



STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM

VISIONING & OUTREACH

STAKEHOLDER VISION AND PRIORITIES

A Report to the Iowa Department of Education
Submitted by State Public Policy Group - SPPG

February 2012

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February 28, 2012

Jay Pennington, Chief
Bureau of Information and Analysis
Division of Communication and Information
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E 14th Street
Des Moines IA 50319

Dear Mr. Pennington:

Over the past year a critical step in the continued development of Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) has been accomplished. The Iowa Department of Education again reached out across the state to elicit the feedback, input, ideas, and opinions of education stakeholders from preschool to post-graduate levels. It is with appreciation and pleasure that we submit this report that outlines the findings of a broad-reaching set of focus groups and a stakeholder survey.

Those of us who served on the SLDS Core Planning Group came to this initiative with varying levels of knowledge and understanding of Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System. Our expectations of the SLDS also vary, and we have all expanded our thinking about the SLDS through the information that was gathered from stakeholders and from our own discussions and deliberations. The investment by the Iowa Department of Education in this level of stakeholder involvement is appreciated by education stakeholders and it is viewed as an indication of the Department's commitment to ensuring the SLDS serves interests far beyond state government and well beyond traditional education.

Stakeholders responded with interest, curiosity, and expectations that the SLDS will continue to be developed and ultimately provide them with reliable and timely data by which to help students learn, grow, and become successful in their lives. This is a significant and longer-term expectation that the Department of Education has made a priority. We are confident that the educators and other stakeholders in Iowa are ready for the increased opportunity to access and use relevant education data for the benefit of learners.

We appreciate the opportunity to be at the table for these discussions over the past months. In this spirit of partnership with the Department, we deliver this report as the culmination of the statewide outreach initiative and with a willingness to continue assisting in the enhancement and further development of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

Sincerely,

Members of the Core Planning Group

CORE PLANNING GROUP MEMBERS

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Dennis Wulf	Norwalk Community School District, Norwalk – Public K-12 Administrator

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SLDS Core Planning Group wishes to recognize and thank the Iowa Department of Education for its commitment to meaningful engagement of stakeholders in the development of the longitudinal data system. Special thanks are due Jay Pennington and Jason Grinstead for their leadership and guidance. Marcia Krieger played a key role in communication with stakeholders, for which the Core Planning Group is grateful.

A dozen focus groups were held around the state in May 2011. We appreciate the warm welcomes and assistance we received in scheduling and arranging for use of facilities in schools, public libraries, community colleges, and at the School Administrators of Iowa offices in Ames, Atlantic, Bettendorf, Clive, Des Moines, Iowa City, Mason City, Oskaloosa, Storm Lake, and Waterloo.

Finally, the Core Planning Group recognizes that its efforts would have been futile without the high level of interest and participation in the statewide outreach efforts. Appreciation is due those who contributed to the focus groups and in completion of the survey. Stakeholders invited to participate included:

- PK-12 Teachers and Curriculum Specialists from public and private schools and Area Education Agencies
- K-12 Business Managers from public and private schools
- K-12 Human Resource Managers from public and private schools
- K-12 Information Technology staff from public and private schools
- Superintendents and Principals from public and private schools
- Area Education Agency Directors
- Community Colleges
- Private Colleges and Universities
- Regents Universities

Our gratitude is extended to all those who participated in or offered support to this outreach and planning effort.

The SLDS Visioning and Outreach Initiative was conducted by State Public Policy Group, Inc. of West Des Moines. www.sppg.com

Central Surveys, Inc. of Shenandoah, Iowa, partnered with SPPG to conduct the statewide survey. www.centuralsurveys.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is a longer-term project linking existing data sets and adding new data sets in ways that will allow information to be extracted and utilized by stakeholders in ways not previously possible. As educators know, families, technology, and education are closely linked and continue to change, facing new opportunities and challenges. Local, state, and federal need for accurate and timely education data to support decision-making are driving this initiative. Federal grants are providing the funding for development of an SLDS that meets federal criteria yet offers Iowa's educators significant enhancements to the existing data warehouse.

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) has focused significant effort and investment over recent years in developing tools and systems to assist educators in data-driven decision-making and in providing greater efficiencies, accuracy, and timely provision of data for education stakeholders. Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is intended to streamline and enhance the way districts provide the data they already send to the state, ensuring educational data are provided in a consistent, reliable, and accurate manner statewide. Within the framework of laws, regulations, and practices protecting the privacy and confidentiality of student and staff data, the DE continues its investment in a useful and practical educational data tool to serve the needs of Iowa's education stakeholders, the DE, and the public.

Stakeholder Vision of Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System

The Statewide Longitudinal Data System is a practical tool for analyzing key indicators to identify effective educational strategies and practices so that all students learn, grow, and succeed during their school years and beyond.

Guiding Principles for Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System

Guiding Principles providing overarching guidance for developers and users of data at all levels in Iowa's education systems:

1. The SLDS will be used to support student growth and learning in all levels of education.
2. The SLDS will comply with all laws and regulations at all levels of authority (federal, state, local, organizational) regarding privacy and confidentiality of student, employee, and other data.
3. The SLDS will be transparent in its development process, governance, and data reports.
4. The SLDS will be governed by a group that includes representatives of stakeholders and owners of the data.

Stakeholder Priorities for the Statewide Longitudinal Data System

Iowa's Department of Education has been working to develop its educational data sets and link them into a system that will greatly enhance the value of the data. Stakeholder input shows that local education users value data and embrace the efforts to continue development of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System that provides local users additional tools to support their efforts in ensuring student growth and learning.

Ten broad priorities based on stakeholder input are consistent with the Guiding Principles and are critical for Iowa's system. These priorities are designed to support the Department's work on the SLDS and offer advice to the Department as it identifies and implements the specific activities required to address the priorities. These priorities are equally important, interdependent, and integrated and for that reason are presented here in no particular order.

Stakeholder Priorities

- A. Ensure individual stakeholders statewide are aware of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and have an appropriate level of understanding so that the SLDS can be utilized optimally to benefit student learning and growth.
- B. Work consistently and steadily in increments or stages to develop and implement the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.
- C. Ensure the Statewide Longitudinal Data System is dynamic and that it will accommodate and guide ongoing education and education policy changes through its outputs.
- D. Ensure the Statewide Longitudinal Data System is developed with flexible and accessible technology so those with limited technology resources will be able to access and use the SLDS.
- E. Include student tracking beyond K-12 in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System to provide aggregate data on student success post-graduation.
- F. Ensure that Statewide Longitudinal Data System education data inform a broad array of decisions.
- G. Provide Statewide Longitudinal Data System education data in aggregate form, and ensure data are de-identified, confidential, and protect privacy of students and employees.
- H. Ensure transparency in Statewide Longitudinal Data System reports to the extent possible.
- I. Provide accompanying information about the context, application, and meaning of the data contained in reports generated from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.
- J. Provide training and professional development to stakeholders in the use of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and how to effectively and accurately utilize the data reports.

Supporting Data

The vision, guiding principles, and ten priorities were developed based upon qualitative and quantitative research conducted statewide in 2011 and early 2012. A planning group representing education stakeholder groups convened in deliberations on the research findings and guided development of this report. Qualitative research included individual interviews with representative stakeholders and a series of 12 focus groups conducted statewide with stakeholder groups in the PK-12 public and private school districts, Area Education Agencies, community colleges, private colleges and universities, and the Regents universities. A statewide survey provided quantitative data which informed development of the priorities for further development of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System in Iowa.

PREFACE

Iowans hold steadfast in their belief that children are the future, and that a solid Iowa education will make that future bright. This is an Iowa value. Yet nothing remains static. In recent years there has been an urgency to ensure that the students emerging from Iowa's school systems are well prepared to compete and succeed in a very different world than that of their grandparents.

The changes in education and Iowa families – such as technology, expanded expectations for performance, the explosion of information that needs to be taught, mobility, and changed family structures – also provide opportunity. Coupled with implementation of new standards and increased expectations for school systems to be accountable, the use of data has become of paramount importance for educators at all levels.

Iowa's education systems embrace data as a tool for today's educators. Efforts at data collection and use that may have been viewed with concern even five years ago are now sought by educators throughout the system. Federal education authorities and Congress have supported the use of data and are requiring consistent and uniform data collection while at the same time protecting individually identifiable data through stringent regulations.

The Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is a longer-term project linking existing data sets and adding new data sets in ways that will allow information to be extracted and utilized by stakeholders in ways not previously possible. Iowa Department of Education certainly needs the SLDS to comply with federal reporting requirements and for its own uses to improve student learning and growth in the state. As local districts and institutions at all levels report data to the state, they also seek means to measure student progress, support staff development, and better manage their own organizations through analysis of data.

Clearly, it is in the interest of federal, state, and local education interests to develop a practical and robust integrated data system for Iowa education data. Good progress has been made on Iowa's system, but with the dynamic environment in education, more is needed. The outreach initiative reported here reflects the needs and priorities of public and private pre-kindergarten through post-graduate education systems. With continued investment in the most necessary elements of the SLDS, the Department of Education can help educators fulfill the Iowa values of education and a bright future for their children.

STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM (SLDS) IN IOWA: THE PATH FORWARD

Over time, people involved in education have recognized the value of using data in decision-making. In order to effectively use data, they need appropriate tools to access, connect, and process the data.

To date, the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences invested \$515 million with states to develop education data systems. The goal is to build state capacity in building and using statewide longitudinal data systems that link students from pre-K to the workforce and provide a big-picture look at important issues such as school and career readiness. These state data systems will be built on standards and could, in the future, facilitate the transfer of information when a student moves from one state to another, with enough freedom for each state to customize for its own needs. Iowa received an \$8 million grant to develop its Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) has worked with stakeholders around the state to develop a practical tool for education staff at all levels that provides easy access to unified data about education systems and students over time. Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is intended to streamline and enhance the way districts provide the data they already send to the state, ensuring educational data are provided in a consistent, reliable, and accurate manner statewide. The SLDS will link disparate data sets to provide stakeholders access to new information and analyses that were previously not available. By giving teachers and administrators the tools for in-depth data analysis, the SLDS will offer a more detailed picture of student achievement and the factors that influence student performance. This initiative will also change the way student data moves between and across educational entities throughout the state, allowing for robust security and increased efficiency.

