

What is the role of the State Education Agency in providing Local Education Agencies with access to key data for instruction?

Most State Education Agencies have begun building and maintaining longitudinal student data systems housing student level data at the state level. With this wealth of information, what role can they play in assisting Local Education Agencies with access to student data? The following points were raised in a roundtable discussion among SEA representatives at CCSSO's September 2007 Education Leaders Conference, 'Using Data to Improve Instruction: Building on Models that Work.'

STATEWIDE STUDENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS

- The SEA is responsible for establishing and implementing a statewide student identifier.
- With high levels of mobility in student populations, the unique student identifier becomes increasingly important; if a student moves across districts, a statewide identifier will allow the districts to track mobile students and correctly place them in classes and programs.

PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The SEA has a role in assisting districts with identifying the key data that is needed for instruction, and ensuring its collection at the district and state level.
- SEAs can provide professional development to district staff on topics such as data quality and effective data use.
- The SEA can build awareness among districts of available tools for improving data use.
- SEAs can maintain a best practices library.
- SEA plays a critical role in certification requirements for teachers and administrators. As such, they can require pre-service coursework in effective data use.

BENCHMARKING SERVICES

- SEAs have a role in providing the big picture context of what is happening in education across the states.
- SEAs can provide benchmarking tools along with data to help districts identify similar districts that may be outperforming others. Districts can use this data to arrange for staff visits to learn what the outperforming districts are doing well.
- SEAs can also identify which school districts need to look for best practice models, and where those models can be found.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

- SEAs need to support the building of a technology infrastructure statewide. This includes promoting common data standards among all districts, helping to manage vendors, enabling common software development, and fostering interoperability.
- SEAs can be helpful in providing a standard, user-friendly format for district staff and teachers to view their data.
- SEAs can help provide common metrics and guidance for connecting data points into meaningful indicators.

LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

- SEAs can advocate for legislative support for cohesive, longitudinal data systems at all levels.

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