



# Education Insights Center

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for K-12 and Postsecondary Education

## PRESS RELEASE

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### ***California Lags behind Other States' Education Data Capabilities, Connected System Needed to Answer Critical Questions***

(Sacramento) - The fragmentation of California's education data systems makes it nearly impossible for the state to assess how well its students are progressing from high school, to and through college, and into the workforce. To identify and help close persistent opportunity and outcomes gaps, the state should establish a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) that links the databases and prioritizes transparency, student privacy, and the public good, according to [A Hunger for Information: California's Options to Meet its Statewide Education Data Needs](#), a new report from the [Education Insights Center \(EdInsights\)](#). The study explores the data systems in other states and issues criteria for California to consider when designing its own system. The authors recommend that California develop a state data agency or office tasked with managing a centralized data warehouse as the best option for understanding and improving equity and overall performance in education.

"It's beyond time for California to have a unified data system," said EdInsights executive director Andrea Venezia. "We cannot get a clear sense of who is falling through the cracks between our education systems and why."

Study co-author Colleen Moore added, "Each of the education systems in California gathers robust data already, and it's a missed opportunity that data are not connected. If we want schools and colleges to be able to measure what's working and to be able to fix what isn't, it's time to link those data systems, for the benefit of students."

Reviewing the systems implemented by other states, authors Colleen Moore and Kathy Reeves Bracco find that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to designing an SLDS and each state must develop a system that meets its own history, culture and capacity. However, they identify several factors crucial to an effective and useful SLDS: 1) participation of K-12 schools, public

#### **Critical questions CA cannot answer without a cross-sector data system:**

- 1) Which high school graduates from which schools are prepared to succeed in college?
- 2) Are districts that receive extra funding through the Local Control Funding Formula increasing the proportion of their students who enroll in college, ready to succeed?
- 3) How successful, by major and degree/credential, are CCC/CSU/UC graduates in the workforce?
- 4) What happens to students who drop out of high school? Or drop out of a postsecondary institution?

postsecondary education systems, and the state workforce agency; 2) transparency about data security, access, and use; and 3) legislation to formalize the structure and ensure compliance and continuity.

### **A Centralized Data Warehouse Best Serves the Public Interest**

Moore and Bracco find that the primary challenges to creating a new SLDS in California are political rather than technical. The individual sectors already collect the high-quality student and workforce data needed to build out a P-20W (preschool through workforce) system, and the technical challenges to creating such a system have been overcome by other states. In developing an SLDS, however, California will need to consider both its data *governance* (i.e., where are the data housed and managed?) and *structure* (i.e., what is the best model for linking the data?).

In considering these questions, the authors developed a set of policy criteria to guide California in selecting among options for the governance and structure of an SLDS: public good, data security, data quality, cost and time, technical feasibility, political feasibility, and sustainability. Based on these criteria, they recommend that:

- **California should create a data office in a state agency, or create a new state data agency, with the mission of developing and managing an SLDS.** This state data office/agency would have the benefit of serving as a neutral manager of public education data.
- **The data office/agency should develop a centralized data warehouse, create standard reports and data dashboards for various audiences, and manage access to the data by external researchers.** A centralized model is more efficient and offers better access to data, compared with a “federated” system, which requires a more cumbersome process to link the data each time it is used.

California would likely benefit from a new education coordinating body, but developing a data system is not contingent on that issue. In addition, a centralized model could incorporate the ongoing work of the California Workforce Development Board to create a longitudinal data system for workforce education and training programs in order to provide a more complete picture of educational progress and outcomes in California.

*A Hunger for Information* is the fourth and final research brief of the series [California Education Policy, Student Data and the Quest to Improve Student Progress](#), which examines California’s approach to gathering and sharing data on student progress through the public education system. The report builds on EdInsights’ prior research looking into the perspectives of state and local leaders with regard to the responsibility for gathering and sharing data about student progress (see [Gaps in Perspectives](#)); into the expansive, but disconnected, data collected by the various campuses, systems, agencies and third parties, as well as past efforts to develop a more comprehensive data system (see [California’s Maze of Student Information](#)); and the challenges inherent in utilizing regional approaches to sharing data across education systems as a substitute for a statewide data system (see [Scaling Goodwill](#)).

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