The US Department of Education outlined key characteristics of statewide longitudinal data systems, but gave states the freedom to innovate and meet their stakeholders' unique needs. General characteristics of a statewide longitudinal data system include:

- Data collected are accurate, detailed and include information related to students, staff, finances, and other education-related data.
- Data systems are linked and collect information over time.
- Data are accessible to users through reporting and analysis tools.
- Data answer key policy questions, which drives informed decisions.

The SLDS will not function as one massive repository, but, rather, will provide linkages with other systems that can enable sharing of data with each other and provide long-term trend information.

The grant requires that DE work in several specific areas that combine to form a single system, the SLDS. Those areas of focus are:

1. Develop the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF), a standard mechanism to move data on students electronically between entities in a uniform manner. This system is in the pilot-testing

phase. SIF allows disparate systems to connect and “talk” to each other. SIF Works zone integration software and the Iowa Education Portal are the tools being used, and the “end systems” that SIF will communicate with include EdInsight, EASIER, ITP, Chart of Accounts, BEDS, IMS, and Iowa Transcript Center. As an example of SIF’s application, when a student is registered in a school district, that student’s data will be uploaded to SIF and compared to find a match to an existing ID or create a new ID, avoiding duplication of records.

2. Automate federal EdFacts reporting (of aggregated data sent to the US Department of Education).
3. Expand EdInsight, by adding additional large-scale, summative assessments, finance data and a secure portal and business intelligence platform that can generate parameterized and ad-hoc reports. DE and AEA partners have focused on training more personnel on EdInsight over the last year, going from 100 to about 2,000 people trained. This year’s goal is to have one staff member in each school district trained. Through EdInsight, as soon as data are available to the state, they are available to districts as well.
4. Develop post-secondary data linkages in order to get a picture of the college readiness of Iowa high school graduates. Working under what privacy laws allow, DE is implementing some feedback reporting from post-secondary institutions (Regents universities and community colleges) to K-12 districts.
5. Develop workforce data linkages to get a sense of “return on investment” in education, such as PK-12 outcomes in comparison with post-secondary education outcomes, employment, industry, and salary. DE is working with Iowa Workforce Development on an agreement to share some of these data.
6. Develop the Iowa Transcript Center (ITC), which lets Iowa schools transfer both student records and transcripts electronically. Today, over 60 percent of K-12 school districts have access to ITC, and the rest will soon be added to the system. Both community colleges and Iowa public universities have the ability to receive Iowa student transcripts.

The goal of SLDS development is to give educators and administrators access to data that will help them in their work and in long-term decision-making. They will be able to see the big picture and annual trends, examine what achievement looks like, and begin to address the question of what our education system can do to better prepare students for the future. Iowa has excelled among the states in working with stakeholders outside the state education agency, such as Area Education Agencies and school districts, including teachers, administrators, and business staff. Rather than building a system to meet only its own needs, DE has engaged in an extensive outreach program to gather input on the needs of future users at many levels in order to design a useful product.

As work on the SLDS under the 2009 grant continues, DE submitted an application in December 2011 for a new grant competition to link post-secondary and workforce data with the SLDS and automate the exchange of information. If Iowa receives the grant, it will focus on developing strategies for how these linkages should be used (governance) and training on how to use the data. A trainer and program

evaluation staff are included in the grant, as well as development of a plan for voluntary data sharing between DE and Iowa private colleges.

Privacy considerations continue to guide work on the SLDS and data sharing. Possibilities have evolved with the recent change in rules under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which governs the way agencies and educational institutions can share information to benefit student learning while respecting privacy and presenting data accurately.

STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES FOR THE STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM

Central to the continued development of Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System are broad understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of the potential that the SLDS brings to education. Data are sought and applied on a daily basis to improve student success in ways not considered even ten years ago. It is critical that local education stakeholders present their vision and priorities to the Iowa Department of Education for consideration as the SLDS is developed and enhanced.

Stakeholders across the state provided input into this report. The vision, guiding principles, and priorities for the SLDS reflect the views, ideas, and deliberations of K-12 administrators and teachers, Area Education Agency staff at all levels, post-secondary institution leaders and education data staff, and others. Public and private education are represented. Information was gathered through focus groups and a statewide survey, with a representative Core Planning Group providing direction along the way in development of the vision, guiding principles, and priorities. A description of the year-long process is included in the next section of this report.

The priorities presented in this report are the heart of the outreach initiative, coming directly from the statewide qualitative and quantitative research and discussed in ongoing deliberations by the Core Planning Group. The vision, guiding principles, and priorities reflect statewide stakeholders' needs and perceptions. They are intended to be considered as a whole, and the priorities to be seen as interdependent.

The Core Planning Group recognizes and appreciates that the Iowa Department of Education has requested and invested in this statewide input and that the final decisions on how the SLDS is developed over time rest with the Department. The priorities are important and broad-ranging, and the Core Planning Group understands that the priorities will be an integral part of the Department's implementation plan. The Core Planning Group also recognizes that the Department will be including these priorities within the broader SLDS initiative and that, as strategies are developed and funding secured, implementation will focus on the areas of greatest need for the many local stakeholders across the state and the Department. The Core Planning Group emphasizes that the priorities developed from stakeholder research are interdependent; some will need to be implemented simultaneously or sequentially to achieve optimal capacity of the SLDS. Awareness of the SLDS is known to be low across the state, and fundamental understanding and knowledge of its value will be critical to its long-term utilization by state and local education stakeholders.

Stakeholder Vision of Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System

The Statewide Longitudinal Data System is a practical tool for analyzing key indicators to identify effective educational strategies and practices so that all students learn, grow, and succeed during their school years and beyond.

Guiding Principles for Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System

The Core Planning Group identified four fundamental principles that Iowa should apply at every step in development and implementation of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. These Guiding Principles emerged from the statewide stakeholder outreach and were of highest priority for the Core Planning Group, providing overarching guidance for developers and users of data at all levels in Iowa's education systems.

Guiding Principles

1. The SLDS will be used to support student growth and learning in all levels of education.
2. The SLDS will comply with all laws and regulations at all levels of authority (federal, state, local, organizational) regarding privacy and confidentiality of student, employee, and other data.
3. The SLDS will be transparent in its development process, governance, and data reports.
4. The SLDS will be governed by a group that includes representatives of stakeholders and owners of the data.

Stakeholder Priorities for the Statewide Longitudinal Data System

Iowa's Department of Education has been working to develop its educational data sets and link them into a system that will greatly enhance the value of the data. Stakeholder input shows that local education users value data and embrace the efforts to continue development of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System that provides local users additional tools to support their efforts in ensuring student growth and learning.

Ten broad priorities were established by the Core Planning Group after deliberation on the input received from stakeholders statewide. All are consistent with the four Guiding Principles and are critical for Iowa's system. These priorities are designed to support the Department's work on the SLDS and offer advice to the Department as it identifies and implements the specific activities required to address the priorities. As noted earlier, these priorities are equally important, interdependent, and integrated and for that reason are presented here in no particular order.

Stakeholder Priorities

- A. Ensure individual stakeholders statewide are aware of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and have an appropriate level of understanding so that the SLDS can be utilized optimally to benefit student learning and growth.
- B. Work consistently and steadily in increments or stages to develop and implement the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.
- C. Ensure the Statewide Longitudinal Data System is dynamic and that it will accommodate and guide ongoing education and education policy changes through its outputs.
- D. Ensure the Statewide Longitudinal Data System is developed with flexible and accessible technology so those with limited technology resources will be able to access and use the SLDS.
- E. Include student tracking beyond K-12 in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System to provide aggregate data on student success post-graduation.

- F. Ensure that Statewide Longitudinal Data System education data inform a broad array of decisions.
- G. Provide Statewide Longitudinal Data System education data in aggregate form, and ensure data are de-identified, confidential, and protect privacy of students and employees.
- H. Ensure transparency in Statewide Longitudinal Data System reports to the extent possible.
- I. Provide accompanying information about the context, application, and meaning of the data contained in reports generated from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.
- J. Provide training and professional development to stakeholders in the use of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and how to effectively and accurately utilize the data reports.

Because the priorities are diverse in their scope – ranging from awareness of the SLDS to confidentiality – they are presented as an integrated package. In many cases it would be difficult to address a priority without there being impact on other priorities. The Core Planning Group urges the Department to consider this interdependence of priorities as it continues development and implementation of the SLDS.

Each of the ten priorities is presented below in greater detail and in a consistent format, with a statement of the priority, context and rationale for the importance of the priority, and supportive qualitative and quantitative data from the focus groups, survey, and Core Planning Group discussions.

Priority A

Ensure individual stakeholders statewide are aware of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and have an appropriate level of understanding so that the SLDS can be utilized optimally to benefit student learning and growth.

Rationale

Work on the Statewide Longitudinal Data System has been underway in Iowa as the Department of Education has developed and improved databases of enrollment, testing, finance, and other education-related information. The SLDS initiative since 2009 has allowed linking those separate databases into a system that allows aggregate data to be utilized in new ways for educational decision-making. While there has been good effort to reach statewide and engage administrators, information technology experts, and data users from pre-kindergarten through post-secondary in planning and advisory roles, that level of understanding and involvement has been very specialized. The SLDS is coming to fruition and will continue to link and add new databases that will become commonly used in education decision-making at local and state levels.

The state must invest resources and time into efforts to inform and educate stakeholders and the public about the SLDS. The Core Planning Group believes the wealth of information that will be available in support of education system decisions simply must be known and available to the full range of education stakeholders. The value the SLDS brings to education needs to be demonstrated and local systems embrace its use. As linkages to other types of data occur, the roles and opportunities for post-secondary institutions, workforce agencies, and others will increase.

All information about the SLDS should emphasize the four guiding principles to ensure stakeholders recognize that the SLDS is a trusted resource for informing education system decisions and understand that these principles are central to decisions about developing and maintaining a data system focused on education. The Core Planning Group recognizes this is a crucial component of awareness and understanding.

