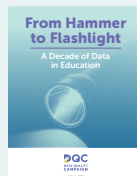**325+** RESOURCES RELEASED

4 LOGOS

DATA QUALITY CAMPAIGN
Using Data To Improve Student Achievement
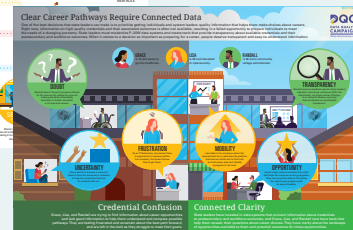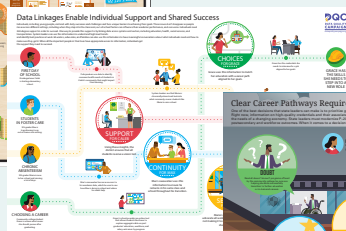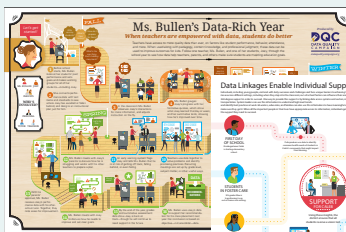www.DataQualityCampaign.org

DQC DATA QUALITY CAMPAIGN
Using Data to Improve Student Achievement

DQC DATA QUALITY CAMPAIGN

DQC Data Quality Campaign

30+ INFOGRAPHICS translating complex concepts into easily digestible images

350+ BLOG POSTS

MOST ACCESSED RESOURCE: *Growth Data Is Critical for Supporting Student Success*

Our Impact

Over the past two decades, DQC has evolved to push the field forward, supporting states to build, sustain, and use ever more actionable data ecosystems to drive systemic change, economic mobility, and student success while safeguarding individuals' privacy.

DQC has led the field and produced real results over time by helping state leaders answer four questions:

1. **Why does education and workforce data matter, and how should a state's data investments make a difference in people's lives?**
2. **How can states use their education and workforce data systems to generate actionable information?**
3. **What policies drive sustainable statewide data systems that provide value to leaders, learners, and communities?**
4. **How can state leaders engage the public around this critical asset and build trust in data?**

Our work on these big questions has not only changed state and federal policy but also reframed how the field thinks and talks about data—as a central tool and a necessary component of any effective initiative or reform. DQC's two decades of making data work for people are marked by three distinct phases in our work, bringing us from an organization setting the policy conversation about K–12 data systems to a keystone organization guiding and supporting conversations across both education and the workforce. Sitting at the intersection of policy, advocacy, research, and communications, we've had wins that no other organization could. The following sections highlight just some of the concrete, sustained wins DQC has had for students, families, educators, and the field at large over our 20 years.

DQC HAS CHANGED THE CONVERSATION.

We've changed how others talk about data.

- Coined phrases used by partners across the field, including "start with your questions," "hammer to flashlight," "data is a people issue, not an IT project," and "privacy is an obligation, not an obstacle."
- Pioneered infographics to translate complex technical concepts for public audiences—including tailoring them for states to use in their own work.
- Launched tools like the *Consumer's Guide to Data* and our signature communications workshop to support proactive, effective communications, no matter the policy context.

We've helped others use their voice.

- Worked with Parent Revolution and parents in Los Angeles to demand growth data in their local report cards.
- Worked with National PTA to help parents understand why data matters and what privacy safeguards they should expect.
- Worked alongside state advocates including Alabama's A+ Education Partnership, California's Education Trust-West, and Colorado Succeeds to shape data efforts in their states.
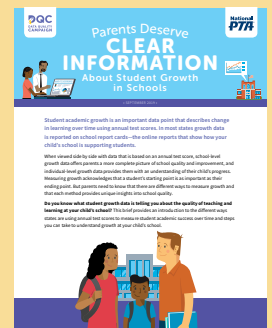
Bringing Data System Decisionmaking out of IT Departments and into the Hands of Leaders and Communities

