

Using Data to Understand What Works

Research 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 Research Matter Right Now?

State and district leaders face many challenges heading into the next school year, leaving them to make tough decisions about what to prioritize and where to invest resources. Adapting the state's existing research agenda or investing in new research solutions can provide states with critical information that will enable them to spend responsibly and identify best practices in the current education landscape. Building an effective research infrastructure can be a long-term, multistep process, and states should begin the work to set that process in motion. Getting started now will ensure that state and district leaders take actions such as the following:

- developing research models to estimate the impacts of school closures on student learning to identify where resources will be needed the most
- building evidence about which intervention strategies are and are not working to make effective administrative and programmatic decisions for the school year ahead
- designing studies to understand how this crisis is affecting student pathways through education and into the workforce and what those findings mean for economic recovery

State and district budgets will be spread thin as a result of the pandemic, and actionable research provides state and district leaders with insights into the policies and programs that best serve their communities. As states and districts prepare for the year ahead, they must use the evidence available to them to continuously improve policies and programs so that they meet the needs of all students.



Spotlight: Texas

The Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC) is a partnership of Rice University and 11 Houston-area school districts serving more than 700,000

students combined. This partnership is putting research into action by supplying survey data to assist local government and nonprofits in identifying needs in communities and allocating resources appropriately. HERC has been able to document the impact of COVID-19 on employment, education (e.g., the digital divide), and physical and mental health for historically marginalized communities in real time. Initiatives like HERC can serve as models for states to use as they create or support similar programs in other districts or even build a statewide version of a research partnership.

Visit [HERC's Gulf Coast Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Community Impact Survey Data Dashboard](#) to learn more.



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

Building and maintaining a robust data infrastructure is the foundation for conducting useful research. In the short term, state leaders must prioritize investing in their data systems, quickly gathering information from the communities they serve, and mobilizing research partnerships to answer more complex questions. These priorities may mean that states need to consider new or temporary data collections that help answer questions about the results of the pandemic. Longer term, they should use their data governance body to manage their research agenda and modernize their cross-sector longitudinal data systems (e.g., P-20W, integrated data systems, data trusts) so they are equipped to build evidence and identify solutions that address present and future challenges.

Near-Term Priorities

- **Use recently allocated funding to make needed investments in data systems and rapid research.** When state budgets are tight, state leaders should maximize their use of federal supplemental investments to address their data priorities. Examples include the following:
 - States can use federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to improve data connections across sectors, build evidence related to interventions, and move forward with addressing questions that can be answered now. Funding from the CARES Act—allocated to K-12 and higher education as well as directly to governors—is flexible and can be used for data and research.
 - States that recently received a new round of [state longitudinal data system \(SLDS\) grants](#) should stay the course on projects they committed to in their applications that will improve data systems and increase their research capacity.
- **Take the necessary steps to mobilize research partnerships.** As states begin to deploy strategies to address the impacts of COVID-19, research partnerships can provide much-needed capacity to analyze what is and is not working. States should act now to get the most out of these partnerships. Examples include the following:
 - Ensure that memoranda of understanding or other data-sharing agreements necessary to engage with researchers and practitioners are in place and up to date.
 - Consult with research partners about planned interventions so they are designed in a way that enables state leaders to measure whether or not they are effective.
 - Work with researchers to survey parents, students, and educators from all backgrounds to identify pressing questions and challenges created by COVID-19, and use this information to guide additional research that informs policy and practice.

Long-Term Considerations

- **Strengthen data governance.** Data governance bodies are the best way to ensure that everyone involved with state data systems can come to the table to set priorities and identify who is responsible for implementing those priorities. States should use these bodies to design a research agenda that addresses the state's most important questions, to make recommendations for directing resources toward research, and to manage relationships with research partners who can analyze the data. Now is a good time to examine who has a seat—and a voice—in these decisionmaking bodies to ensure that they are representative of stakeholders who need data to answer questions and take action.
- **Modernize data systems.** States must continue the hard work of integrating data systems to enable states and their research partners to answer increasingly complex questions. In particular, connecting K-12 data systems with early childhood, postsecondary, and workforce data is critical for addressing long-term challenges related to education and economic recovery. States should keep an eye out for new sources of funding, including those that may not be explicitly for data. Pulling together small amounts of funding from multiple sources can be an effective way to maintain momentum on data system enhancements.