Whether the effort takes the form of a granular approach to bringing SLDS to stakeholders through professional development or is the focus of a formal, statewide marketing campaign, getting the word out that SLDS is a tool for every educator is critical. The Department of Education should implement strategies for actively reaching out to stakeholders until all know about, understand, and can utilize the SLDS at the appropriate level for their need. By its very nature, the SLDS will be dynamic and evolve to include reports and features. To ensure users maintain optimal skills and capacity to use SLDS data, the Department's strategies should include sustaining the communication and training for stakeholders as the system changes.

Focus Group Comments

All the stakeholder groups recognized that data is everywhere, even though many were not aware of the SLDS initiative. Parents are demanding more data; students are motivated by quickly seeing how they are performing; student achievement and learning are summarized in standardized, quantitative reports; and administrators want to and are expected to utilize data in their daily decision-making. With the availability and acceptance of data comes increased scrutiny and accountability, which administrators and business managers spoke about most often – they are responsible to their governing bodies, parents, public, media, and policymakers. The demand for data and scrutiny of return on investment makes it critical that school personnel, especially administrators and business managers, are aware of the tools SLDS offers and how to utilize them most effectively. They need not only to understand how to access and glean the data, but also how to utilize the data to show the return on investment – how a district's practices are impacting its students' outcomes. The public and external stakeholders increasingly demand the results of such analyses, so the people held responsible have to know how to meet those demands.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- It has to do with educating the people we're working with. People come at issues from different points of view and levels of sophistication and understanding of the status quo. (Post-Secondary)
- Part of it is the communication about a data system; in a large district it's a challenge. People might not know it's available. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- The biggest barrier is knowing what's out there. For me, sitting in the classroom, I don't know what I'm missing. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- The increased scrutiny from the public is making an impact. There are websites for schools now that show return on investment. Schools will need to think about our business model. (Superintendents/Principals)

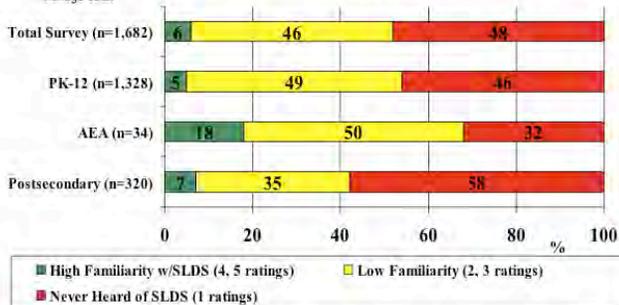
- ... the public is demanding access to more and more information... Schools are slow moving in those directions because they don't have the resources or mechanisms. Those are all the things we deal with – it's not just a best practice, it's a demand from stakeholders. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- There is a demand for data. *Time* magazine talked about financing higher education – it's front and center on their radar. When there is cost involved, that's where the questions and public comes in. (Post-Secondary)

Survey Findings

The statewide survey of education stakeholders found that only 6% of respondents reported high familiarity with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System in Iowa. Nearly half of respondents, 48%, were unfamiliar with the SLDS, and 46% reported low familiarity with the SLDS. Nonetheless, most survey respondents reported that they use data regularly to make decisions. Overall, 80% of respondents reported they either analyze data and develop reports or use data regularly to make decisions. Those percentages were higher for PK-12 (84%) and AEAs (85%), with post-secondary respondents reporting lower percentages (61%).

Most respondents are unfamiliar with the SLDS. (Total Survey)

* Survey groups in which relatively high proportions are familiar with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System include educators affiliated with Regents Universities, AEAs, and those whose job it is to analyze and manage data.

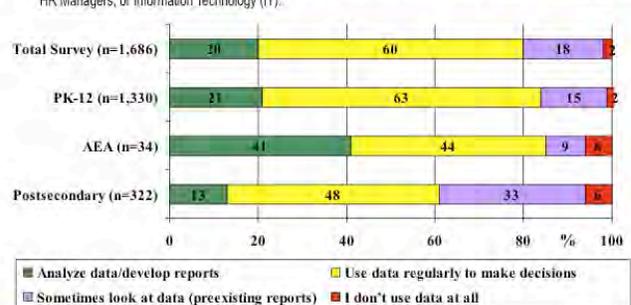


Q.12: "Please rate your familiarity with the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) using the scale below."

11

Most respondents use data regularly to make decisions. (Total Survey)

* Survey subgroups in which relatively large proportions say their job is to manage and analyze data include respondents representing AEAs, Regents Universities, or K-12 respondents with the role of Business Managers, HR Managers, or Information Technology (IT).



Q.11: "In your work, how do you access and use data?"

10

These data show that the Iowa Department of Education will need to work to create awareness and understanding of the SLDS across all stakeholder groups so that it will be accepted and used, as intended, to benefit student learning and growth. With the vast majority of stakeholders using data on a regular basis but only 6% being aware of the SLDS, there is great potential for the SLDS as a tool supporting the work of stakeholders in all groups in accessing and using data for their decision-making.

Low levels of awareness and understanding of the SLDS and its value were also shown in responses to questions related to the value of the SLDS. Respondents representing post-secondary institutions are more than twice as likely as those representing K-12 districts to respond that the SLDS will have significant value to post-secondary institutions, with 65% for post-secondary and 36% for K-12. Conversely, respondents representing K-12 districts are significantly more likely than those

representing post-secondary institutions to respond that the SLDS will have significant value to K-12 districts, with 61% for K-12 and 34% for post-secondary. These differences demonstrate that the system as a whole and its value to all stakeholders is not clearly understood.

Finally, all stakeholder groups responded that they agree that the primary focus of the SLDS should always be to support better learning for students, with 86% either strongly agreeing or somewhat agreeing with that statement.

These data seem to suggest that stakeholders support the primary purpose of the SLDS, to use data for decision-making, but many do not know about or understand the SLDS. With that awareness and understanding, a much broader range of stakeholders could be equipped with a valuable tool in their various roles in supporting student growth and learning.

Priority B

Work consistently and steadily in increments or stages to develop and implement the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

Rationale

The Statewide Longitudinal Data System is an extremely complex initiative, requiring expertise in everything from software coding to data analysis to negotiating. What gets the attention and the funding first? What has to be done later because it is dependent on something not yet in place? How can the system be built to be inherently dynamic as education and data systems evolve or undergo sudden requirements for something new or different? Above all, how does the system ensure privacy and confidentiality while providing transparent access to aggregated data?

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither will Iowa's SLDS. The Core Planning Group has a vision and certainly would like to see education benefit from a comprehensive system quickly. However, the Group also recognizes and values the importance of taking the development in steps and phases to ensure it is the best quality and functional system it can be as a tool for informing education system decisions. Throughout the Group's deliberations, they recognize this is part of a longer-term and evolving process. Not everything can be included in the SLDS, and certainly not be immediately perfect.

The Group identified several areas for the Department to address as it develops the SLDS.

- Because of its central role in the value of information from the SLDS, improve the student state ID system and processes to ensure increased accuracy.
- The data included in SLDS reports must be current, accurate, and available to stakeholders with short turnaround time from when it is submitted to the state. If this is not possible, the SLDS will not be accepted or used by stakeholders.
- Determine which data are of most value and importance to various users, and focus efforts in developing those elements of the SLDS early. Reports of value to a teacher may be quite different from those utilized by the district's finance manager.

- Retain the Department’s current approach of seeking opportunities to increase the value of SLDS to stakeholders in the future and ensuring the system will be flexible to accommodate new information or reporting.

Focus Group Comments

Focus group participants spent considerable time pointing out current difficulties with handling data that need to be addressed in order for the SLDS to provide the expected benefits to them and the state. These included improving tracking mechanisms for all students (not just those with special designations), including fixing problems with the unique student state ID system; giving districts more timely access to data they send to the state; and linking existing data, such as local assessments, to increase the flexibility of what districts can learn from SLDS. The overall concern is that what SLDS puts out will only be as good as what is put in, and there is work to be done to ensure quality data is put in, such as training the staff who enter data on the importance of consistency and how the data will be used. Participants also emphasized the need to hone in on information most useful to their work, instead of being overwhelmed with all the data available.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- ...Data doesn’t always match with our state IDs. That’s a problem. The state ID process is a problem. It’s getting better and they know there are issues, but it’s concerning. (Business Managers, HR, IT)
- We have difficulty with students who have no special identification. Wal-Mart does a better job tracking a pair of jeans across country than we do tracking kids. We do a good job tracking special education students, but not others. It is labor-intensive and inefficient. The answer to inefficiency is technology. (Superintendents/Principals)
- Given today’s needs, we need data as timely as possible. We also have created huge amounts of data without figuring out how to analyze, interpret and use it. (Superintendents/Principals)
- [The system needs] different levels of access to reports. I don’t need BEDS, so don’t overwhelm me with everything. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- Consider that every district does some of their own assessments, so it has to be able to incorporate those into the system. It has to have flexibility for local development. That information is just as valuable as ITBS. (Superintendents/Principals)
- [In response to what is most important to consider.] Flexibility and having access to data in a time-sensitive manner. Data has to be more frequently collected and updated – it can’t just be three times a year. Past a month old, it’s not good data anymore and there’s no point. (Business Managers, IT, HR)

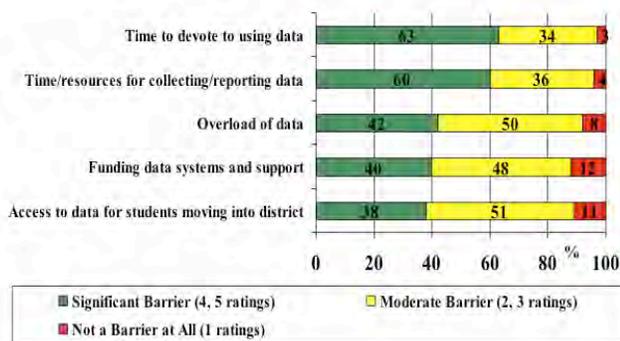
Survey Findings

Stakeholders were generous in their identification of important elements to include in the SLDS and in features they believe will help them in their goal of supporting student growth and learning. The survey examined a variety of aspects of the SLDS to ensure stakeholder perspectives are considered as the SLDS development continues.

