



Reforms of the size and scale to which Race to the Top States have committed, require unprecedented planning, oversight and problem solving to implement. Although many factors influence the outcomes of these reform efforts, performance management is a key structural element in realizing *sustainable reforms* that are durable and adaptive, and persistently focused on improved student growth in the face of changing conditions.

The Reform Support Network (RSN) has prepared a series of four briefs to examine how Race to the Top States are pursuing performance management of their key education reforms. At the RSN's request, leaders from four States—Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts and Tennessee—agreed to describe early, promising work that embodies the basic elements of performance management. This brief—the third in the series—profiles how Delaware and Hawaii are collecting and using data to inform continuous improvement.

What is performance management?

Performance management is a systemic approach to ensure quality and progress toward organizational goals by aligning structures, processes and routines through a set of reinforcing activities that enable an agency to methodically and routinely monitor the connection between the work underway and the outcomes sought.

This brief addresses “collection and use of data,” the third of four elements of performance management described in the *Sustainability Rubric*, created by the Reform Support Network to support State education agencies (SEAs) endeavoring to improve their performance management practices.¹ The rubric offers a template through which SEAs can identify key elements of sustainability and assess strengths and weaknesses to address in their sustainability planning.

¹The rubric's three categories are system capacity, performance management, and context for sustaining reform. Within the category of performance management are four elements: clarity of outcomes and theory of action, alignment of resources, collection and use of data, and accountability for results.

What is collection and use of data? It means to establish and implement routines and processes for collecting, analyzing and monitoring data, including leading and lagging indicators, to inform continuous improvement, provide feedback and make decisions. Using the rubric, SEAs can gauge how well they are answering key questions related to clarifying expected outcomes for student improvement:

- Do the State, the field and the public, all have access to valid, frequent and useful data on performance measured against the State's goals?
- Does the State have feedback loops in place that help the SEA to understand whether its reforms are carried out faithfully in the field and its strategies are having an impact on its goals?
- Does the State hold regular dialogues about performance and implementation quality, using the data it collects to drive improvements and adjustments to its strategies?

Measuring progress by collecting data and using it to improve results, a key element of performance management, helps SEAs determine whether their reforms are producing the intended improvements in student achievement outcomes. It allows them to assess whether the resources redirected to support these reforms are producing their intended results. Although data collection is not a new activity for SEAs, some are collecting new types of information about student performance and reform implementation, organizing data in new ways, and using it to inform conversations to improve student achievement and the effectiveness of reforms. Because new initiatives inevitably require shifts in direction, thoughtful data collection can also inform continuous improvement and ensure that course corrections take the agency closer to achieving its outcomes.

This brief describes how two States, Delaware and Hawaii, are collecting data and using it to measure their progress toward the improved student achievement outcomes each has chosen.

What is "collection and use of data"?

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Delaware's Commitment to Data-based Continuous Improvement

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has made a commitment to implement data collection routines and use data to support dialogue among stakeholders about how to improve student learning. During the first year of its participation in Race to the Top, DDOE planned intensively with school districts. The agendas for these discussions included the measures that school districts would use to monitor progress toward the goals that the State had outlined in its Race to the Top application. Ultimately, DDOE identified nearly **40 measures** to monitor and assess State and district progress towards achieving its Race to the Top goals, including Advanced Placement class enrollment, National Assessment of Educational Progress results and achievement gaps between different groups of students.

DDOE also encouraged each district to identify custom measures as part of its planning. "If they wanted to look at suspensions and expulsions, participation in honors classes, classroom walk-through frequency, we weren't going to say no," said Sara Kerr, Delaware's former chief performance officer. "We said, 'You know your schools and your constituents better than we do.'"

To ensure that district stakeholders engaged in discussion to evaluate and improve reform implementation, the DDOE implemented two performance management routines to review and analyze both statewide and individual district

measures for determining each district's progress toward their achievement goals. The first routine is a progress review, conducted during the school year, a face-to-face formative review of implementation progress focusing on qualitative data. The progress review occurs during meetings and site visits with school districts. The other routine is performance evaluation, conducted by DDOE **mid-year** and **end-of-year**. Checking at two points allows the DDOE and school districts to review both leading and lagging indicators for statewide and district-specific performance measures and assess progress over time. The year-end evaluation includes State assessment results, and districts must identify gaps between expected and actual performance and articulate reasons for the gaps. These routines are critical to DDOE's continuous improvement process, allowing DDOE and districts to gather frequent feedback on their progress, determine what is working and should continue and what course corrections to make. "We feel it's really imperative to get data in front of ourselves and our districts as soon as possible so that we have maximum time to decide what steps to take to improve," Kerr said.

Materials from one Delaware school district's end-of-year review shared with the Reform Support Network demonstrated how the data-based performance evaluation process can enrich the dialogue about strategies, resources and student achievement outcomes. DDOE tracked the district's implementation of college and career-ready standards and assessments by examining lagging outcome measures for SAT, PSAT and AP participation, as well as post-graduation college enrollment, determining that the district had not linked the actions it proposed to take with the outcomes it sought to achieve.

