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GAINING GROUND

Achieving Excellence in High Poverty Schools

Division of State Services and Technical Assistance

Improving State Data Systems to Implement NCLB

Jinhee Lee

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) highlights the need for high quality student and staff data that are necessary to create and to promote programs that support student achievement. High quality data decision-making involves a multi-step process and requires collaboration at all levels of the education system. An efficient system assumes the movement of electronic records among levels of the education system based on data and technology standards, the maintenance of data in flexible databases, and the availability of reporting and analysis capabilities for those who must make effective decisions. An effective data system requires a focus on data needed for decision-making, reflects an understanding and a standardization of data collected from data providers, offers strategies for efficient movement of data, and gives guidance on effective usage of the data. It presupposes that data are important to the various providers and that data providers record accurate data.

At the state level, individual student and staff records help meet the reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Once the school or district records the student data, then NCLB reporting requirements can be met. Information about a student's race/ethnicity, migrant status, English Proficiency status, disability status, economic status, and proficiency levels in reading, math, and science is necessary to satisfy reporting requirements. In an individual student record system, each student receives a permanent and unique (within the state) identification number. The identifier allows the state to link student infor-

mation across grades, provides "on-time" secondary school graduation information, and links assessment data with demographic and program participant records. Individual student records would not be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for student privacy reasons, and only aggregate data from the individual records would be compiled and submitted.

The current status of individual student record systems across the states varies from effective systems to no systems at all. The National Forum for Education Statistics has developed an on-line survey (www.nces.ed.gov/forum/tecsurvey) to assess each state education agency's information systems. In the survey, states responded to questions regarding their on-line data collection, web reporting, individual student level record systems, decision support systems, and on-line federal reporting capabilities. State answers to the survey questions varied. A vital question asked the states, "[a]t what stage is your SEA in the development of an individual student level record system?" Twenty-two out of forty-seven states that responded to this question currently use an individual student level record system, fifteen states are in the design and discussion phase, and ten states have either no plans or no interest in developing an individual student level record system.

Among states that have an individual student level record systems, the types of data stored in the record systems vary. Most states already collect student personal information, enrollment, assessment information, discipline information, and special program participation and student services. However, fewer than half the states collect information on school participation and activities, non-school and post-school experiences, transportation information, and health conditions. While this survey does not provide a compre-

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The Role of Arts Education in Improving the Performance of High Poverty Schools

Lauren Stevenson

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP), administered by the Council of Chief State School Officers, is in the second year of a three-year project to examine the role of arts education in improving the performance of high poverty schools. This project is driven by recent research on arts education whose findings indicate that: 1) arts education has positive effects on both social and academic outcomes for students; 2) these effects can be most profound for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and 3) arts education has positive whole school effects including improved school culture and resiliency. Although this research gives cause for *all* education leaders to seriously consider arts education among their tools for school reform, it speaks especially to school and community leaders working to improve student performance and close the achievement gap between high poverty and low performing schools.

In a national letter sent to the Title I community affirming the positive connection between arts education and the performance of high poverty schools, Mary Jean LeTendre, former Director of Title I programs at the U.S. Department of Education, stated:

Both anecdotal and formal, controlled studies show that an arts-infused curriculum helps raise performance in academic subjects, improves student and teacher attendance, and decreases disciplinary actions. The arts also can motivate some students when other strategies have been unsuccessful. Given the emphasis in Title I on assisting low-achieving students to reach the same challenging standards expected of all students, I applaud you and challenge others to include the arts among the many effective strategies for educating some of our neediest children.

The AEP's new project strives to help schools put the potential that LeTendre

describes to work, to help them understand exactly *how* the arts can contribute to the improvement of their schools and to the success of their students. The culmination of the project will be a manual that will provide guidance to school and community leaders on implementing the arts among their strategies for school improvement.

LeTendre's comments support recent research studies including those summarized in AEP's publication *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*, and suggest that arts education improves the performance of students and schools as measured by a wide range of indicators. These indicators include, not only student academic performance, but also student and teacher retention, community involvement, student engagement and attendance, student social skills, and school culture.

At the outset of this project, AEP assembled a team of researchers to determine a set of research-based indicators against which it could measure school performance. That is, what are the factors that one must examine to determine whether or not schools are succeeding? The AEP team deemed it important to broadly define school success and developed an appropriately wide-ranging list of indicators, including those mentioned above, that go beyond academic test scores to delve deeper into what constitutes student and whole school success.