Understanding and addressing the barriers to use of data is one way to approach development of the SLDS. Stakeholders overwhelmingly (97%) say that time to devote to using data is a barrier; 63% say it is a significant barrier and 34% say it is a moderate barrier. Time or resources for collecting and reporting data are the second-greatest barrier with 96%.

Consistent with these findings, when asked to rank the importance of a single portal (web location) to access data, 80% ranked this in the top three. Nearly half of all respondents (47%) ranked the single portal as their number one selection.

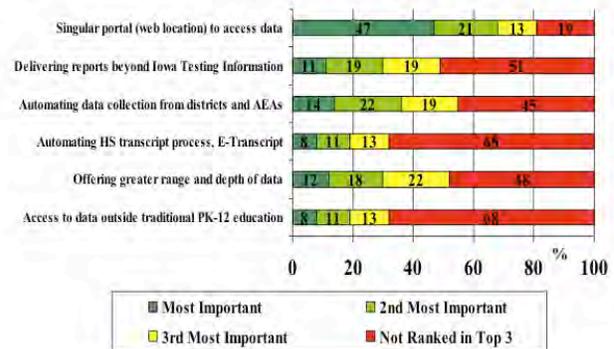
Top 5 Barriers to Use of Data
(Total Survey, n=1,587)



Q.13: "To what extent is each of the following a barrier to your use of data to make informed decisions?"

12

Ranking the Value of Various Characteristics of the SLDS
(Total Survey, n=1,466)



Q.15: "Please identify and rank the top three most important characteristics of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System."

15

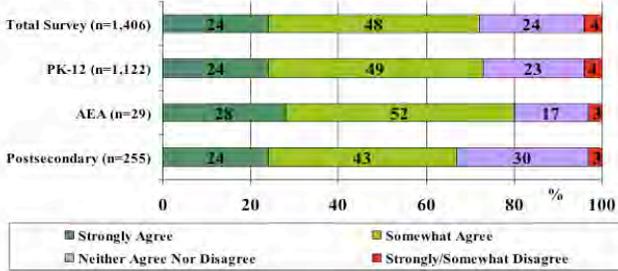
The survey provides some insight into stakeholder perceptions of the potential benefits of the SLDS. Overall, 66% of respondents say the SLDS will facilitate sharing of data among school districts, currently underway through the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF). Relatively, there was high agreement among educators in special education, those representing small school districts with fewer than 300 students, those in districts with more than 2,500 students, and respondents most familiar with the SLDS.

The SLDS feature of linking databases to provide a single, comprehensive source of data and reduce the need to access multiple databases is a benefit of the SLDS that 72% of all respondents agree with. Likewise, 72% of respondents also agree that a major advantage of integrating existing data in the SLDS is that linking data will eliminate the need for duplicate reporting by districts. In both cases, the level of agreement tends to increase with the familiarity with the SLDS. Generally, the level of agreement with these benefits is higher for administrators than for teachers.

Level of Agreement With Statement:

(F) The SLDS will link existing databases – providing a single comprehensive source of data and reducing the need to access multiple databases to find needed information.

- The level of agreement with this statement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS. Generally, the level of agreement is higher among administrators than among teachers, and is higher among White/Caucasian respondents than among African Americans (or members of other race/ethnic groups).



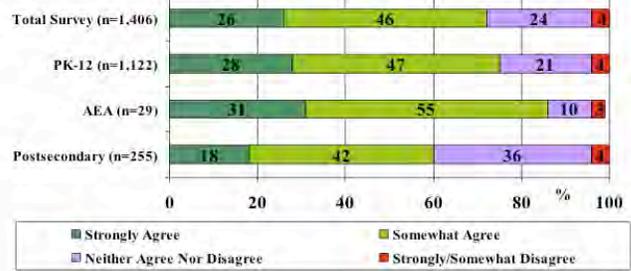
Q.17: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Possible Benefits and Value of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System' using the scale below.

25

Level of Agreement With Statement:

(G) A major advantage of integrating existing data in the SLDS is that linking data will eliminate the need for duplicate reporting by districts.

- As on the previous chart, the level of agreement with this statement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS. Again, the level of agreement is higher among administrators than among teachers, and is higher among White/Caucasian respondents than among African Americans (or members of other race/ethnic groups).



Q.17: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Possible Benefits and Value of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System' using the scale below.

26

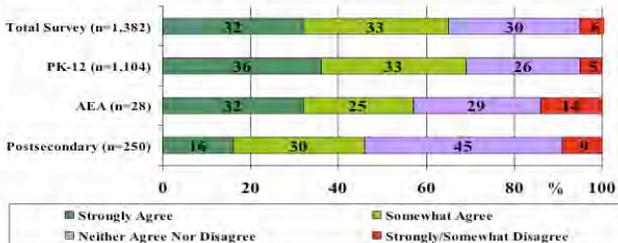
While there is strong agreement regarding the benefit and value of these databases, the survey also found that specific content was of significant importance to respondents. Among all respondent groups, 65% say that the primary mission of DE in developing the SLDS should be to integrate existing databases, such as EdInsight, Edinfo, EASIER, BEDS, IMS, Assessment, State Student Identifiers, and Iowa Transcript Center. Integration of these data should be the focus rather than gathering new types of information. Only 6% disagree with this mission.

Stakeholders want data to use to support articulation and student transitions from grade to grade or from one school to another. Among all respondents, 78% agreed that these types of data are needed. The largest "strongly agree" proportion is found among K-12 districts with 2,500 – 7,500 students.

Level of Agreement With Statement:

(A) The primary mission of DE in developing the SLDS should be to integrate existing data systems – such as EdInsight, Edinfo, Easier, BEDS, IMS, Assessment, State Student Identifiers, and E-Transcript – rather than to gather new types of information.

- Administrators (K-12 superintendents, principals, business managers, HR/IT managers) are significantly more likely to "strongly agree" with this statement than are teachers or members of the special education subgroup.
- Those who analyze/manage data as part of their job are significantly more likely than average to agree with this statement. Generally, the level of agreement increases significantly with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.



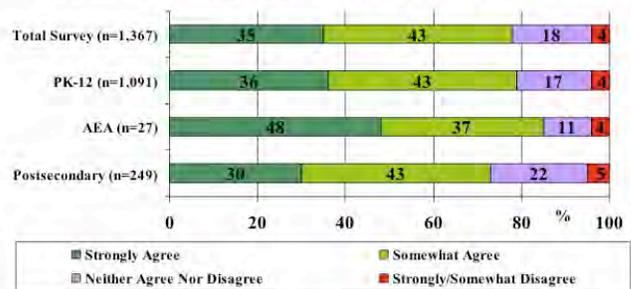
Q.19: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Content of Statewide Longitudinal Data System' using the scale below.

37

Level of Agreement With Statement:

(D) Data are needed to support student transitions (from grade to grade or from one school to another) and articulation.

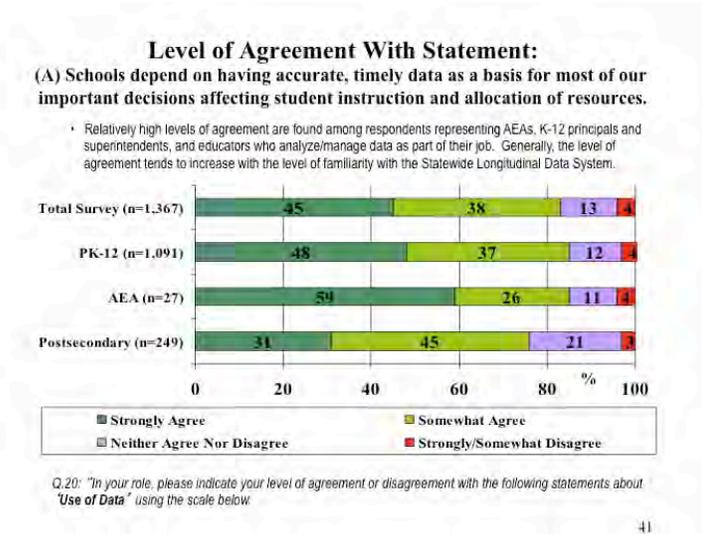
- Generally, the level of agreement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The largest "strongly agree" proportion is found among K-12 districts with 2,500 to 7,500 students.



Q.20: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Use of Data' using the scale below.

44

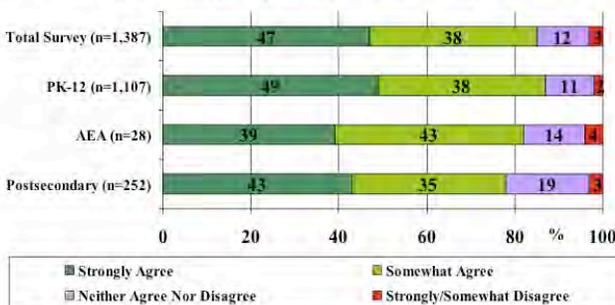
The survey overwhelmingly supports the findings of the focus groups and the discussions of the Core Planning Group regarding the importance of accurate and timely data with which to make decisions. Generally, the level of agreement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.



All respondent groups agree that a high priority in designing the SLDS should be to provide quick and easy access for approved users of the data. Eighty-five percent strongly agree or somewhat agree with this priority, with only 3% disagreeing. Similarly, 70% of all respondent groups strongly agree or agree that the SLDS should provide an efficient vehicle for automating transfer of transcripts. Generally, the highest levels of agreement are among K-12 superintendents and post-secondary respondents in administrative roles.

Level of Agreement With Statement:
(D) A high priority in designing the system should be to provide quick and easy access to approved users of the data.

• There is strong agreement among all subgroups of respondents; only a few disagree with this statement.