Having the data allowed DDOE to discuss with the district what more it could do to advance the implementation of college- and career-ready standards and assessments. "We really keep coming back to three questions: Are we doing what we said we would do? Are we doing it well? Is it making a difference?" Kerr said.

Hawaii's AcFin: A Tool for Collecting Data to Inform Continuous Improvement

Like Delaware, Hawaii has implemented data collection routines and carefully integrated data collection into a planning process that requires schools to address the six **priority strategies** crafted by the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE), based on its **strategic plan** and three overarching goals (student success, staff success and successful systems of support), adopted jointly by the State Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi and the State Board of Education in the 2011–2012 school year. The six strategies together constitute HIDOE's framework for support to its schools:

1. Academic review teams
2. Common Core
3. Comprehensive student support system
4. Formative instruction/data teams
5. Educator effectiveness evaluation
6. Induction and mentoring

The foundation of HIDOE's performance management system is the **Academic and Financial Plan**, known colloquially as AcFin, developed annually by each of the State's 257 schools and 15 complex areas.² AcFin has existed for a number of years, but HIDOE exercised little quality control, said Alex Harris, a former portfolio manager in the Office of Strategic Reform, with plans varying from school to school.

HIDOE changed the expectations for AcFin significantly for the 2012–2013 school year, tying it directly to the strategic plan adopted the previous school year. AcFin templates incorporate the goals from the strategic plan, and HIDOE also populates AcFin with the strategies and outcomes outlined in the strategic plan that all schools are required to

²Complex areas are administrative units managed by an area superintendent and composed of two to four high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools.

implement. “When you hear us talk about these six strategies, we wanted to anchor that,” Harris said. “The strategic plan lays them out, and because we’re both a State and local education agency, we had to have the mechanism to cascade them out to schools and complex areas.” In 2012-2013, HIDOE required schools to address implementation of college- and career-ready standards and data team sessions in the AcFin in order to progress toward Hawaii’s goal of student success. Next year, HIDOE will require schools to speak to the other two goals—staff success and successful systems of support—in the AcFin as well.

Through this steady integration of the AcFin with the overarching goals and strategies set by the State for reform, it has become a performance management tool for collecting and analyzing data to inform continuous improvement and provide feedback. HIDOE set individualized non-negotiable performance targets for 2013–2014 for each AcFin, based on baseline student achievement data for each school and complex area, according to Harris. This step enabled HIDOE to achieve a consistent approach to measuring progress toward outcomes and strategies. “We were in a mode of a thousand flowers blooming, schools doing their own thing. To set a direction across the State is big for us,” Harris said. “Districts can tool around at the edges and add things that are appropriate, but it’s not okay not to have the six strategies and the outcomes in their academic plan.”

Part of HIDOE’s intention is eventually to return responsibility to schools and complex areas for setting performance targets for student achievement, so the agency’s approach is designed to build the capacity of schools and complex areas in terms of their data literacy. Although HIDOE set performance targets for student success for 2013–2014, and State assessments provide the measure of success on outcomes, HIDOE also encouraged schools and complex areas to examine additional data, including attendance, discipline, course grades and any formative assessments in use.

To ensure that schools use data for purposes of continuous improvement, HIDOE also requires that each school establish an **academic review team** of administrators and teacher leaders. The academic review team monitors not only the data from HIDOE entered in the AcFin but also the quality with which the school or complex area is implementing the six strategies. The team meets regularly and puts into place regular routines to review leading and lagging indicators of progress toward the performance targets. The team analyzes whether the school or complex area is meeting the measures in the AcFin, and takes action to adjust implementation as necessary. Several complex area teams mentor schools on the use of AcFin, and these efforts increased through Race to the Top funding.

Conclusion

This brief, the third in a series of four outlining the elements of performance management, has looked at how Delaware and Hawaii identified the data needed for performance management and developed routines for collecting and analyzing the data in ways that advance implementation of reforms by frequently assessing whether the strategies being implemented are producing their intended impact. Strong performance routines have allowed Delaware and Hawaii to determine whether their reforms are producing the results intended and adjust course accordingly.

Briefs one, two and four in this series look at the other elements of performance management—clarity of outcomes and theory of action, alignment of resources, and accountability for results—through the experiences of Tennessee and Massachusetts, as well as Delaware and Hawaii.

For Race to the Top States to produce sustainable improvement in student achievement, State education agencies and local educational agencies are making the commitment to improve student outcomes in

ways that will live well beyond any single program or source of funding. In doing so, the education agency's role is evolving from monitoring- and compliance-centric to include leadership in support of statewide goals for improved student outcomes.

Each State's ability to drive change depends on the capacity of its performance management system to guide its work and measure progress. Effective performance management requires commitment

to all four elements. In order to accept responsibility and accountability for results, schools, districts and individuals must have clarity about purposes and outcomes and the work needed to accomplish them, must have some autonomy to align resources in support of the work, and must have access to data about their performance and the time and space to analyze the data to make course corrections.

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