

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC REPORTING TO ENSURE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS FOR ALL

As states adopt and implement bold education reforms intended to dramatically increase a student’s likelihood of graduating from high school prepared for college and career, there is a strong sense among many states that reporting the right data to the right people at the right time, and reporting it well, is an essential path toward meeting their college and career readiness (CCR) goals. By setting their sights on improving CCR outcomes among high school graduates, states will promote greater opportunities for individuals as well as economic growth at all levels. Timely, accessible, contextual, and coordinated data reporting in alignment with these goals and strategies for getting there is a critical foundation for states CCR reform efforts. To go one step further, it can also serve as a strategic driver toward the goals.

Data are at the heart of many of the CCR reforms underway in states today. Making these data transparent and connected to action is essential to create the velocity needed to spark the improvements in college and career readiness and to shrink achievement gaps that have proven so elusive in many states (see “Transparency of Data as a Driver of Results in Ontario”). States such as **HAWAI’I** and **INDIANA** have devoted time, energy, and resources into publicly reporting actionable and meaningful data on student CCR to the school level. States such as **NEW JERSEY** centered their ESEA Flexibility waiver applications on school and district performance reports. Numerous states such as **OKLAHOMA** and **NEW MEXICO** oriented their school accountability systems around A-F grade report cards. All of these efforts require two major things: 1) A great deal of work to collect, manage, analyze, and report data and 2) a belief that the work will pay off – that displaying the data in ways that encourage understanding of performance will translate into action and positive impacts on student outcomes.

Yet, in many states, public reporting of student results has not met this vision. These systems serve only as a compliance function, with reports that include the minimum set of data indicators required by law, without consideration for how the data will be used and by whom – with no attention to translating it for broader use by educators, policymakers, parents, and the public. It may be fragmented – with multiple entities reporting disparate indicators aligned to different purposes. The reporting may happen too late for educators or parents or

TRANSPARENCY OF DATA AS A DRIVER OF RESULTS IN ONTARIO

Michael Fullan puts it best – “Transparency of data is essential, and it can and must be made into a powerhouse.” Transparency of student results at the school and district levels was a critical element of the overall systemic change strategy behind Ontario’s success in improving elementary literacy and numeracy and high school graduation rates beginning in 2003. Combined with a relentless focus on performance targets, building coalitions for reform, engaging peer-to-peer learning, and promoting positive accountability techniques, Fullan argues that making meaningful data on student outcomes accessible to all “generates specific, precise, visually clear images of what works” and “takes all the excuses off the table.”

Source: 2010 Michael Fullan, “Positive Pressure”, in *Second International Handbook on Educational Change*, Springer.
www.michaelfullan.ca/media/13396083550.pdf

community members to act on the information, or it may be presented in such a way that those who need the data most can't draw meaningful conclusions – or can't find the data in the first place. To do this well, states will need to develop dynamic, actionable reports on student outcomes that include the right data, targeted to the right people, at the right time, with the context needed to enhance understanding of performance. In many states, however, the path forward from their current suite of public reports to a coherent, aligned system is not clear. To clarify the path, changes to reporting should be seen as part of the broader policy agenda to ensure that greater transparency will translate into effective action.

The intent of this policy brief is to clarify some concrete mechanisms by which states can gain traction, turning their aspirations for effective public reporting into reality. It first explores the current state of public reporting on CCR indicators across states, then discusses several policy mechanisms on which states could draw to advance their reporting, and finally addresses the opportunity for states to create partnerships to ignite the power of data reports.