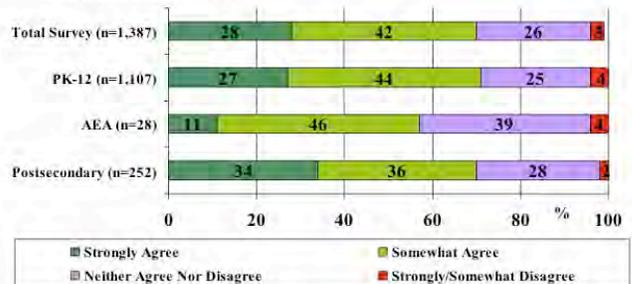


Q.18: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Function and Development' using the scale below."

33

Level of Agreement With Statement:
(E) The SLDS should provide an efficient vehicle for automating transfer of transcripts (E-Transcripts), reducing the effort associated with sending and entering transcript data.

• Generally, the highest levels of agreement are found among K-12 superintendents and postsecondary respondents in administrative roles.



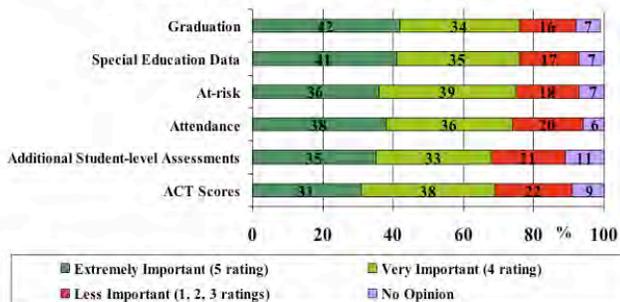
Q.18: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Function and Development' using the scale below."

34

Stakeholders also offered perspectives on the importance of adding various types of data to the SLDS. Graduation data, special education data, at-risk data, and attendance data were all seen as extremely important or very important by about three-fourths of all respondents. Of the 13 types of data presented, 9 were seen by more than 50% of respondents as extremely important or very important.

How Important That Various Types of Data Be Added to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System

(Most Important Data Based on Total Survey, n=1,350)

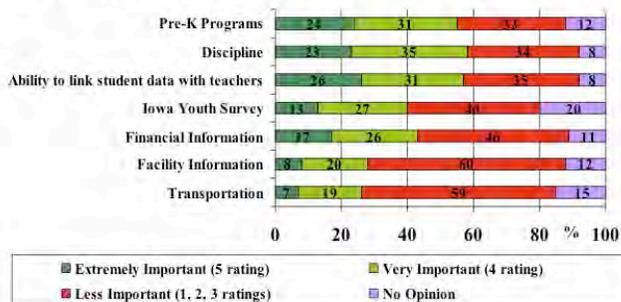


Q.23: "The state educational data warehouse, Edinsight, currently contains Iowa Testing (assessment), curriculum and enrollment data, and limited student demographic data. In addition to these data, please indicate how critical it is that the following types of data be added to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System to establish a true picture of educational development by using the scale below."

55

How Important That Various Types of Data Be Added to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System

(Relatively Less Important Data Based on Total Survey, n=1,350)



Q.23: "The state educational data warehouse, Edinsight, currently contains Iowa Testing (assessment), curriculum and enrollment data, and limited student demographic data. In addition to these data, please indicate how critical it is that the following types of data be added to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System to establish a true picture of educational development by using the scale below."

56

Priority C

Ensure the Statewide Longitudinal Data System is dynamic and that it will accommodate and guide ongoing education and education policy changes through its outputs.

Rationale

At no time in recent history has education seen such sweeping change as in the current environment. The increasing availability of data and its application in reviewing student growth and achievement are core drivers of these changes. Data-driven decision-making and use of data to identify effective educational strategies are likely to continue and expand. The role of the SLDS, then, can be expected to expand as well. The Core Planning Group believes it is a priority that the SLDS capacity and development get and stay in front of change, providing education data as one element in the program and public policy decisions we see now and in coming years.

In the past decade or more, as educators began to see data as one input into the complex issue of student growth and learning, some tried strategy after strategy to improve schools and test scores. Some adopted change after change, not truly having the chance to know what works for the long haul in helping students and improving schools. The SLDS, as it is strategically developed as a longitudinal tool, will allow district leaders, state leaders, and state policymakers to see a more complete and long-term view of the impact of education strategies on student growth and learning during their educational system years and beyond.

The Core Planning Group urges the Department to recognize the role of the SLDS in informing public policy for education and to consider that role in planning and developing the SLDS.

Focus Group Comments

Stakeholders ranging from teachers to business managers to state department staff want data to help understand what is effective and what is not in helping students learn and grow. They want information to inform their decisions and recommendations, they want to know what is working so they can evaluate their practices, and they want to identify high-performing districts and colleagues to reach out to for advice. Administrators also said that data on what is working would help them meet public demand for justification of decisions. Overall, participants saw that knowing what works would inform decision-making from the classroom level to the state policy and legislative level, from instruction methods to allocation of resources. The questions being asked about education and specific practices will continually change, so forward thinking and flexibility in the SLDS's capabilities are key.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

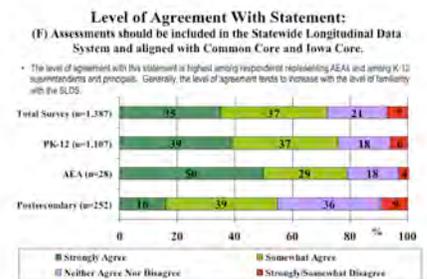
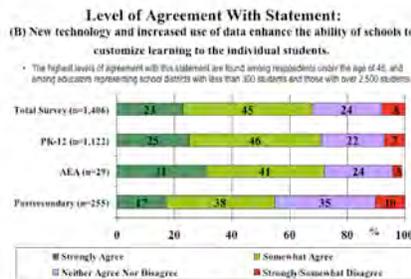
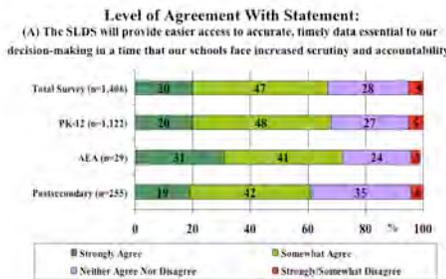
- Is the data going to change policy? Students who come to us at the community college and make a transition to a private four-year college before they get their AA, that's not "successful" for us by policy definitions, even though it is a success for the student. (Post-Secondary)
- [The SLDS] could help us inform policy better, make recommendations, and know what works and what doesn't. (Department of Education)
- It's important to have the data so you're not just making blind decisions. It lets us know what's working, instead of having to try lots of different things. It's data instead of perceptions. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- We need to know when things are working or not working. That's what data is supposed to do. Are things worth the time and resources? (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- The [school] boards want to be more informed, because constituents are holding them more accountable, ... and they want to have the data to support the decisions they're making. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- The Legislature always asks questions about who is providing the best education – small or large schools. We could really answer the question with an SLDS. I don't think it is about size, but about quality. (Superintendents/Principals)

Survey Findings

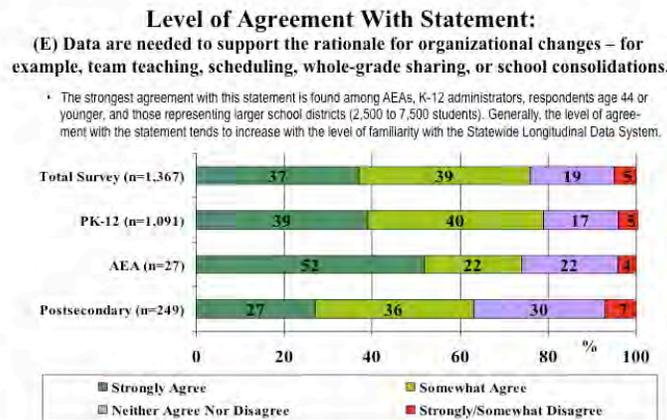
Survey respondents provided ample data supporting their desire and need for a dynamic SLDS that will meet the needs as education and education policy change over time. When asked the value of specific characteristics of the SLDS, more than half of all respondents want reports beyond Iowa testing information (58%) and a system that offers a greater range and depth of data (53%).

Data drive education decisions at an increasing level. Policy decisions are also highly dependent on data to inform the direction of education policy at all levels. Two-thirds of all stakeholders agreed that the SLDS will provide easier access to accurate, timely data essential to decision-making in a time that schools face increased scrutiny and accountability. Respondents representing Area Education Agencies had a significantly higher percentage of "strongly agree" responses compared to the other response categories.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents also agree that the combination of new technology and increased use of data enhance the ability of schools to customize learning to the individual students. In further illustration of this perspective, 76% of respondents representing PK-12 and 79% of those representing AEAs agree that assessments should be included in the SLDS and aligned with the Common Core and Iowa Core. The level of agreement with this statement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.



Respondents recognize the use of data in policy decisions at the local level as well. Slightly more than three-fourths of respondents (76%) agreed that data are needed to support the rationale for organizational changes, such as team teaching, scheduling, whole-grade sharing, or school consolidations. Generally, the level of agreement with this statement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.



Priority D

Ensure the Statewide Longitudinal Data System is developed with flexible and accessible technology so those with limited technology resources will be able to access and use the SLDS.

Rationale

Tight budgets for education and elsewhere in the public and private sectors have an impact on access to SLDS data. Families have also tightened their budgets in the past several years. Older computers,

slower Internet connections, and lack of both impact lowans in all parts of the state. On the other hand, technology presents rapidly expanding means to make information available quickly and to appear on many types of devices.

The SLDS must accommodate equitable access to information for all, no matter the individual capacity of the seeker. It is in this area that SLDS developers must ensure that the school with an old and slow PC, the parent with dial-up Internet service, and the Department with broad access to technology can get to the SLDS and obtain the information they seek through the technology they have.

How the Department addresses this issue is certainly a technical development issue that is determined by experts, and is likely one that is already an expectation for the SLDS. Still, ensuring all lowans have access to SLDS reports to inform their respective roles in their community or education system is worthy of emphasis as a priority.