The research team believes that arts education's ability to improve schools and the performance of students by a multitude of measures will be of particular interest to high poverty schools. High poverty schools face unusual challenges in addressing some of the foundational factors of schooling (e.g., a safe learning environment, retention of qualified teachers, student engagement, and community involvement). Research shows that factors of success-

ful schooling are inter-related and a school's lack of ability to address one factor can adversely affect its ability to succeed in other areas. For example, a school's inability to maintain a safe learning environment may inhibit its ability to increase, and sustain at high levels, coveted reading and mathematics scores.

In 2001, the Arts Education Partnership called on its more than one hundred partner organizations comprised of education, business, government, and philanthropic communities nationwide, to identify high poverty schools that successfully (as measured by AEP's identified set of indicators) use the arts as a tool for school improvement. As a result of its search, AEP has identified ten schools in ten states that will serve as case study sites for this project. The schools represent a cross-section of urban, suburban and rural communities, and elementary, middle and high schools across the nation.

In the spring of 2002, AEP's researchers visited the first five schools (CA, MS, NY, OH, RI). They will visit the second set of five in fall 2002 (AZ, IL, MN, NC, SC). The purpose of the site visits is to explore: 1) whether the schools' work truly reflects recent research findings on arts and education; 2) how they are succeeding in improving school performance as measured by the established indicators; and 3) what specific practices and ideologies from these schools might be employed by other schools.

The evidence collected from the first group of site visits confirms that the schools have improved their performance in multiple ways and that the positive changes being effected through arts education are indeed in alignment with recent research. Perhaps one of the most remarkable findings from these visits is specific evidence of the ability of the arts to reach, in profound ways, students who have not been reached by more traditional methods of instruction, particularly students facing significant barriers of poverty, English language learners, and students in need of accelerated instruction. This finding affirms recent research studies, including those in *Critical Links*, that arts-infused curriculums can reach these students. The arts create a venue for students to empower themselves which is particu-

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State Leaders Join Forces to Focus on Early Childhood Education

Oralia Puente

More than 80 participants from 16 states attended the CCSSO sponsored forum “Maximizing Resources to Improve Early Childhood Education” funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and held on June 17-18, 2002, in Alexandria, Virginia. This was the concluding activity of the CCSSO’s “Tools for Building State-wide Support for Early Childhood Initiatives.”

This initiative’s main goal has been to strengthen Chief’s capacity to promote federal and state initiatives to build comprehensive early care and education systems. The key activity of this initiative was the preparation of case studies documenting five state initiatives. Based on extensive interviews with state leaders, the case studies examined not only the steps taken in each state to create and advance a school readiness agenda, but also the processes needed to enhance public awareness of the importance of early learning, the creation of a favorable political context for increasing investment in young children, and sustaining those investments as new conditions and leaders emerged.

During the forum, state leaders from the five case study states of Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Texas showcased their initiatives at breakout sessions and discussed their efforts at a time of challenging budget cuts.

The participating early childhood leaders from the 16 attending states had submitted proposals documenting their efforts in early childhood education and care, their creation of partnerships and integration of team members in their efforts, and their developing of public engagement and finance. Representatives from locally based national organizations, associations, and the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services Administration also participated at the forum. The panelists, speakers, and participants provided lively discussions, considering new and different possibilities of merging and

configuring resources from different sources and with new partners.

Former North Carolina Governor James Hunt, a long-time champion of early childhood education, opened the forum. He spoke in a practical and insightful manner about North Carolina’s efforts to forge strong early childhood education and child care programs.

Dr. Steven Barnett of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University delivered the luncheon address. Dr. Barnett gave a provocative and a convincing summary of the simple economics of preschool education. He presented major cost/benefits studies, quantifying the economic benefits and explaining the projected effect behind the benefits. His summary included cost estimates in the context of national and state budgets. With the backdrop of current enrollment and program quality, he proposed the quality improvement needed to obtain economic benefits for preschool education. He summarized the long-term benefits of investing in early childhood education as:

- Increased achievement test scores
- Increased graduation
- Decreased grade retention
- Decreased special education
- Decreased crime and delinquency

Dr. Barnett concluded his presentation by stating that quality preschool education can be a good economic investment and that most 3-4 year-old children already attend some kind of classroom program, but in many situations the quality of these programs is low.