Resources

States can refer to the resources below for clear, actionable information related to building and using evidence.

Using the CARES Act to Strengthen Education Data Collection and Use

The CARES Act provides \$20.7 billion in emergency aid to address the impact of COVID-19 on the nation's education, research, and innovation. This funding can be used for a wide range of activities, including using data to support data systems such as report data collection, data system integration, and increased data system transparency. States can also consider using some of this federal funding to increase the quality of their data infrastructure.

IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND USE. CARES Act funding may be used for the collection, use, and data evaluation leading to and fully consistent with the parent's informed consent, and other educational and educational activities.

- The CARES Act requires that 1-2% of funding may be used to provide principals and other school leaders with resources to address the needs of their individual schools and to promote coordinated response and prevention.
- CARES Act funding may be used for teacher and data training consistent with the state's professional development program.
- Professional development and use of CARES Act funding for "any costs" associated with significant professional development for the state.

CONNECTIVE DATA SYSTEMS. CARES Act funding may be used to complete vital information effects to connect state agency data systems to provide comprehensive information about the program serving children and other students.

- The CARES Act grants parents access to the funding. The emergency funds are determined by the state educational agency to address issues regarding the CARES Act.
- Specific provisions of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant (SSAE), IDEA, Title IV-A, part A, and other provisions.

PROMOTE ACCESS TO DATA. CARES Act funding may be used to provide teachers, families, leaders, and other stakeholders with access to useful information through data dashboards and other data tools.

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- Specific provisions of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant (SSAE), IDEA, Title IV-A, part A, and other provisions.

CARES Act funding is available for states to use for these and other purposes. Also, state funding to the CARES Act, recently passed in the House and up for consideration in the Senate. If passed, it would provide further opportunities to expand education data, including through the use of the CARES Act funding to support data collection and use and based on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Additional data and technology investments, using funding from the Department of Education, may be used to support data systems and education to continue the significant impact of student learning loss caused by the pandemic, design the upcoming school year to meet student needs, and prepare students for college and the workforce.

Using the CARES Act to Strengthen Education Data Collection and Use is a

DQC fact sheet that details how states can and should consider using some of this federal funding to increase the capacity of their data infrastructure.

Roadmap for Effective Data Use and Research Partnerships between State Education Agencies and Education Researchers

Key Focus Areas for Using Research Partnerships to Improve Student Outcomes

Where are we going?

Research partnerships between state education agencies and education researchers have the potential to make a significant impact on student outcomes. By bringing research partnerships, education agencies, state policymakers, practitioners, and education researchers and other stakeholders together to work together to use research to improve the education program for all students. Without high-quality and trustworthy data, research, innovation, and improvement efforts are limited. This roadmap provides a guide to help states and education researchers work together to build a research partnership that is effective and sustainable.

- Use the best strategies and resources available to better understand what information was used for which decisions and which researchers.
- Identify education agencies and the population most in need of research to improve student outcomes.
- Understand the long-term effects of education policies and practices on student outcomes.
- Understand existing laws related to collection and policies affecting data.
- Develop a greater understanding of how researchers work.

Why form partnerships with education researchers?

Research partnerships between state education agencies and education researchers can lead to more effective and sustainable programs for all students. Research partnerships can lead to more effective and sustainable programs for all students. Research partnerships can lead to more effective and sustainable programs for all students.

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What is Research?

Research is the systematic and objective investigation of a topic or issue to gain a better understanding of it. Research is the systematic and objective investigation of a topic or issue to gain a better understanding of it. Research is the systematic and objective investigation of a topic or issue to gain a better understanding of it.

Roadmap for Effective Data Use and Research Partnerships between State Education Agencies and Education Researchers

is a resource from DQC that lays out eight focus areas for education leaders looking to build meaningful collaborations with research partners.