Focus Group Comments

School staff, ranging from classrooms, administrative offices and business offices, are accustomed to having their ideas for innovation be limited by what the school can afford, and that came through in the focus groups. While the potential of the SLDS is exciting, they were all cautious because of the reality of old computers, diverse system capabilities, and tight budgets. Placing a priority on making the SLDS compatible with a wide range of technology and equipment will help allay those concerns.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- The problem is the financing is so limited and technology is limited. Funding is a huge piece. When we have an across-the-board cut you have to look at everything, so you have to know what's working to know where to put your limited dollars and where to cut. It would help us determine what's best for the students. What would help their achievement the most?
(Business Managers, IT, HR)
- We need the technology. That's huge, like availability of a laptop. If you're expected to teach with technology, you better have Skype if you want kids to learn that way. It's one thing to say yes to technology, but it's another to have the resources to do it.
(Superintendents/Principals)
- Accessibility and adaptability. Different technologies need to be compatible with the system. Parents, community members, business people should have access. The ability to adapt to the times and evolution of technology. (Superintendents/Principals)
- The technology capabilities and the infrastructure to support this system need to be in place.
(Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)

Survey Findings

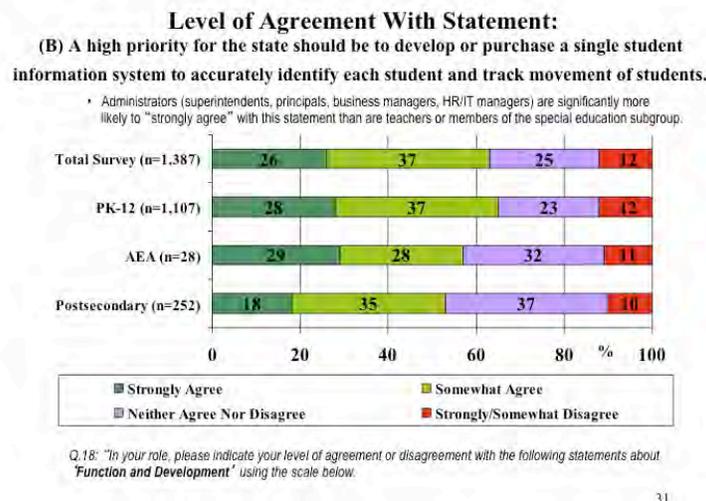
Many of the data presented in Priority B in support of consistent, ongoing development of the SLDS apply in consideration of ensuring the SLDS structure allows access by all, regardless of technology available to them.

Among the significant barriers to use of data to make informed decisions that are cited by respondents include funding data systems and support (40%). Another 48% see this as a moderate barrier, while 12% did not perceive funding as a barrier. Access to useful information was cited as a significant (27%) or moderate (59%) barrier by 87% of all respondents. Reluctance to replace current software or systems was a significant (19%) or moderate (54%) barrier by 73% of respondents.

An access point is important to those who use education data regularly in their job. As noted previously, the development of a single portal (web location) to access data is rated as extremely valuable by 49% of all respondents and is ranked the number one most important characteristic of the SLDS by 47% of all respondents. Development of the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) that will facilitate sharing of data among school districts throughout the state is another means to ensure all levels of technology can exchange data. Overall, 66% of survey respondents agreed that the SIF is of possible benefit and value.

Flexible technology includes ease of using the SLDS. Whenever efficiencies can be achieved through the SLDS, it increases access and use by those with and without limitations on their technology. Integrating existing data in the SLDS will eliminate the need for duplicate reporting by districts, which is seen as a major advantage by 72% of responding stakeholders that agree with that statement.

When presented with a statement that a high priority for the state should be to develop or purchase a single student information system to accurately identify each student and track movement of students, 63% of respondents agreed.



There is strong agreement that a high priority in designing the SLDS should be to provide quick and easy access to approved users of the data; only 2 to 4% of respondents disagree. Again, this demonstrates the shared priority stakeholders in ensuring those who are eligible to access data can do so easily and efficiently.

Survey respondents were invited to offer general advice to the Iowa Department of Education for development of the SLDS. Open-ended comments were received. Overwhelmingly similar in an open-

ended response, 29% of those responding said to keep the SLDS simple, easy to use, and user-friendly. In addition, 4% suggested attention be given to reducing duplication and implement a single portal access.

Priority E

Include student tracking beyond K-12 in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System to provide aggregate data on student success post-graduation.

Rationale

To have a true longitudinal perspective on student growth and learning, the SLDS must include data that go beyond K-12 education. The Core Planning Group emphasized the value of obtaining and linking post-secondary data to K-12 learners and looking at the aggregate findings for that group to see their progression beyond high school. Likewise, data linkages with Iowa Workforce Development could also provide windows into the workplace paths of Iowa's K-12 students. Such data could inform decisions by post-secondary education, K-12 school districts, business and industry, and state agency policy direction.

In a practical sense, without the linkages, the SLDS will be of little value to post-secondary and related state agencies. The post-secondary institutions outside the Department of Education – private colleges and universities and the Regents institutions – have little incentive to engage meaningfully in this process at this time. Their real and practical concerns revolve around potential cost involved with connecting with the SLDS as well as the yet-unknown Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) implications and recently proposed changes.

In discussions to frame a future where these data are linked to SLDS, stakeholders need to be thoroughly involved in shaping the relationships with the participating entities and in identifying the data necessary to provide answers to the longitudinal education and workforce questions posed. Through information about how each organization would interact with the SLDS in providing data to link to the SLDS and in receiving relevant reports back, a broader understanding of the value would be identified to help institutions reach an informed decision on their participation.

The Core Planning Group believes that the Department of Education must ensure linkages with Iowa's post-secondary institutions and public agencies that create, sustain, and emphasize mutual benefits from the investments of all parties.

In time, data on children from birth through pre-kindergarten will be important to add to the perspective as well. Data on a child's development in the earliest years, prior to entering the formal education system, will help provide a more complete picture of longitudinal growth and in identifying effective educational approaches and strategies. Certainly, inclusion of birth through pre-kindergarten data is not within the immediate reaches of SLDS development, Over time, however, the SLDS will need the capacity to link and utilize the value of these data to provide an optimal system.

Focus Group Comments

Focus group participants were hungry for the long-term data that would tell them how and what high school graduates are doing in the years after they leave the K-12 system, because they want to know how well the education they provided prepared students. Both post-secondary education and workforce data were noted as important to understanding what works in student education – information that is indispensable if Iowa is to ensure its schools prepare people for the real world. Also, knowing what and how students do after graduation, both in post-secondary education and careers, would help schools meet students' needs and demands, which evolve along with our economy.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

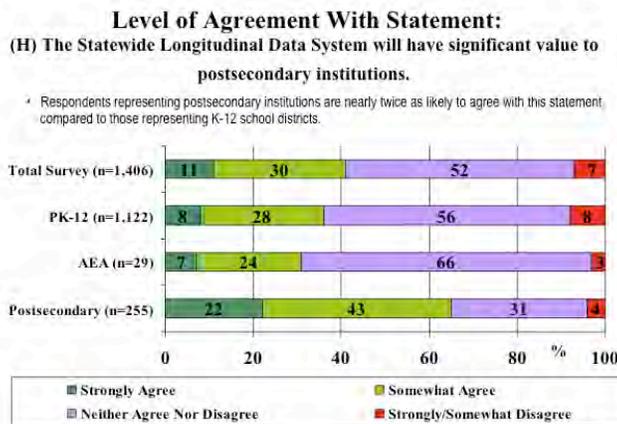
- We need a system that can track all these different paths kids might take, like going straight into the workforce. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- It would be helpful to know what happens to students after graduation if they can share it with us again. (Superintendents/Principals)
- By having all these systems combined you can make decisions on what programs to offer at your school, based on what students are going on to do after graduation. Just because you've always done it isn't a good enough reason to keep doing it. Not every student is geared for an 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. day – maybe school time could be flexible or expand, and use different methods of teaching. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- We're always concerned with what our students are doing after they leave us. Do they finish college somewhere else, like at a Regents university or another community college? Right now we don't know where they go. (Post-Secondary)
- We got a program we paid for to take our student graduation data and look at post-secondary information to see which students went on to graduate from college, how long it took them, if they made it through their first year, etc. We could see that graduates from one particular high school took longer to graduate from college than students from another high school – why is that? It would be great to know why, for looking long term. Right now a third party is getting this data instead of colleges reporting back to school districts – FERPA prohibited that. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- If we adopt a new learning program, I want to see if those who used it are doing better and are still successful years later. We need to track students beyond a year or two to see if it makes a difference. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- It would be useful if colleges could send data back to school districts again, so we could see what courses kids are succeeding or failing in. Then we could follow up with students and ask them what we could do differently, what's missing in our curriculum. This could be aggregate data. We found significant differences in how our students succeeded at the University of Iowa and Iowa State. (Superintendents/Principals)

Survey Findings

As an indicator of how stakeholders are currently thinking about data outside the traditional PK-12 education data sets, when asked the value of various characteristics of the SLDS, this received the lowest value ratings of the six items tested: 21% said extremely valuable; 24% said valuable; 34% said

low value; and 21% said they don't know. Consistent with those ratings, when asked to rank the top three most important characteristics, access to data outside traditional PK-12 education appeared in the top three rankings of 32% of respondents. In comparison, the single portal characteristic appeared in the top three rankings of 80% of respondents. Implications of these ratings and rankings may include the need for greater understanding of the SLDS and the value of "nontraditional" data (such as post-secondary, workforce, or Census data) in informing stakeholders in decision-making for student growth and learning.

Respondents were asked whether they agree that the SLDS will have significant value to post-secondary institutions. Those representing post-secondary institutions are nearly twice as likely to agree, compared with those representing PK-12 school districts. Among post-secondary institutions, 65% agree that the SLDS will have significant value to post-secondary institutions.