On the final day of the conference, co-panelists Joan Ohl, Commissioner from the Administration for Children, Youth and Families at the Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services, and Susan Neuman, Assistant Secretary of Education for Elementary and Secondary Education, addressed interagency initiatives in early childhood education. They discussed their efforts and resources in early care and education. A panel from Head Start and the Childcare Bureau talked about their programs and partnering with federal and state leaders to improve and enlarge education opportunities for young children.

Department of Education representatives spoke about their proposed efforts in early reading, special education, and Title I and how these efforts impact on states. They emphasized the need to inform states and leaders about the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and how this legislation affects their responsibilities.

Participants received snapshots of each states’ case study as part of the “Tools for Building Statewide Support for Early Childhood Initiative”. These snapshots outline a history of the initiatives, core services, keys to success, challenges, and results. By December 2002, reports from each will be released as part of the initiative. CCSSO will continue to work with state leaders to provide technical assistance in early education, connecting partners in providing quality education for young children. For more information about the “Tools for Building Statewide Support for Early Childhood Initiative,” please contact Oralia Puente at 202 336-7072 or at oraliap@ccsso.org.

Findings from a State-level Survey – Delivering Technical Assistance in Special Education

Gitanjali Pande

CCSSO recently released the report *State Systems of Technical Assistance in Special Education: Key Survey Findings*. This report enhances efforts to disseminate research-based information in special education, particularly toward improving the achievement of students with disabilities in high poverty, low-performing schools. This study attempts to connect research to practice on behalf of students with disabilities, describing the key aspects of 42 states' systems of delivering technical assistance in special education, including its coordination with general education initiatives. It was developed in partnership with the Elementary and Middle School Technical Assistance Center at the American Institutes for Research. A summary of its key findings follows.

Definitions and Providers of Technical Assistance

Though only about a quarter of all state responses indicated the existence of a formal statewide definition for technical assistance (TA), many follow guiding principles or specific protocols described in their state plans or performance reports that shape their TA system. Of the 42 states that participated in the survey, all but six state respondents (86%) indicated a specific office or bureau of special education as responsible for providing special education-related TA. With respect to the level of coordination between TA activities in special and general education, 24 states (57%) indicated that the offices responsible for delivering TA in special and general education are one and the same. In addition, five states have some level of coordination between general and special education TA, with these states moving toward increased coordination. The other 13 states (31%) indicated that they have separate offices/departments for delivering TA in special education

versus general education.

Regional TA Focus

Over half the respondent states have regional resource centers, education service centers/units, or regional educational collaboratives/networks that serve as delivery points for TA in special education. At the time of the survey, two states (North Carolina and Kansas) mentioned contracting with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to assist schools and districts with special education-related TA.

Technical Assistance Audience

The most common technical assistance deliverers include state education agency teams, external technical assistance providers, and regional service providers. Common recipients of technical assistance are teachers, principals and local special education directors, followed by district staff or administrators, and paraprofessionals. A high majority of the respondent states also provide technical assistance to parents and families.

Activities

Assisting with compliance procedures represented the most common type of activity or service included in a TA delivery system, with all but one state including this activity in their systems. This was closely followed by activities involving working with stakeholders and related groups, analyzing issues and diagnosing problems. In addition, state responses cited the following activities: identifying, selecting, and designing solutions and approaches, facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges, and mentoring/coaching. Other frequently mentioned services included installing/implementing products, programs and technologies; designing program evaluations; and providing moral support/counseling.

Methods of delivery

In general, all states used five or more of the below listed methods for delivering technical assistance services to districts and schools. All but one

state cited meetings and workshops as the most frequently used method for delivering assistance. Almost every state that returned the survey (90%) cited telephone calls and the development and dissemination of publications as methods for delivering technical assistance. This was followed closely by statewide conferences (37 states, i.e., 88% of respondents), and on-site visits (35 states, i.e., 83% of respondents). Four other methods for service delivery cited were the Internet, web-based communication (chat rooms/discussion forums), training of trainers, and video conferencing.

Alignment with general education

Nearly every state integrated at least one specific strategy or activity involving alignment of special education with general education. There existed, however, much variation across states as to the type and extent of alignment.

The inclusion of students with disabilities within state assessment and accountability systems represented the most common area of alignment. In particular, states provided local education agencies technical assistance, administered alternate assessments for students with disabilities, and offered evidence on aligning IEP goals to the general education curriculum. Twenty states identified one or more of these strategies as areas of coordinated activity and alignment. The next most common alignment areas included school improvement activities and standards-based instruction, reading initiatives, and support for behavior management.

