Steps to Maximize your Longitudinal Data System

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Policymakers must have data to support decisions that will ensure that students enter the education system prepared to learn and leave high school prepared for college and work. In reality, students will journey across many education sectors and data systems as they transition from middle to high school, earn a high school diploma and prepare for college, enter postsecondary, complete a postsecondary program or degree, and enter the workforce. The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) has identified a common set of data elements that capture students’ progress through the education pipeline at three key transition points:

- High School Readiness
- High School Success/Postsecondary Readiness
- Postsecondary Success

For each of these transition points, key questions to be addressed by policymakers and related data elements have been identified along with conversations you need to have to make sure that a complete data system is in place to answer these questions.
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1. Which elements are you missing? Are there plans/timelines for implementing? What are challenges? Who is responsible?

2. Is there broad acceptance and understanding of the role of state longitudinal data system by key stakeholders and understanding of the goals of collecting, sharing, using data from that system? Who are the champions? Who are the potential detractors? How do you turn potential detractors into allies?
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3. Are there agreed upon policy & practical questions/issues that the state wishes to address with data and realistic timelines and budget for completing that analysis?

4. Does your state have the necessary agreements (political, legal and practical) among various sections to ensure data can be shared across and among P-12 and postsecondary systems to ensure transparency? Accountability? And feedback for continuous improvement? If not, what are the barriers? Is than an action plan for addressing this gap?
5. Are there assurances that the state longitudinal data system has sustained appropriate funding and the capacity to provide training and professional development to practitioners, policymakers, and staff who will need to access and use data from the data system? Is it a line item in the budget? For how much money? To whom does this funding go? Are there plans to increase this funding over time?
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6. Is there a strategic plan and adequate funding and capacity to provide training and professional development to practitioners, policymakers, and staff who will need to access and use data from the data system? Who is responsible for doing this? Are all divisions within SEA trained to access and use the data coming out of SLDS? LEA and school-based training for accountability and continuous improvement purposes?
7. Is there a governance structure in place to have discussion about sharing data across and between sectors, states, districts and the appropriate uses of that data (and to ensure reduction and duplication of effort)? Is there a governance plan in place for determining which data are to be accessible to whom and in what capacity? Are there assurances of researcher access to data?
8. Has a data warehouse been developed (does in include K-12 and postsecondary data? Other data sets that could be connected with education data?) and development of portals and business intelligence/data analysis reports and tools to make it easier for stakeholders to access the data relevant to their interests?