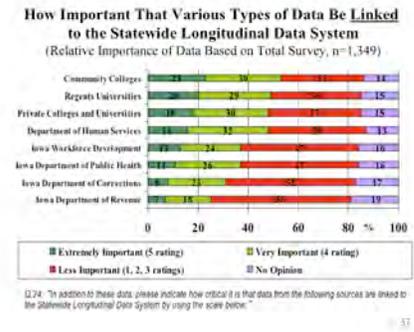
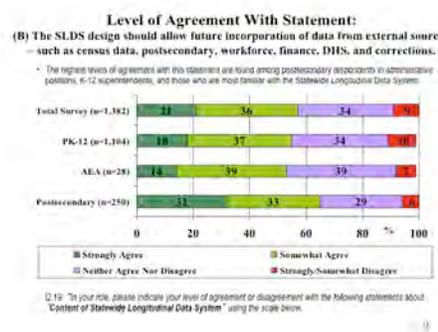
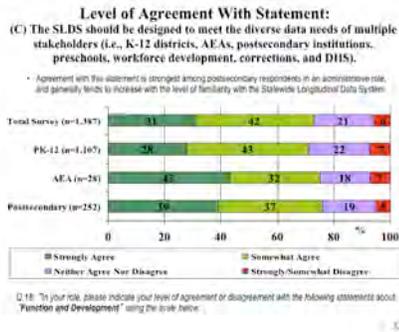
Q.17: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Possible Benefits and Value of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System' using the scale below.

27

Despite the findings in the specific level of value, benefits, and understanding of post-secondary data in the SLDS, there is widespread agreement when a broader statement is tested. Seventy-three percent of survey respondents overall agree that the SLDS should be designed to meet the diverse data needs of multiple stakeholders (i.e., K-12 districts, AEAs, post-secondary institutions, preschools, workforce development, corrections, and Department of Human Services).

As questions are posed regarding the future inclusion in the SLDS of various data sets beyond the traditional K-12 data, there is also widespread agreement. Overall, 57% of respondents agree the SLDS design should allow future incorporation of data from external sources, such as Census data, post-secondary, workforce, finance, Department of Human Services, and corrections. The highest levels of agreement with this statement are found among post-secondary respondents in administrative positions, K-12 superintendents, and those who are most familiar with the SLDS.

As the previous question asks about design of the system to allow future inclusion, another question asks about how critical it is that certain data are linked to the SLDS. Agreement that data sources are critical hover around 50% for community colleges, Regents universities, private colleges and universities, and Department of Human Services.



Priority F

Ensure that Statewide Longitudinal Data System education data inform a broad array of decisions.

Rationale

Once education stakeholders learn of the SLDS and the potential it holds, they are very excited for what it may do for them. Expectations soon become high, and hopes for data from the SLDS become very specific. Throughout this planning process, one of the goals was to both educate stakeholders about this developing information tool and gather their input on what they need from the system as it develops. In their discussions of the findings of stakeholder outreach, the Core Planning Group distilled the inputs and identified general applications of aggregate data by stakeholders to support their functions and roles in education.

It is a priority of the Core Planning Group to ensure the SLDS provides an array of reports of aggregate data that informs education decisions at all levels and functions of education.

- SLDS reports must provide the Department with the information it needs for reporting, compliance, and fulfilling its mission. However, that is not enough. Local education stakeholders want to understand, manage, and improve student learning and growth. The data and reports they need may be different from what is necessary for DE to collect as part of federal and state reporting. Likewise, value to post-secondary institutions may require that other data be linked or collected to ultimately receive the reports they need. The array of need for information to aid decision-making should drive the data that is gathered, maintained, and linked, and it goes beyond what is needed only for the Department of Education to be effective at its job.
- The SLDS should allow for data collection and reporting that demonstrate accountability for students, teachers, and administrators.
- Education stakeholders at all levels and roles want to know what works so students grow, learn, and achieve over time. A common and high-priority capability of the SLDS for local

stakeholders is the ability to know, according to data, which schools are having success. There is great interest in being able to share “what works” among schools and districts. With knowledge of which schools show success, other interested stakeholders could create means to learn from those schools about what was implemented, and how and why those schools were successful.

- Post-secondary needs for reports of aggregate data include those that support program planning, placement, and student recruiting. The SLDS will need to continue to work with stakeholders toward the best means to link post-secondary institutions, including private institutions, in meaningful ways beyond transcript transfers.

Focus Group Comments

The different stakeholder groups had different visions of what kind of data would be most helpful in their roles. Teachers specifically mentioned the importance of considering the whole child, knowing about and adapting to any health, family, economic, or other stressors on the family and teaching with those factors in mind.

Teachers also said they routinely utilize formative data at the individual student level to help them best meet each student’s needs. The Core Planning Group’s discussions led to the acknowledgement that the SLDS will not be the appropriate tool to serve this purpose for several practical reasons. Formative data are not currently consistent statewide, and their value in aggregation would be limited. Formative data are often unique to a district’s curriculum, are invaluable to teachers in monitoring individual students’ learning, and are applied in developing individualized interventions. For these reasons, the Core Planning Group believes that collection and utilization of formative student data are best left to the local level.

Administrators’ priority was aggregate data on student performance in their districts to identify needs, and in other districts to seek advice from those finding success. Business managers and HR staff also want to compare practices with other districts, but with financial and personnel data. Post-secondary stakeholders desire data on their students after they leave the institution, to get a more complete picture of what students are prepared for and how to meet their needs. The focus group discussions made it clear that stakeholders have high expectations for a system that can meet their wide-ranging needs for supporting student success.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- When we had site visits, we asked about a district that we could compare with. District comparisons in specific curriculum or achievement areas would be of interest.
(Superintendents/Principals)
- [I want] to see more aggregate data from other districts and compare information with them. We need to be able to look at specifics, and see what other districts are doing differently that we could tap into. When our own numbers are low, it’s hard to see what’s working.
(Superintendents/Principals)
- The sooner the better for data availability; the same day would be great. Every day you don’t know is wasted. If I could’ve gone back and helped a student with a weak area, then we

- could have made more progress since then. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- The biggest piece I want to know is what students do after they leave the institution. I don't use the K-12 data; what I need is what happens after. (Post-Secondary)
- [In response to how does the SLDS change education.] Accountability problems go away because you have access to data and someone else has access. (Superintendents/Principals)
- What I can't resolve now is what happens to students who leave without graduating from the community college. We see students we think are transferring without finishing the associate degree – what is the success of students who transfer to a four-year school without finishing an AA program? (Post-Secondary)
- If you can access it so you can see the last three years of a student and put that in as your search, that would be awesome – instead of having to look at one year at a time, you could compare year to year by putting in the search period you want and having it show it all at once. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- You need to make sure reporting is flexible enough that decision-makers and people interacting with the system can actually get access to meaningful data they need. (Business Manager, HR, IT)
- We can look more closely at how other parts of a student's life are affecting their achievement. For example, is poor attendance necessarily the reason for low scores? Consider the part of the city they live in, urban, or rural – for example, if urban kids are doing better than rural, why is that? (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)

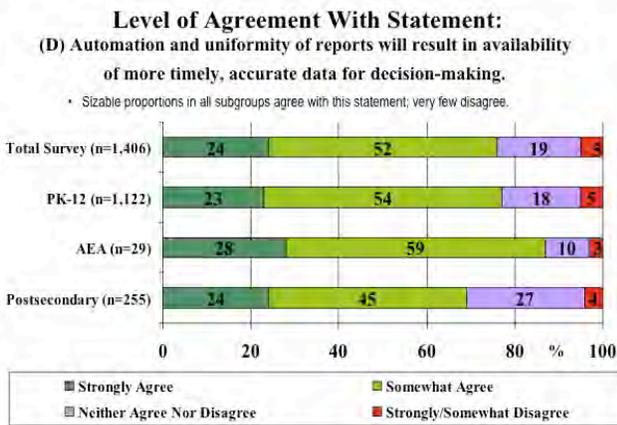
Survey Findings

The diversity in the roles of stakeholders will demand the SLDS provide data to meet their respective needs in supporting student learning and growth. The survey shows that 80% of stakeholders analyze data, develop reports, or use data regularly to make decisions in their jobs. Subgroups of respondents in which relatively large proportions say their job is to manage and analyze data include respondents representing AEAs, Regents universities, or PK-12 respondents with the role of business manager, human resources manager, or information technology.

Education at all levels and school districts at the local level are experiencing and faced with managing change because of recent economic stresses as well as education policy shifts. Most survey respondents (67%) agree that the SLDS will provide easier access to accurate, timely data essential to decision-making in a time when schools face increased scrutiny and accountability.

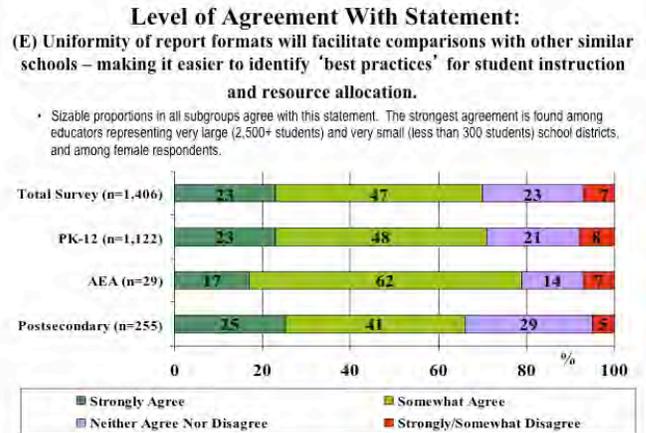
When respondents were asked about possible benefits of the SLDS, they say they see benefit and value in information that will be available to inform their decisions. Overall, 76% of respondents agree that automation and uniformity of reports will result in availability of more timely, accurate data for decision-making. Sizeable proportions in all subgroups agree with this statement, and very few disagree.

In addition, 70% of respondents agree that uniformity of report formats will facilitate comparisons with other similar schools, making it easier to identify best practices for student instruction. The strongest agreement is found among educators representing very large (more than 2,500 students) and very small (fewer than 300 students) school districts.



Q.17: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Possible Benefits and Value of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System' using the scale below.

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Q.17: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Possible Benefits and Value of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System' using the scale below.

24

Stakeholders seem to view the value of the SLDS to their own stakeholder group more highly than for other stakeholders. When asked about their agreement that the SLDS will have significant value to post-secondary institutions, 65% of respondents representing post-secondary institutions agree. In comparison, 36% of respondents representing PK-12 agree and 31% of those representing AEAs agree. When asked in a separate question about their agreement that the SLDS will have significant value to PK-12 districts, 61% of respondents representing PK-12 districts agree. In comparison, 34% of representatives of post-secondary institutions agree. However, 73% of AEA respondents agree that the SLDS will have significant value to PK-12 districts; this is 12% more than the PK-12 districts themselves agree.