State Reporting of CCR Indicators

According to Achieve's 2012 Closing the Expectations Gap report, 28 states and the District of Columbia publicly report to the school level at least one of four indicators of student college and career readiness. The four indicators include the following:

- **Students graduating with a college- and career-ready diploma** - the percentage of students who graduate having completed the requirements for a college- and career-ready diploma.¹
- **Students achieving a CCR score on a statewide assessment** - The percentage of students who score at the college- and career-ready level on a high school assessment given to all eligible students.
- **Students who earn postsecondary credit while still in high school** - The percentage of students who earn college credit while still enrolled in high school through AP, IB and/or dual enrollment.
- **Graduates who enter postsecondary education needing remediation** - The percentage of high school graduates who, upon entrance to a postsecondary institution, are placed into a remedial course in reading, writing, or mathematics (courses that do not count as English or mathematics credit).

TEXAS is the only state that publicly reports all four indicators. There are five states – **FLORIDA, GEORGIA, INDIANA, KENTUCKY,** and **OHIO** – that report three of the four indicators. A total of 23 states

¹ Research by Achieve suggests that for high school graduates to be prepared for success in a wide range of postsecondary settings, they need to complete a challenging course of study in mathematics that includes the content typically taught through an Algebra II course or its equivalent and four years of grade-level English aligned with CCR standards.

do not report any of these CCR indicators.² Without the public seeing and understanding the data, it's far more difficult to create the case for changes in policy and practice.

To assist states in envisioning how to report these data indicators in actionable ways driving toward CCR goals, Achieve has published guidance and a sample school report card (www.achieve.org/public-reporting).

	CCR Diploma	CCR Assessment	Earning College Credit In HS	Requiring Remedial Courses	State Total
Alabama	x			x	2
California	x	x			2
Colorado			x	x	2
Delaware	x				1
District of Columbia	x				1
Florida	x	x	x		3
Georgia	x	x		x	3
Hawaii	x			x	2
Indiana	x		x	x	3
Illinois		x			1
Kentucky	x	x		x	3
Louisiana	x			x	2
Maine		x			1
Massachusetts	x				1
Michigan		x			1
Missouri				x	1
Montana				x	1
Nevada				x	1
New York	x	x			2
New Mexico				x	1
Ohio	x		x	x	3
Oklahoma	x			x	2
Texas	x	x	x	x	4
Utah			x		1
Virginia	x				1
West Virginia				x	1
Wisconsin		x			1
Wyoming				x	1
Indicator Total	16	10	6	17	

² Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington

Policy Levers for Public Reporting

States have a number of policy levers that they can draw on to advance reporting CCR indicators. Some of the most prominent – and powerful – policy levers are the state and federal laws and regulations that govern the **comprehensive report cards** state education agencies publish on all districts and schools. Another policy lever stems from P-20 education initiatives that often include public reporting of student results. Some states report these indicators through high school feedback reports meant to spur specific changes improving college and career readiness. An additional policy lever involves the reporting of results to indicate progress toward **performance management** goals established through specific programs or grants. Finally, a critical policy lever arises from the state’s **accountability** formula for districts and schools. States will need to be clear about how to draw on the right policy lever to get the results they’re seeking from reporting.

Comprehensive State Report Cards: Many states have statutes or regulations that detail the performance indicators, frequency, and levels of reporting required for states’ comprehensive report cards. Many of these policies arose from statewide education reforms that accompanied increases or changes to funding formulas, and as such, are seen as part of a larger system of accountability for these reforms. In some states, the report card itself has been the focus of the reform effort. These report cards have high visibility with parents and the public, and should be viewed as critical levers by states as they consider how to enhance public reporting. While in many cases, states can add data indicators to comprehensive report cards without changes to statute or regulations, actually putting policy changes into law may have a high payoff in reinforcing the importance of the data with policymakers and securing commitment and resources needed to implement the data collection, management, analysis, and robust reporting they envision.