We launched with a goal of helping state leaders understand the value of a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) and the data that makes these systems robust and useful. **DQC's 10 Essential Elements of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System** focused on the data needed to answer policymakers' key questions, recasting state data systems as reflections of governors' education priorities, values, and responsibilities.
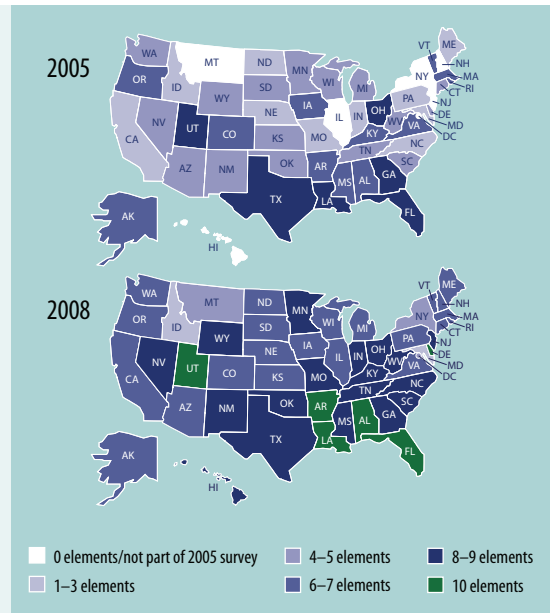
- To understand state progress, DQC **conducted an annual state survey** and released results that helped guide states on their path forward. For 10 years, all 50 states responded to our queries because they valued the agenda and the landscape that the results provided.

In 2005, no state had all 10 Essential Elements.

By 2008, six states had all 10 Elements, and 48 states had five or more Elements in place.

With the increase in the number of Elements in place, more states had the data to:

- Understand which schools produce the strongest academic growth for their students: **21 → 39 states**

- Understand what achievement levels in middle school indicate that a student is on track to succeed in rigorous courses in high school: **3 → 12 states**

- Calculate the percentage of high school graduates taking remedial courses in college: **8 → 27 states**

2005

2008

☐ 0 elements/not part of 2005 survey	▩ 4–5 elements	■ 8–9 elements
▨ 1–3 elements	▦ 6–7 elements	■ 10 elements

- In 2007, the federal America COMPETES Act codified 12 "Required Elements of a P–16 Education Data System" that aligned closely with DQC's 10 Essential Elements, essentially **elevating DQC's agenda to federal law**. The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act as well as subsequent cycles of the federal SLDS grant program required grantees to include these elements as well. The DQC agenda was now considered the baseline expectation to receive federal funding.

- DQC established and **spun off the Early Childhood Data Collaborative, PostsecData, and the Workforce Data Quality Campaign** to provide the early childhood, postsecondary, and workforce data sectors the targeted policy and advocacy supports that DQC had supplied to K–12 leaders.

> "Sustained funding for the state longitudinal data systems would not have been possible without DQC. DQC really changed the conversation about data, taking it from a conversation about an IT project to a conversation about an important policy tool."
>
> *—Jennifer Engle, Research Professor and Director of Policy and Strategy, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*

# Setting the Policy Agenda for How Data Should Work for People

With the introduction of our **10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use** in 2009, DQC laid out an ambitious agenda to push states to create policies that enable data use and generate actionable information for families, educators, and policymakers.

In 2011, no state had all 10 State Actions, and only four states had eight or nine Actions.

By our final survey in 2014, three states had all 10 Actions, and 17 states had eight or nine Actions.

