

From Compliance to Service

Evolving the State Role To Support District Data Efforts To Improve Student Achievement

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As a result of state, national and federal leadership and political will, states have dramatically increased their capacity to collect robust longitudinal education data. However, without an equally ambitious effort to ensure access and build stakeholders' capacity to use data to increase student achievement, these infrastructure investments cannot be fully realized. Because districts are the agents that directly affect teaching and learning, states cannot succeed in this evolution in policy and practice unless they actively engage their districts. This engagement requires state education agencies to evolve from their traditional role of primarily ensuring compliance with state and federal laws to a new role as service providers that meet the diverse needs of all districts in the state.

No One Entity Can Succeed Alone: Why State and District Data Collaboration Is Critical

School districts are nearly always the entities on the front line responsible for implementing key data-intensive state policy initiatives such as school turnaround, teacher evaluation and effectiveness, and next-generation assessment systems. Many higher-capacity districts have created their own best-in-class data systems, benchmark assessments and data portals and are actively engaged with local educators in efforts to collaboratively analyze student progress and assess school and student performance. Yet for most districts, such efforts are beyond their resources and capacity. By working

together and partnering around their efforts to use data, states and districts can:

- ▷ Maximize data investments and reduce costs and burden;
- ▷ Ensure cross-district and cross-state comparability;
- ▷ Meet the needs of all stakeholders; and
- ▷ Equalize and enhance district capacity.

Four Guiding Principles for States

The task for states is clear: shift from compliance bodies to service providers that support the use of data and start recognizing that districts are the number one customer. Districts are not only data suppliers but also data consumers. Making this change to service provider will require an evolution of agency culture, a commitment to the projects by leadership

and a shift in expectations. For states, the job of building data systems will not yield the desired outcomes until data use by policymakers; researchers; state, district and school administrators; teachers; parents; and community stakeholders is the norm. To help realize this vision, states must prioritize these four guiding principles:



How Is Your State Supporting Local Data Use?

STATE ROLE	STATE RESPONSIBILITIES
Principle 1: Collaboratively identify district data capacity to inform state data efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proactively engage districts and other local entities to identify data capacity and inform the design of the state data system and related policies. ✓ Develop and disseminate data tools and supports in ways that encourage active use.
Principle 2: Transform data into actionable information and ensure district access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Build robust partnerships with external research and development organizations (universities, regional education laboratories and others) to develop research questions, conduct analysis and interpret findings from longitudinal data to inform data displays, reports and analytic tools. ✓ Develop data portals that are engaging and enable users to access data based on role, and customize displays so users are able to answer questions and address real-world problems. ✓ Align efforts with developers who are creating data applications for local districts.
Principle 3: Ensure data literacy among educators through preservice and in-service policies and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Collect the data on students and teachers necessary to implement and evaluate state policies, and link these data according to identified promising practices, including developing robust “teacher of record” definitions. ✓ Change certification and program approval policies to ensure that educators have proven competency in using data to inform instructional decisionmaking. ✓ Share teacher performance data annually and automatically with teacher preparation programs to use in their efforts to improve their programs. ✓ Provide or support high-quality professional development to develop data literacy among educators on how to analyze, assimilate and apply data in their everyday work.
Principle 4: Maximize efficiency and minimize burden in data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure transparency and clearly communicate data element definitions and collection timelines, providing sufficient time for districts to make changes. ✓ Integrate the underlying technology of state and district data and reporting systems so data can be more easily transferred electronically across each system. ✓ Focus data collection on the information needed to answer critical policy questions developed through broad-based input in the state.

States, districts and all education stakeholders have much to gain from working together to realize the potential of state and local data investments, and the time to act is now. The political will to use data to improve student achievement and system performance has never been greater, as is the critical need for states and districts to work together to meet this demand. When states follow these guiding principles to direct their data efforts, they can evolve beyond being compliance bodies to being service-providing entities to ensure that districts, regardless of capacity, have the support required to effectively use data to improve student achievement.