Research Partnerships Are Key to Improving Practice

States and districts face challenges around the collection, production, and use of research in education. And without research partnerships, most state and district leaders are left to make policy and practice change based on anecdotal rather than evidence. Stronger connections between researchers and practitioners, more meaningful and accessible circulation of relevant research to decisionmakers, and governance systems and processes that grant researchers appropriate access to data from state and district systems are all steps to ensure that research partnerships can provide states and districts with the evidence-based information they need to benefit students, to build research partnerships, and to improve student outcomes.

Research partnerships create space for researchers and education leaders to collaborate to address current needs, to gain a better understanding of the challenges they face, and to identify ways to address those challenges. Research partnerships can be used to address current needs, to gain a better understanding of the challenges they face, and to identify ways to address those challenges.

- provide technical support, information, and resources.
- strengthen data governance and building data capacity for emerging and emerging data.
- ensure data quality and privacy.
- ensure data collection is better informed and more practice-oriented.

What is a "research partnership"?

A research partnership is a collaborative relationship between researchers and practitioners that is designed to address a specific problem or challenge. Research partnerships are designed to address a specific problem or challenge. Research partnerships are designed to address a specific problem or challenge.

Core Characteristics of Research Partnerships

Research partnerships are characterized by several key features. Research partnerships are characterized by several key features. Research partnerships are characterized by several key features.

Research Partnerships Are Key to Improving Practice is a

DQC brief that lays out how research partnerships can benefit states and districts along with the core characteristics and drivers of research partnerships.

An Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19: What We're Learning

The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) has released a new report titled "An Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19: What We're Learning." This report provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on COVID-19 and offers evidence-based recommendations for states and districts.

The report is organized into several sections, including:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- What We're Learning
- Recommendations
- Conclusion

The report is available for download at <https://www.ncee.org/our-work/reports/an-evidence-based-response-to-covid-19-what-we-re-learning>.

"An Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19: What We're Learning,"

posted by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, shares rapid-response research on distance learning from the What Works Clearinghouse.

When Researchers Have Access to Data, Students Succeed

Research is the key to understanding what works in education. When researchers have access to data, they can identify effective practices and improve student outcomes. This infographic illustrates the benefits of research in education and how it can be used to improve practice.

RESEARCH IS ABOUT ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Research is the process of gathering information to answer questions. Research is the process of gathering information to answer questions. Research is the process of gathering information to answer questions.

RESEARCH SUPPORTS INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Research can help individual students succeed. Research can help individual students succeed. Research can help individual students succeed.

RESEARCH HELPS STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS SUCCEED

Research can help schools and districts succeed. Research can help schools and districts succeed. Research can help schools and districts succeed.

RESEARCH IMPROVES BETTER DECISIONS

Research can help leaders make better decisions. Research can help leaders make better decisions. Research can help leaders make better decisions.

RESEARCH BUILDS KNOWLEDGE FOR THE FUTURE

Research can help build knowledge for the future. Research can help build knowledge for the future. Research can help build knowledge for the future.

HERE'S HOW RESEARCH CAN BE USED:

- BY PRACTICES
- BY RESEARCHERS
- BY EDUCATORS
- BY RESEARCH LEADERS

When Researchers Have Access to Data, Students Succeed, an

infographic from DQC, provides an illustration of how research can affect students in the classroom.

Using State Data Systems to Create an Information Culture in Education

This policy guide provides a framework for states to create an information culture in education. It outlines the key components of an information culture and offers strategies for implementation.

What is a State Education Data System?

A state education data system is a collection of data that is used to inform education policy and practice. A state education data system is a collection of data that is used to inform education policy and practice. A state education data system is a collection of data that is used to inform education policy and practice.

Why is an Information Culture Important?

An information culture is a shared set of values and practices that supports the use of data to inform decision-making. An information culture is a shared set of values and practices that supports the use of data to inform decision-making. An information culture is a shared set of values and practices that supports the use of data to inform decision-making.

Using Data Systems to Create Information Culture in Education, a

policy guide from the Education Commission of the States, documents how leaders can leverage existing data systems to create stronger infrastructure to meet policy and research demands.



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 and follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/EdDataCampaign/) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/EdDataCampaign/) (@EdDataCampaign).