- **GEORGIA’s** state Code Section 20-14-34 prescribes the content and dissemination required for school report cards, including ratings on the quality of learning, financial efficiency, and school climate. See: <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20112012/127822.pdf>
- Regulations in **TEXAS** detail the indicators, cut-points, and thresholds involved in their Performance-Based Monitoring Assessment System (PBMAS). See page 36: <http://info.sos.state.tx.us/fids/201203759-1.pdf>
- In **WYOMING**, statewide school reforms have also led to changes in the statute governing school report cards, which will now require indicators of college and career readiness including an on-track measure of 9th grade credit accumulation. See: <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2012/Enroll/SF0057.pdf>
- House Bill 605 in **ILLINOIS** prescribed a new suite of indicators that will be reported, including the percentage of graduates college- and career- ready, as well as methods of data display such as showing comparisons to similar schools. See: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/97/PDF/097-0671.pdf>

Federal policy has also played a major role in shaping comprehensive report cards, particularly with the

2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (NCLB). Section 1111(h)(1)(c) requires states to report data on the students in each grade at each achievement level of the state’s assessments disaggregated by student subgroup, graduation rates, and teacher quality measures. Section 1111(h)(2)(b) requires states to report these data for each school, showing the comparison of performance with their district and state. The ESEA Flexibility program has also had a significant impact on reporting in 2012 and beyond. States that chose a waiver from the requirement to make AYP determinations must report on their report card’s performance data for all students and subgroups against their new Annual Measureable Objectives (AMO’s). All states with waivers are also asked to sign off on an assurance that they will annually report, for each district and high school, the college-going and college credit-accumulation rates for all students and subgroups (indicators (c)(11) and (c)(12) from the State Fiscal Stabilization Program (SFSF)). Finally, under the program, all states granted flexibility must report the identification of schools, including Reward, Priority, and Focus schools.

As states implement their ESEA Flexibility waiver accountability systems, there is a tremendous opportunity to leverage the changes to public reporting that can lead to real results for students. As states make amendments to their applications over the coming years, they can follow the lead of **NEW JERSEY** by including sample new report cards to communicate their vision and enhance support for meeting it. Regardless of the requirements that states must meet, they should not be limited by these requirements but should instead use them as a starting point to create a robust report card that meets their policy goals.

Performance Management: Although less developed in states than other policy levers, some states are making great strides to work with districts and schools to clarify performance targets and monitor progress toward them as part of high-profile efforts to meet statewide performance goals. Making data publicly available on school and district progress against their targets reinforces the urgency of meeting them. Some states such as **MASSACHUSETTS** are leveraging major grants, such as Race to the Top, to frame this approach. Although the reports only include data at the district level, the “end of year progress reports” for Race to the Top are highly strategic tools to drive improvement by making goals transparent and urgent, and tying them to strategies and funding to reach them. See: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/rttt/district.html>. Again, this is a relatively new policy lever in states, but one with untapped potential to rally support for continuous improvement. States may wish to consider how they can enhance current reporting in comprehensive report cards or other reports to include information on district and school performance targets, their progress in meeting them, and even information on the strategies in use to reach the goals.

Accountability: States’ accountability systems often drive the content, timing, and dissemination of school and district report cards. States often report the indicators used to differentiate and categorize schools and districts with the greatest priority and detail. As states think through how to report the results of their accountability systems, they should consider building in reporting techniques to tell a story about the underlying student performance data to drive understanding and action – rather than solely reporting the indicators in a technical way according to the accountability formula.

Third Party Coalitions

States on a path toward enhancing the capacity of their district and school report cards to drive college and career readiness may need more than strong policy levers at their disposal – they may need a coalition to build the will and knowledge needed for change. Data collection, cleansing, analysis, and reporting may take resources and time that state education agencies have in short supply, and coalitions can help smooth the way forward. This coalition should include stakeholders with an interest in what is reported about student performance, particularly those who can end up as champions for reform. The coalition may also include partners – advocacy organizations, higher education organizations, or specific education programs – that are not only interested and supportive, but are willing to be a part of the work itself.

