

EIMAC Fall 2007 Meeting
Longitudinal Data Systems Subcommittee
October 16-17, 2007
Chair: Corey Chatis, Tennessee
Chair Elect: Tom Olson, South Carolina

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

Introduction

As this is the first ever convening of this subcommittee, the Chair provided an overview of the purpose of the subcommittee and how it differs from other groups discussing this topic.

- Subcommittee aligns with EIMAC's mission to provide guidance to states on building LDS systems.
- Subcommittee is funded by the states as opposed to the task forces.
- Subcommittee will focus on the technical aspects of LDS systems rather than policy.
- Subcommittee discussions result in recommendations to chiefs.
- Subcommittee is a venue to discuss lessons learned in building these systems.

Data Security and Access Rights

The subcommittee hosted an open discussion on the topic of data security and access rights. Participants discussed this issue from their individual state's perspective. Key points and questions included:

- If students are users of a state system, then any support center has to be qualified (background checks) to deal with children/minors.
- When do you purge the system of unused IDs/passwords? How difficult do you make password rules?
 - 3 month limit on passwords
 - State mandate on complexity of password
- One person in a school or district can register to use the system. They review a list of applications available and indicate for each one which level they will use it.
- Approval for access is through the data owner – the director that has mandated collection of that data.
- How do you structure access rights for teachers to have access to student data for students coming in as well as students who have left them? Circular model rather than linear.
 - The Holland & Knight paper on FERPA provides good guidance on this topic.
- Small cell size security is an issue too.
- More data and increased access to data leads (i.e., more users) leads to increased risks of security breaches.

E-transcripts

The subcommittee joined the General Statistics Subcommittee for a discussion on e-transcripts. The group in general has found that vendors seem to be leading this

discussion and promising on products that they can't deliver. Vendors have approached districts and institutions of higher education independently of SEAs and tried to sell programs. The following issues were raised in discussion.

- What do we mean when we talk about e-transcripts? Or do we mean electronic student records?
 - School to school, district to district, district to SEA, district to higher education, etc.?
 - Student records are bigger than transcripts.
- Some states have implemented an e-transcript program successfully. Indiana has offered themselves as a resource.
- MWHEC has negotiated a package with Docufiled on behalf of 11 upper Midwestern states.
- SIF can provide the specs for this.
- Common course codes are essential.
- E-transcripts ignore the K-8 aspect of a student's academic record.
- What data is needed for the e-transcript?

EIMAC will follow-up on this issue.

Interoperability

Laurie Collins from SIFA presented the SIF specification framework to subcommittee members. She announced that they just completed a proof of concept with South Carolina and the U.S. Department of Education for collecting data and submitting ED*Facts* files using SIF. She mentioned that IES grantee states can receive some TA from them through their contract with CCSSO on the grant work.

Data Linkages

The subcommittee discussed how LDS systems can link up with data from other agencies. Key issues discussed included:

- A data linkage is a link or map of data from two different sources based on some common element
- You have to run additional matches because there is often a lack of trust of the other data source.
- Data linkages usually blocked by FERPA.
- The biggest stumbling block in linking data with outside agencies is the attorneys.
- Tie the data linkage to an economic development initiative to get more traction.
- Increased the need for data quality if outside agencies will be using your data.

Wednesday, October 17, 2007

DSAC II

Rick Rozzelle, CELT Corporation, gave a presentation on phase II of the Decision Support Architecture Consortium. He outlined the progress that has been made on the DSAC framework since the summer meeting in Nashville and announced a follow-up meeting in December in Indianapolis. By January 2008, the tool will be available to all states for free.

He invited comments from any state present that is currently participating in Phase II.

- IN: Site visit went well. The LEA they had at the meeting was pleased with the tool. They feel that the tool is very applicable at the SEA level as well as the LEA.
- MO: They had 2 suburban districts present. The LEAs learned a lot about themselves through self evaluation. It is an eye opening experience for districts as they see the best practices and try to find evidence to support them. A national standard for best practices has a lot of value. It's not prescriptive or mandated by the federal government. This can become a repository of best practices for LEAs. As districts rate themselves highly, they can be a resource for others.
- NC: This is a customized approach for school/district improvement rather than a one size fits all. State level folks began to think differently about how to evaluate and provide TA.
- TN: The process creates constructive tension as district level folks discuss the best practices. Could you be doing things better? Could you be standardizing processes? Always room to improve.

Determining the Factors in LDS Costs

The subcommittee listed and discussed the variety of factors that influence a state's cost to design, build, and maintain a longitudinal data system.

- What existing infrastructure is going to continue to be used?
- LEA costs need to be determined.
- What staff do you have and what positions will you need to recruit?
- How much local control do you have in your state? What is the balance of power between SEA/LEA?
- State laws/mandates are a big factor (e.g., a state must implement SIF).
- Software licensing issues: does the SEA pay for licenses throughout the state?
- Level of existing collaboration within an LEA or between LEA/SEA (data governance, etc.). The longer it takes to establish good communication and governance processes, the more expensive the project becomes.
- Security and identity management; more users with access leads to more security and higher costs.
- Diversity of existing SIS systems in LEAs.
- Physical space needs can expand depending upon the services you're offering.
- Change management work to change cultures around data at SEA level and LEA.
- Training costs at the school, LEA, and SEA levels.
- Data quality: more data to more people at more detailed level. Need for more accuracy.
- Data linkages with other organizations and postsecondary institutions creates costs. Storing and matching other organizations' data is costly.
- Creating in-house vs through a contractor.
- Update hardware and software every X number of years – like building a house and maintaining. 3 year cycle for hardware. Maintenance needs to be part of the budget process.
- Risk analysis: what is the risk of keeping hardware over 3 years?

- What is the scope of your LDS system? Trying to get data into the classroom?
To parents?
- Capacity issue on data requests.
- Scope creep can significantly increase costs; need good project management.

Report-out

The subcommittee made the following three recommendations to Chiefs during their report-out.

- 1) Chiefs should collectively develop a core set of questions they would like answered by a longitudinal data system.
- 2) Chiefs should have an awareness of the sustainability requirements (including LEA effort) of their state's LDS and be an effective advocate at the state and national levels.
- 3) Chiefs should collectively and individually establish their vision and promote their requirements regarding electronic student record exchange and e-transcripts.