With the increase in the number of Actions they had, more states had the data to:

- Share with educator preparation programs information about how teachers perform in the classroom: **6 → 22 states**

- Publish high school feedback reports with information on how a class of high school graduates fares after graduation: **12 → 41 states**
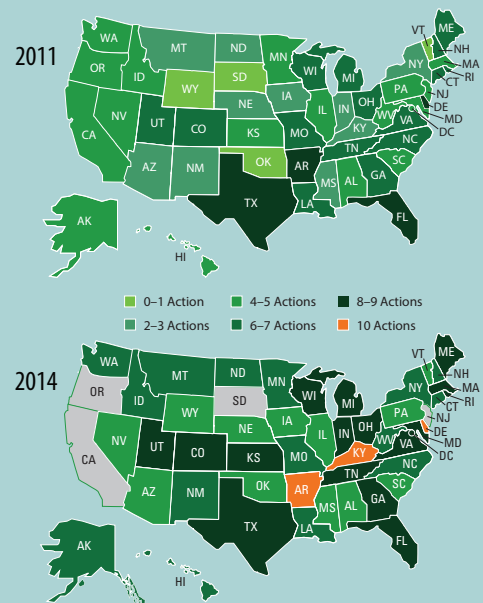
- DQC **helped state leaders see the value in investing in their data systems**. In 2009, eight states were budgeting state funds for their data systems. By 2014, this number had jumped to 41 states.

- Amid questions about data privacy and security, **DQC shared best practices, galvanized partners and privacy experts, and created resources to help states ensure that data remains a safe and trusted tool** to support student success. Between 2013 and 2019, every state introduced a bill to safeguard the privacy and security of education data, and 45 states enacted 128 student data privacy laws. The coalitions of privacy experts and advocates we created during this time continue to lead the field in confirming the value of data while ensuring privacy.

> **"When I think of one word to describe DQC, I'm going to use the word _credible_. There's a tremendous amount of expertise and experience in bringing folks to the table who know how to do this work."**
>
> —_Chris Woolard, Chief Integration Officer, Ohio Department of Education and Workforce_

Ensuring People Have Access to the Data They Need in the Ways They Need It

DQC knows that data work is ultimately about people. Our current policy agenda is built entirely around the unique data needs of leaders, educators, communities, and individuals—**formally pivoting in 2021 to go beyond K–12 to focus on P–20W** (early education, K–12, postsecondary, and the workforce). We have centered and elevated the voices of students, parents, educators, and local leaders in our research and advocacy, ensuring that everyone with a stake in education can be heard as a data champion. And with the partnership and buy-in of nearly 50 national research, policy, and advocacy partners, DQC galvanized the field around a vision for data access. Released in 2023, this vision guides our work and provides the field with a roadmap to demonstrate the real-world impact of state data systems that are designed to help individuals succeed from early childhood through K–12 and postsecondary and into the workforce.

While DQC's work is always driven by a clear theory of action, what makes our work effective is how we work. We know how to move policy priorities forward in ways that both anticipate and reflect the needs of the field. As a result, never before have this many people been able to understand and speak to the importance of data access. **Today, more policymakers than ever are empowered to enact policies that make data work for people and to implement these policies with vision and commitment.** The following is a peek into how we're doing that today.

Research: Understanding the Data Landscape

The power and credibility of DQC's advocacy results from a broad foundation of policy research. We listen to and learn from attempts to use data effectively, map the field's progress, and identify the best practices and conditions that support high-quality data work. Our unique research efforts guide our work and help the field and funders better understand how people think about and use data.
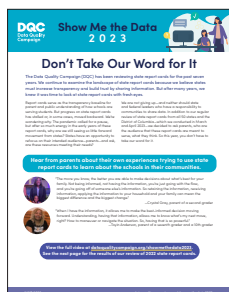
Show Me the Data, DQC's landscape analysis of state report cards across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, holds states accountable for providing a full picture of student success and school quality.
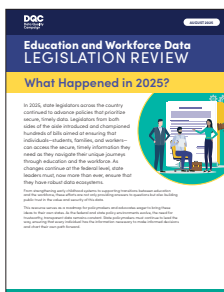
DQC has tracked **state legislative efforts** on education and workforce data since 2014. Our analyses of the state legislative landscape have helped legislators use their unique role to create and promote policies that support people's ability to access and use data.