Education Advocacy Organizations: Education advocacy organizations, such as Advance Illinois, can play a large role in shaping understanding of high-impact indicators and the best sources of data (see: <http://www.advanceillinois.org/state-report-card-pages-59.php>) as well as have a major impact in communication efforts and building public will. **KENTUCKY'S** Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (www.cipl.org) has been training parents on the new report cards released as a part of the state's next-generation accountability system spurred by Senate Bill 1.

Higher Education: Higher education organizations can also play a huge role. In **ARKANSAS**, the **University of Arkansas NORMES** research center publishes the state's report card for districts and schools, bringing added analytical capacity to the effort. In many states, higher education agencies coordinate the release of "feedback reports" to high schools that illuminate their graduates' postsecondary outcomes. These smaller, highly-focused reports can help to clarify results – but a lack of visibility in many states may hamper their impact. The reports may be geared to a specific audience, such as high school principals and guidance counselors, yet include powerful data that is of great use to parents, community members, and others. **INDIANA**, through its Indiana Commission on Higher Education, issues high school feedback reports that include remediation information disaggregated by students' high school diploma type. See: <http://www.in.gov/che/2591.htm>

P-20 Initiatives: Reporting is also a major component of P-20 initiatives. These groups include stakeholders across early childhood to K-12 to higher education, policymakers, and business/community leaders, enabling a united voice for performance across the cradle to career pipeline.

- **HAWAII'S** P-20 Partnership, in collaboration with the Hawai'i Department of Education and University of Hawaii, publishes an annual College and Career Readiness Indicator Report (http://www.p20hawaii.org/indicators_report.html) for each high school that includes a wide array of indicators across the K-12 to higher education systems. The indicators include the percentage and number of students attaining advanced high school diplomas, scores on college-ready assessments, participation and success in Advanced Placement, college enrollment, and remediation rates.

- **KENTUCKY's** high school feedback reports, created and published by the P-20 Data Collaborative (are publicly accessible at <http://kentuckyp20.ky.gov/DataReports.aspx>) show each high school's ACT CCR benchmark scores, the college-going rate, the type of institution (4-year, 2-year, etc.) they attend, and the number of students attending each institution.

Given that P-20 initiatives often have a large number of powerful stakeholders, these reports can gain higher visibility from the press and potentially from parents and the public. In many cases, however, states only report state-level results. These states should work with P-20 initiatives to enhance reporting to the district and school levels, either by bringing high-priority indicators from P-20 reporting into comprehensive report cards or adding district- and school-level reporting to current state-level reports.

Targeted Programs: Finally, specific programs focused on tracking student outcomes could also be beneficial in getting the work done. For example, if a state has a targeted program such as an AP Training & Incentive Program to improve outcomes on Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams, or a program such as **TENNESSEE'S** Lottery Dual Enrollment Scholarship to provide funding for students to take dual enrollment courses, they may be instrumental in finding data sources and building support for reporting results.

Conclusion

There is tremendous interest across states in dramatically enhancing the effectiveness of their public reporting systems as part of an overall strategy to lift student performance and educational attainment toward and beyond college and career readiness. Several states have taken strong steps toward creating a cohesive and aligned system that gives parents and community members, as well as policymakers and educators, access to meaningful information they can use in supporting student performance improvement in their schools. Many more states have aspirations for their public reporting that exceed their current capacity, but strategically leveraging policy and partnerships could support their aspirations.

Guidance and Resources

- Achieve and The Education Trust, November 2008 – Measures that Matter: Making College and Career Readiness the Mission for High Schools: A Guide for Policymakers - <http://www.achieve.org/files/MakingCollegeandCareerReadinesstheMissionforHighSchool.pdf>
- Education Trust, September 2011 – Parents Want to Know - http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/Parents_Want_to_Know.pdf
- Data Quality Campaign, December 2011 – High School Feedback Reports -Analysis of Current State Efforts - <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/HS%20Feedback%20Table.pdf>
- Data Quality Campaign – Empowering Parents with Data - http://dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Hot%20Topic_Parents.pdf