For additional information regarding the Elementary and Middle Technical Assistance Center and their efforts to improve learning opportunities for students with disabilities, visit their website at www.emstac.org.

For further information about this report please contact Gitanjali Pande at gitanjalip@ccsso.org or 202-326-8695, or Elaine Bonner-Tompkins at elainebt@ccsso.org or 202-336-7035.

The report is available in its entirety on the CCSSO website at: http://www.ccsso.org/hps/SPED_MatrixExecSumm.pdf.

CCSSO's School Health Project Releases New Publication on HIV Prevention

Stephanie Yun

The Council of Chief State School Officers' School Health Project is disseminating a new publication titled, *HIV Prevention: Multiple Challenges, Multiple Strategies*. The publication examines the current face of the HIV epidemic and how state education agencies, schools, and their partners in the community can offer effective programming and protect the health of students.

Schools play an important role in assisting in the reduction of adolescent sexual risk-taking behaviors because students can readily receive prevention messages while in school. Recent studies such as the Add Health Study and the Seattle Social Development Project show that students who feel a "connectedness" to their school are more likely not to engage in high-risk behavior. Moreover, these same studies indicate that students who eschew risk-taking are more likely to be successful in school.

Examining the most current Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) data, CCSSO identified three groups who may be disproportionately at risk for HIV: 1) African-American students; 2) Latino students; and 3) gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. The publication provides a description of high-risk behaviors and statistics related to sexual risk-taking for each identified group.

Since 1987, CCSSO has worked to strengthen the capacity of state education agencies to assist local education agencies and schools to implement effective HIV education within the framework of coordinated school health programs. Prior to the *HIV Prevention* publication, CCSSO released three publications related to HIV education and schools. The first publication, *How Four States Put HIV/AIDS into the Classroom*, was released in 1990 and followed by *Beyond the Health Room* (1990) and *Lessons From the Classroom* (1992).

If you have any questions about these documents or would like information about the School Health Project, please contact Step-

hanie Yun at (202) 336-7038 or stephanie@ccsso.org.

32nd National Conference on Large-Scale Assessment a Resounding Success! Over 900 Participants Attend Conference

Carl Andrews

CCSSO's held its 32nd annual conference on Large-Scale Assessment on June 23-26, 2002, in Palm Desert, California. Highlights featured U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, Susan Neuman as the opening luncheon speaker, over 120 large and small group sessions, 2-hour symposia, and multiple roundtable sessions.

The 2002 National Conference addressed critical issues of No Child Left Behind, such as the assessment and evaluation of Limited English Proficient students and students with disabilities; test development; and issues related to the reporting of results. The sessions also addressed a wide range of technical concerns related to developing new standards-based assessments, performance assessments, and portfolio assessments. Attendees had numerous opportunities to discuss and examine relevant issues, to examine the current status of research and practice in assessment, and to explore future initiatives and endeavors in the field.

Roy Truby, President of the National Assessment Governing Board, addressed participants concerning the history and context of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In addition, Sue Rigney from the United States Department of Education provided information concerning the role and implementation of Title I with regards to No Child Left Behind.

The Role of Arts Education in Improving the Performance of High Poverty Schools

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larly important for those students who do not readily find these opportunities in other environments and are most frequently left behind.

In addition to these improvements, the site visits yielded compelling evidence that arts education improves academic outcomes for students (in areas like reading and mathematics test scores) and enhances schools as a whole (i.e., a more positive school culture and resiliency, higher community involvement, better teacher retention, satisfaction, and ability to understand student needs).

Alongside these ten case study schools, a larger set of schools will be examined to collect additional resources for the project's resulting manual with the intention of fostering a network of high poverty schools that are effectively using arts education to improve their performance. If you know of a school that should be included in this group, or would like further information on this project or the *Critical Links* publication, please contact Lauren Stevenson at laurens@ccsso.org or (202) 326-8686. The release of AEP's manual on the role of arts education in improving the performance of high poverty schools is scheduled for release in winter 2003.

Besides *Critical Links*, research cited in this article derived from: *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*; and *The Arts and Education Reform: Lessons from a Four-Year Evaluation of North Carolina A+ Schools*.

Accountability Systems and No Child Left Behind

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hensive illustration of state data systems, it does show a broad overview of the status of state data systems. This survey was conducted prior to NCLB, and it does not specifically address the state data reporting capabilities demanded by NCLB.