Since 2014, our **public opinion research** with students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, higher education administrators, and early education program leaders has informed our resources and our recommendations to ensure that policies and practices serve people.

State Policy and Advocacy: Advising on Policy and Implementation

> **"DQC . . . has shown up for two decades so that all of us doing this work across the state are empowered, are supported, and have the information we need to be good advocates."**
>
> —*Christopher J. Nellum, Executive Director, EdTrust-West*

Today's most important education and workforce problems require breaking down silos—among both data and people—so people can securely share data and work together across early childhood, K–12, postsecondary, and the workforce. That is why DQC supports people to change policies, communication and engagement strategies, and practice.

DQC's state policy and advocacy work involves staying credible and relevant so state policymakers—including lawmakers, agency leaders, and governors' offices—and advocates reach out to us to get smart on how to answer their data questions and how policy can drive more robust data systems that meet today's needs. We answer when called while remaining *advocates;* we are here to celebrate the good and provide critical friendship when it's necessary.

To support advocacy efforts across the country, we:

- **Offer our expertise and support to local, state, and national advocates and leaders on policies and practices that help states implement data ecosystems that provide value for the people they serve.** In 2019, California leaders finally signaled their readiness to build a robust state data system. DQC was at the table, bringing lessons learned from leading states including Indiana, Kentucky, and Maryland as the state crafted its legislative and administrative approach to establish the nation's best state data ecosystem. California's 2021 legislation, which was grounded in national best practices, has since served as a model for many states, including Alabama, Colorado, and Rhode Island.

- **Help state policymakers ensure that their data systems reflect their state's priorities and goals.** DQC's role in distilling what works from known data leaders like Kentucky, Maryland, and Washington has resulted in states across the political spectrum passing and implementing laws on issues such as cross-agency data governance. Through these laws, states are ensuring that their data ecosystems enable access to and use of data that supports individuals, policymakers, and the public through education and workforce decisionmaking.

- **Build other organizations' capacity to compellingly communicate data's value, build trust, and create coalitions.** We've worked with advocacy partners and coalitions in states like Alabama, Colorado, and Ohio to build the capacity of advocates to be experts in their states, and as a result, we have deepened data advocacy across the country.
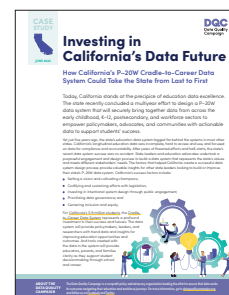
Convening and Collaborating: Bringing People Together

DQC acts as a hub, connecting spokes from across the field to work in collaboration to find solutions that benefit people. We create and support networks of partners with policy guidance, communications resources, recommendations, and best practices.

DQC's **Data Champions Collaborative** (DCC) regularly convenes more than 50 organizations from across education and the workforce to ensure that federal policy partners are aligned on key data issues, including support for SLDSs. DQC's vision for data access was developed collaboratively as part of this effort.

Together, DQC and the DCC partners:

- **Speak with a united voice** about the value of data and state data systems in federal forums, including efforts like joint comments to the Department of Labor highlighting states' need for greater clarity around the use of confidential unemployment insurance data and to the Department of Education suggesting revisions to the Institute of Education Sciences.

- **Inform federal agencies** about how their policies could better support and incentivize state and federal data systems, directly resulting in federal grant programs, guidance, and technical assistance that strengthen state data infrastructure, use, and capacity.

- **Provide policymakers and advocates with innovative solutions** that make federal data more accessible and actionable for state leaders. Most recently, DQC crafted recommendations, drafted a letter from 31 state chiefs to the Department of Defense (DoD), and provided technical assistance regarding the creation of a system that would enable states to access military enlistment data to better understand student pathways and outcomes. As of summer 2025, DoD had begun a pilot with three states.
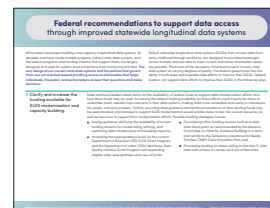
> ### "Because of DQC's efforts and the way that DQC brings together all of these partners, I really think there's greater understanding among state leaders that good data policies are key to meeting the real needs of constituents and the people that elected officials represent."

