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# ESEA Hearing Primer

## Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization: How Data Can Be Used to Inform Educational Outcomes

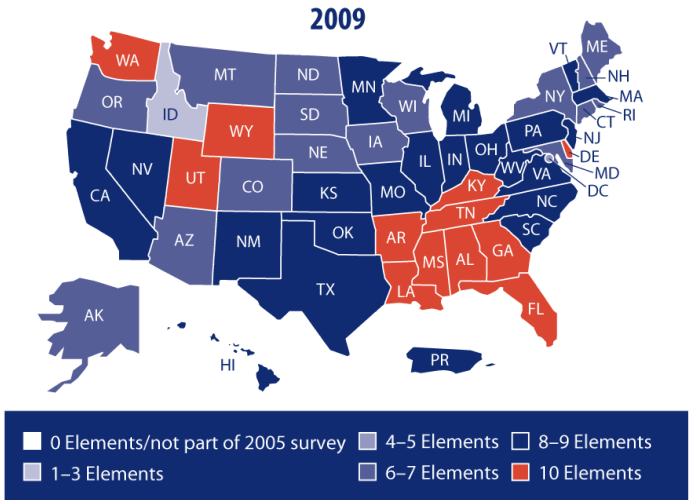
Useful Facts for the U.S. House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee Hearing
April 14, 2010

### THINGS TO KNOW

Longitudinal data—data about individual students over the course of their academic career—is necessary to implement many of the strategies and policies that are critical to the nation's college- and career-ready agenda, including

- calculating accurate high school graduation rates;
- measuring students' college and career readiness;
- implementing early warning and intervention systems;
- implementing growth models for school accountability; and
- measuring teachers' effectiveness in improving student outcomes.

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) annually surveys states' progress in building such systems that include ten essential elements. According to the DQC's 2009 survey,[1] states have made significant progress in building their data systems, as demonstrated in the map below.




States' progress in building these systems is due in large part to investments made by the federal government through the Institute of Education Sciences' Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems grant program. Since 2006, this program has appropriated $413 million and provided funds to forty-one states.

There is much work to be done to link this information across the P–20/workforce pipeline and build capacity for using the data throughout the system. For example:

- Many states lack critical elements essential for addressing college and career readiness and the impact that teachers have on student achievement.[1]
- Only thirty-three states have the ability to match student-level P–12 data and higher education data.[1]
- Only ten states are sharing individual progress reports with educators, and fewer than half of all states provide reports to stakeholders using aggregate-level statistics.[1]

Data are useful only when they are transformed into actionable information that people can access, understand and use. However, state and district data systems are generally not linked and neither are meeting all of educators' needs. According to a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education:

- Districts report that they rely primarily on data systems they purchase or develop themselves—not state systems—for the purpose of instructional improvement.
- While 90 percent of districts studied store student outcome data, less than half can link those outcomes to inputs and guide improvements.
- Educators report many barriers to greater use of data, including lack of time, system usability issues, relevancy of available data, district-pacing policies, and training to connect data to instructional improvements.
- Only 23 percent of responding teachers reported having enough time to look at data during the school day.

### FLAWS IN THE CURRENT LAW

- Currently, the federal Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems program is authorized as part of the Education Sciences Reform Act, not ESEA. This program is focused on building capacity solely at the state level while there is a critical need to also build capacity in districts.
- ESEA does not do enough to leverage the use of funds (including through Title I, school improvement grants, or various staff development programs) to build educators' data knowledge, nor does ESEA do enough to support the use of diagnostic and other data to drive decisionmaking.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

A reauthorized ESEA should:

- Continue the investment in statewide longitudinal data systems and shift the focus from building basic systems to addressing linkages across the P–20 education pipeline, across states, and between states and districts.
- Embed use of data to drive decisionmaking throughout the accountability and school improvement processes.
- Ensure that districts and schools develop and implement processes and tools necessary to use data from both the statewide longitudinal data systems and other data developed locally.
- Build the capacity of all stakeholders, particularly teachers, principals, and other school staff, to use data as part of daily practice to improve teaching, learning, and student outcomes.

**For additional legislative recommendations, visit http://www.all4ed.org/files/ESEARecs.pdf.**

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[1]Data Quality Campaign, *Inaugural Overview of States' Actions To Leverage Data To Improve Student Success* (Washington, DC: Author, 2010). [2]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, *Use of Education Data at the Local Level From Accountability to Instructional Improvement* (Washington, DC, 2010).