NCLB also requires information regarding teacher qualifications. Every class will be recorded in terms of the teacher's credential status (highly qualified, fully certified, emergency/provisional credential). Each district and state will also have to report the percentage of classes that are not taught by "highly qualified teachers." To meet these reporting requirements, states need staff data systems linked with personnel and licensure information systems regarding assignment, qualification, and certification.

According to the Characteristics of a Comprehensive Education Information System for a State Education Agency, there are three general standards of staff data. The target standard involves an individual staff level record system that provides electronic historical staff records with the capacity to link them to programs, classes, and students for analysis. The interim standard contains an individual electronic, historical staff record that is maintained but cannot be linked to programs, classes, or student analysis. The least effective standard includes staff records maintained on paper. Not surprisingly, states without individual student records and those with staff records maintained on paper will face major obstacles in fulfilling the NCLB requirements.

Both the USED and the state education agencies recognized the need for improved data quality and efficient data systems. In May 2002, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education initiated a meeting to discuss and to develop a shared data model, data stan-

dards, and data definitions for a state-level information system that will respond to the reporting requirements of NCLB. Other states invited include: Florida, Mississippi, Iowa, New York, Oregon, Nebraska, and Kentucky. These states either have student information systems in place or have expressed interest in developing a student information system. Representatives from USED, CCSSO, and federal contractors also attended this meeting to bring further collaboration between the state and federal education agencies. Depending on the feedback from the states, the consortium may expand to include all states in efforts to centralize data initiatives.

USED continues to work in collaboration with states to address the NCLB data reporting requirements. One such collaboration proposed by USED is the Performance-Based Data Management Initiative (PBDMI). PBDMI reduces the federal data burden for states reporting to the federal government by streamlining the USED data collection process, and creating common data standards between federal, state, and local education agencies. PBDMI proposes a central federal data repository that collects and stores data reported by the states. The states would report the data to the repository instead of responding to queries from various USED program offices which often ask for redundant data and whose data definitions vary from program office to program office. Instead of requesting data from the state education agencies, the program offices at USED could harvest the data it needs from the data repository. PBDMI also requires education agencies and its respective program offices to use a common data dictionary and data framework to ensure comparability between and among education entities.

USED is simultaneously assessing the state capabilities for NCLB reporting requirements. On July 18 and 19, 2002, USED convened representatives from state and federal education agencies to review NCLB information requirements, state system capabilities, and efforts to address challenges that states

may face. As a result of the meeting, USED hopes to identify issues, potential solutions, and technical assistance opportunities with respect to NCLB data reporting requirements.

Timely and accurate data is critical to evaluate the effectiveness of education entities and its programs. NCLB has highlighted the need for both federal and state education agencies to produce improved data quality. The need for improved data quality has been an issue that has been discussed for many years, and states with effective data systems will be best prepared to fulfill the reporting requirements of NCLB.

Helpful Resources

- www.educationadvisor.com for the latest information on the data requirements efforts by the Department of Education
- <http://nces.ed.gov/forum> for information on efforts to improve the quality, comparability, and usefulness of education data.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact Jinhee Lee at (202) 336-7051 or jinheel@ccsso.org.

Research cited in this article derived from: Ligon, Glynn. (2002). *A Review of the Accountability Reporting Requirements for HR1 No Child Left Behind Elementary and Secondary Act*.

SSTA Division STAFF NEWS

Natalie Fielman joined the SCASS Project as the meeting planner. She hails from the Society of Research Administrators International, where she was their meeting manager and office manager. Her prior work history also includes several years with Smith, Bucklin, & Associates, where she worked as a meeting planner in the convention and trade show division. Natalie has a B.A. in English from the University of MD.

Melissa Zack joined the Division of State Services and Technical Assistance of CCSSO in July 2002. Melissa just finished her first year of graduate work at University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. Her concentrations are in social policy analysis and non-profit management. Prior to her graduate work, she worked in grants management at other national education organizations, including Reading Is Fundamental, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Public Education Network. She is a graduate of Miami University in Ohio.

Melissa has been hired as a graduate-level summer intern to conduct research, compile findings, and develop links in the National Dairy Council grant under CCSSO's School Health Project. Staff assigned to this project will develop state policy profiles related to physical activity and nutrition in schools. These profiles will serve as part of a planning tool to be used by state teams during the upcoming Healthy Schools Summit to be held in October 2002. CCSSO is partnering with the Dairy Council and other organizations to support the Healthy Schools Summit.

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