—Brooke DeRenzis, Chief Executive Officer, National Skills Coalition

The **State Data Leaders Network** is the only initiative bringing together state data leaders charged with modernizing their state's data ecosystem from early childhood through career. Launched in 2025 after an intensive needs assessment, each state leader that we approached to join the Network enthusiastically accepted the invitation. DQC is supporting 17 of these state leaders in the Network's inaugural year.
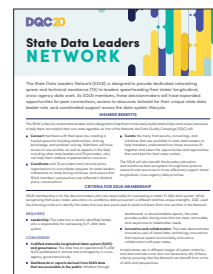
As host of the Network, DQC:

- **Connects** members with their peers by creating a trusted space for building relationships, sharing knowledge, and problem solving.

- **Coordinates** with technical assistance providers and national policy organizations to consolidate requests for state leaders, collaborate on state-facing initiatives, and ensure that members' perspectives are reflected in federal policy conversations.

- **Curates** the many frameworks, convenings, and initiatives that are available to state data leaders to help members understand how these resources fit together and select the opportunities and approaches that work best for their state context.

> ### "Data moves at the speed of trust. And one thing that DQC has done exceptionally well is to create a high-trust network among state data leaders. Regardless of whether we're coming from red states or blue states, whether we're new to this space or have been running data systems for many years, DQC has managed to create a high-trust environment, which is important for us being able to effectively learn from each other. . . . That's not easy to do."

—Mary Ann Bates, Executive Director, California Office of Cradle-to-Career Data

Communications: Supporting Organizations Working to Communicate about Data

DQC's leaders bring deep knowledge and expertise to our work, and our thought leadership reflects what we know: people won't use data they don't trust. Our commentary and resources help guide the field with an honest, credible voice and prepare organizations and leaders to communicate clearly, directly, and inclusively about data in ways that engage communities and open a dialogue to find solutions.
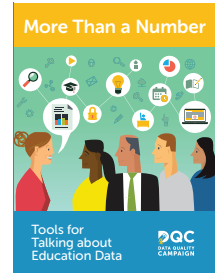
THE DQC DIFFERENCE: BUILDING CAPACITY IN COLORADO

Our impact is always best showcased when we tell the story of how it gets done—and Colorado is no exception. Over the past two years, the state has made significant progress in building a robust state data system, and DQC has had a front row seat for this work as a partner, supporting advocates and leaders in Colorado and building knowledge and capacity across the state. DQC's commitment to providing support soup to nuts helps ensure that state leaders and advocates can continue to make better data to drive decisionmaking a reality once policy wins lose their luster.

RESEARCH: DQC's policy research exploring the national data context and Colorado's unique ecosystem shaped how we engaged with Colorado state leaders and advocates in service of better data systems. Our in-depth assessment of Colorado's and other leading states' current data priorities and related challenges provided us with the clarity to work with Colorado state leaders on the high-impact data issues that mattered most to their communities. And DQC's recent landscape analyses of P–20W data system costs, state data legislation, researcher data access policies, and the public availability of school performance data elevated concrete best practices to guide Colorado leaders' thinking and approaches.

STATE POLICY AND ADVOCACY: In 2024, Colorado legislatively established the state's SLDS and introduced a leadership-level governing board, setting the stage for robust cross-agency data governance and greater transparency in education-to-workforce data. DQC provided expertise, guidance, and best practice support as state advocacy organizations led by Colorado Succeeds formed the Better Data for Better Decisions coalition to advocate for the establishment of the SLDS and cross-agency data governance. Working as thought partners, we supported advocates who deeply understood their own state's context, and we were tapped as trusted advisors to help make needed policy change happen.

