



Education Insights Center

Advancing Research and Policy
for K-12 and Postsecondary Education

Testimony to Senate Education Committee (SB 1224)

April 11, 2018

Thank you Chair Allen, Vice Chair Wilk, and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Colleen Moore and I'm the assistant director of the Education Insights Center, a research and policy center at CSU Sacramento. EdInsights does not take a position on legislation, but I was asked to make comments today based on some research I'm doing that examines California's approach to tracking student progress across institutions and systems.

My research has found that the data systems at the four system offices, while quite good, are disconnected, which has led to a kind of "maze" of data-reporting and data-sharing efforts. The handout you have is from one of our reports and depicts the complexity and duplication of effort in our current approach.

This decentralized approach to student data has a number of disadvantages—it reinforces a siloed approach to education planning, leads to fragmentation in the metrics that are used, and creates confusion among stakeholders. Worst of all, it leaves the state unable to answer important questions that cross sectors.

In my interviews, local education leaders often expressed frustration with the current pressures they feel from the state to provide more data, often on topics they have no ability to track as students move across institutions and regions. While some participate in regional data-sharing efforts, those face significant challenges and limitations, and are not an effective substitute for a statewide data system.

For the final report in the series I'm writing, I have recently been looking at the national context, and speaking with national experts about these data systems. I've learned that California is far behind on this front. As of late 2016, 37 states had longitudinal data systems that combined student data from

at least two sectors of education, and 16 states had full P-20W data systems (preschool through workforce), with other states moving in that direction.

States use different models and processes for their data systems but, whatever their structure, states are using these systems to monitor progress toward statewide goals, to evaluate the impact of state policies, to provide feedback to institutions about what happens to their students when they move on to other institutions or the workforce, and to provide information for students and families.

In my research, I've heard about the barriers to developing a data system in California such as the use of different student identifiers in K-12 and higher education. Other states face the same issues and are finding ways to move forward.

It is imperative for California to be able to evaluate the success of the various education reforms and initiatives implemented in recent years, and it is equally important that schools and colleges are able to assess and improve their programs. This requires access to information about student progress that spans across the education systems and into the workforce – information that could be gained from a statewide longitudinal student data system.