CONVENING AND COLLABORATING: Colorado Succeeds and the Better Data for Better Decisions coalition are now focusing their efforts on ensuring that the newly established SLDS is implemented effectively. DQC has been supporting this effort by providing implementation guidance and ongoing policy expertise, including in-person facilitation of some governing board meetings. As part of DQC's State Data Leaders Network, the state's data leader receives real-time support from DQC staff and peer leaders from across the Network.

COMMUNICATIONS: Throughout this process, DQC has shared with advocates and state leaders alike what we know about communicating about data. DQC shared communications guidance with advocates; provided Colorado Succeeds with resources to help advance its coalition efforts, including a video demonstrating how Colorado's SLDS can be a powerful tool for advancing education and workforce data efforts; and presented nationwide best practices to the state's SLDS working group to serve as a foundation as they develop and brand their data system.

Looking Ahead . . .

TO THE NEXT 20 YEARS AND BEYOND

We're proud of the progress we've made—but we know the job of making data work for people isn't finished. DQC's work has endured and grown over the past two decades because our strategies are durable and blend our expertise with the nimbleness necessary to respond to current needs. Our line in the sand has not changed: we remain laser-focused on ensuring that people have access to the data they need to successfully navigate their education and workforce journeys and believe modernized SLDSs designed for access are how we get there. And we're not slowing down. Here's how we'll move the needle on data—and continue to pick up speed—in the years to come:

- **Directly supporting partners and leaders in states to pursue best practice data policy.** States are currently navigating a unique set of policy conditions that affect their ability to move the needle on data; the role of the federal government—long a source of comparable national data and investments in state data systems—is in flux. Additionally, 36 states will hold gubernatorial elections in 2026—many of them amid uncertain budget outlooks. Despite these challenges, a record number of states have passed robust cross-agency data governance laws and are making meaningful investments in education and workforce data systems, policy, and leadership. These investments have the potential to transform state data systems into a shared tool for secure data access and powerful action. But states have more work to do to ensure best practice data access—and DQC is uniquely poised to provide individualized, state-specific support to advocates and leaders alike.

- **Working with state leaders to support the implementation of modernized data systems, policies, and public tools.** The P–20W data field is at a critical juncture. State data leaders need collaborative space to solve problems and more coordinated and curated supports to turn this momentum into results for families, educators, and policymakers. DQC is connecting, coordinating, and creating resources for the field in ways never done before.

- **Fully engaging the early childhood, postsecondary, and workforce sectors in states' data priorities and structures.** With states now building out robust systems across the P–20W pipeline, it's time for DQC to bring these siloed sectors back together in service of even more meaningful, aligned, and collaborative work.

- **Advancing federal policy that enables and moves state policy in positive ways.** DQC has always worked with federal policymakers in their efforts to create the conditions, supports, and incentives for effective state data policy. With federal leaders and policymakers rethinking their role in education and workforce development, DQC and its DCC will be more critical than ever.

- **Elevating the voice of data for and with new audiences.** DQC's impact has reached far beyond state and federal policymakers. For 20 years, our peer education and workforce organizations, researchers, the media, and funders have relied on DQC to understand the value of data, how to put data to work for learners, and how to unlock the power of data to tell stories and bring people together. DQC will continue to be the voice of data and to support states to make data work for people. For us, this means working across the field to answer pressing questions and find solutions rooted in best practice.

But we can't do this work alone. As always, DQC will rely on trusted partners to help us answer the following questions— and to map out the right path forward together.

What is the future of **state policy and advocacy**? What are the different strategies state policymakers can employ to make data work for people, and what resources—people, time, momentum, and political will—are needed to make that change happen?

What is the future of data policy **implementation**? What state policies, connections, and investments support the implementation of data systems that work for people?

What is the future of **federal advocacy**? How can federal policies and programs support a broader and more modernized P–20W data ecosystem across states?

What is the future of data policy **research**? How can research center the experiences of students and other data users to best inform state data policy?
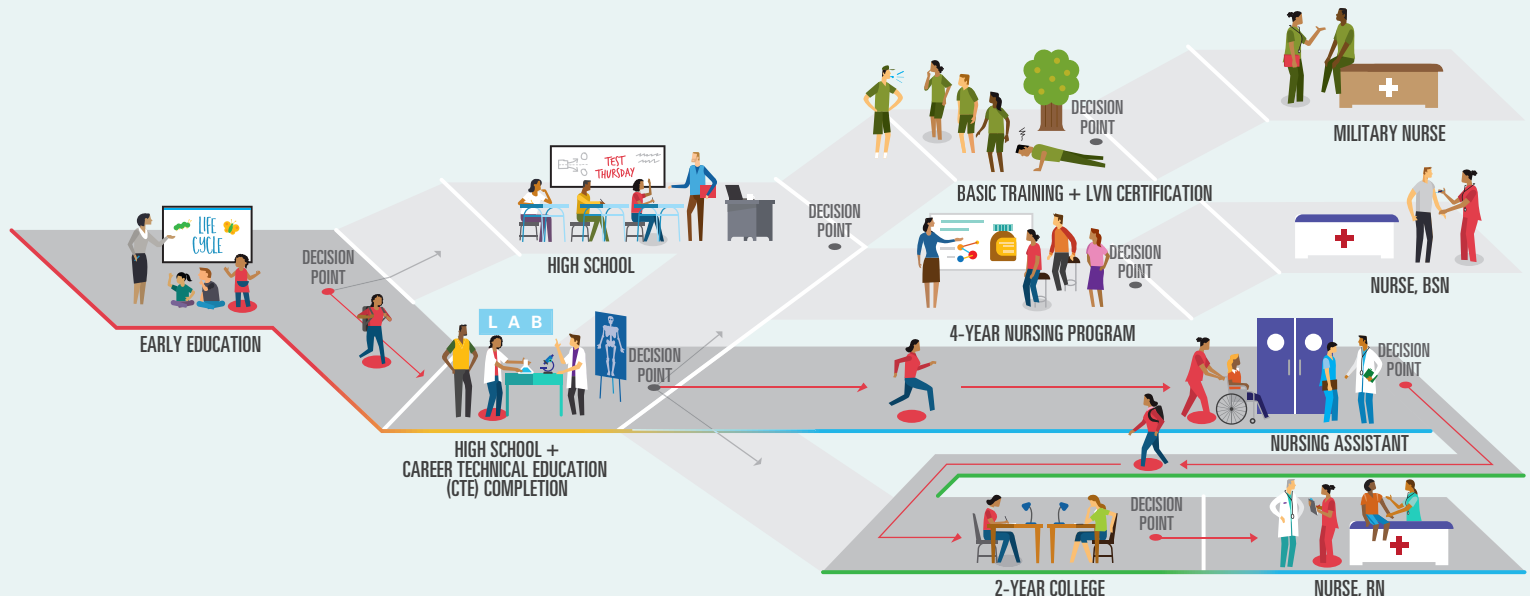
What is the future of data **communications**? What does supporting advocates in every state to build trust and their own capacity to communicate about data look like?

Won't you join us?

Meet Grace. Grace used data to choose her own pathway without making decisions in the dark. All learners and earners should be able to do the same.

EARLY EDUCATION

DECISION POINT

HIGH SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL + CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) COMPLETION

DECISION POINT

DECISION POINT

BASIC TRAINING + LVN CERTIFICATION

4-YEAR NURSING PROGRAM

DECISION POINT

MILITARY NURSE

NURSE, BSN

NURSING ASSISTANT

DECISION POINT

2-YEAR COLLEGE

DECISION POINT

NURSE, RN