Of all respondents, 72% agree that assessments should be included in the SLDS and aligned with the Common Core and Iowa Core. As might be expected, the level of agreement is slightly higher in the PK-12 (76%) and AEA (79%) subgroups and somewhat lower among those representing post-secondary institutions (55%). The level of agreement with this statement is highest among respondents representing AEAs and among PK-12 superintendents and principals. Generally, the level of agreement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.

Similar to what was found in the focus groups, the survey data also show the need for data to support professional development and accountability, with 79% of respondents in agreement. K-12 superintendents, principals, business managers, human resource managers, and IT managers are significantly more likely to strongly agree with this statement than are teachers or members of the special education subgroup. Those who analyze and manage data as part of their job are significantly more likely than average to agree with this statement. Generally, the level of agreement increases

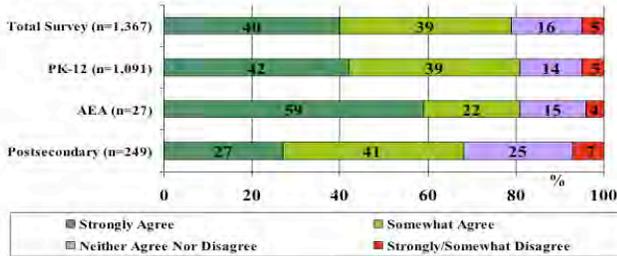
significantly with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.

Eighty-two percent of stakeholders agree that data should be used to identify best practices for improving student instruction and learning. The strongest agreement is found among those representing AEA's and those in school districts with 2,500 to 7,500 students. Generally, the level of agreement is higher among administrators than among teachers.

Level of Agreement With Statement:

(B) Data are needed to support professional development and accountability.

- Administrators (K-12 superintendents, principals, business managers, HR/IT managers) are significantly more likely to "strongly agree" with this statement than are teachers or members of the special education subgroup.
- Those who analyze/manage data as part of their job are significantly more likely than average to agree with this statement. Generally, the level of agreement increases significantly with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.

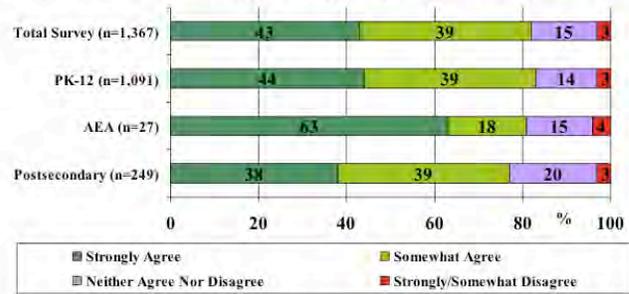


Q.20: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Use of Data' using the scale below"

Level of Agreement With Statement:

(C) Data are needed to identify 'best practices' for improving student instruction and learning.

- The strongest agreement is found among those representing AEA's and those in school districts with 2,500 to 7,500 students. Generally, the level of agreement is higher among administrators than among teachers.



Q.20: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Use of Data' using the scale below"

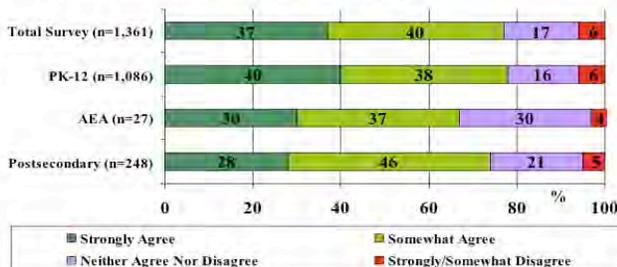
Responses to survey questions about the reporting and output from the SLDS also show a need for data to support decision-making. More than three-fourths (77%) of respondents agree that school districts should have timely, accurate data comparisons with other similar districts as a basis for implementing best practices for student instruction and operational efficiencies. The strength of agreement is higher among administrators than among teachers or those in special education. Generally, strength of agreement increases with how much respondents use data in their jobs.

Respondents were asked about specific types of reports used at the K-12 level and their importance to the stakeholder. All four types of reports were rated extremely important or very important by a significant majority of respondents.

Level of Agreement With Statement:

(E) School districts should have timely, accurate data comparisons with other similar districts as a basis for implementing best practices for student instruction and operational efficiencies.

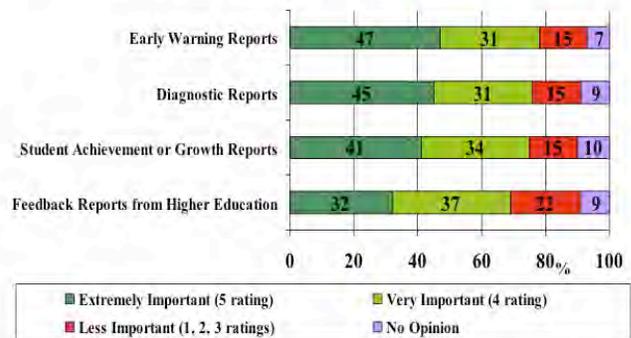
- Although sizable majorities in all subgroups agree with this statement, the strength of agreement is higher among administrators than among teachers or those in special education. Generally, the strength of agreement increases with how much respondents use data in their jobs.



Q.21: "In your role, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about 'Reporting and Output' using the scale below."

Relative Importance of Four Types of Reports

(Total Survey, n=1,357)



Q.22: "Please use the scale below to rate the importance of the following types of reports to your organization." (Note: Detail descriptions are included in the question wording.)

Priority G

Provide Statewide Longitudinal Data System education data in aggregate form, and ensure data are de-identified, confidential, and protect privacy of students and employees.

Rationale

This priority is of the utmost importance to the Core Planning Group and to all across the state. Simply, no data coming from the SLDS and available to stakeholders will be able to be identified with any individual student regardless of whether that student is currently in an Iowa educational institution. The same criteria must apply to employees of the organization submitting data.

Certainly, as the governance of the SLDS determines, there must be a means to provide more in-depth information for those who need that information for their educational role. The determination of role-based security must be undertaken very carefully. There is concern among stakeholders and the Core Planning Group that data identified with a particular individual – student, teacher, administrator, or other role – be considered confidential and not used punitively.

Discussions of the Core Planning Group also led to the recognition that formative data on individual students are unlikely to be included in the SLDS because of the complexity and diversity of formative assessments. With local collection and management of formative data, there is immediate value in its utilization in customizing instructional strategies to meet the needs of a particular student. The Planning Group suggests that the SLDS serves a different purpose, that of informing education systems and strategies at an aggregate and longitudinal level.

It is recognized that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act provides the criteria by which the state and districts address student data. The Core Planning Group also noted that proposed changes in FERPA may open the door wider than desired to data availability. In addition, FERPA does not address the privacy and confidentiality protections necessary for employees of educational systems and institutions.

The integrity and ultimate value of the SLDS are linked to the assurance of safeguarding individual data and use of aggregate data. This priority reflects further upon the elements of the related Guiding Principle and underscores its imperative.

Focus Group Comments

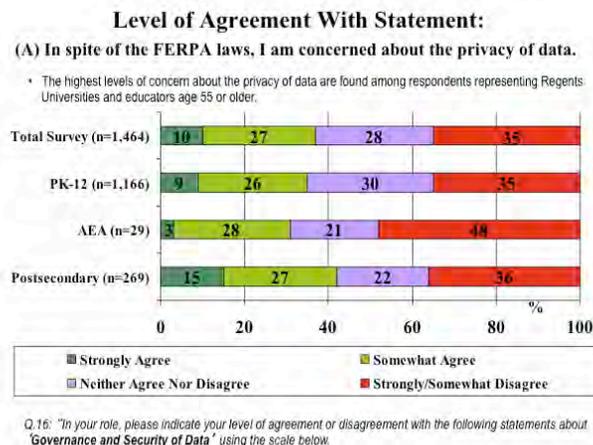
Although they see many benefits for their work in more open sharing of data among educators, all stakeholders expressed concern about opening the door too wide and leading to unfair public scrutiny and uninformed, punitive interpretation of once-confidential data by outsiders, such as parents and the news media. They cautioned that making any information available must meet a threshold of legitimately supporting student learning. To address access, many participants supported policy outlining tiered, “role-based” access to data. Some indicated that would best be handled at the organization level, while others felt it should be consistent statewide. An overarching priority was that owners of data, including students, have a say in who can view their information.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- From a registrar perspective, what concerns me the most is we have been closer to the privacy end of the spectrum (as opposed to collecting all data possible). I want to make sure we don't go too far toward the "get all data possible" end that there is no privacy. The pendulum appears to be swinging too far, too fast. We can't forget that we're talking about real people with real concerns about ownership of their own data. I don't mean it as a barrier, but a caution or consideration that shouldn't be pushed aside to address the perceived need for anything everyone could possibly know, including the media like the *Des Moines Register*. (Post-Secondary)
- In a school my size, when you run data, privacy is an issue. We don't report out under 10 students. But even with 12, you can still pick out specific kids. (Superintendents/Principals)
- Privacy is a big concern. We're self-funded so all the personnel information is our responsibility. So we have that on top of payroll. Contact information and Social Security numbers are sensitive. And then there's the student information. We're so dependent on databases that it's critical to have IT security experts. No one used to have in-house IT people, and now everyone either does or contracts for it. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- Student privacy rights have to be maintained. The student should have to give permission for a college to access their transcript. (Post-Secondary)
- [Ensure] confidentiality. I don't want to open up a Pandora's box where people look just to see how their student is doing against someone else. That's a huge issue for some people, and it shouldn't be. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)

Survey Findings

The survey provided additional data in support of the Department's commitment to provide useful data that fully protect the confidentiality and privacy of students and employees. When asked questions about governance and security of data, 37% of respondents agree that, in spite of the FERPA laws, they are concerned about the privacy of data. The highest levels of concern about privacy of data are among respondents representing Regents universities and educators age 55 or older.



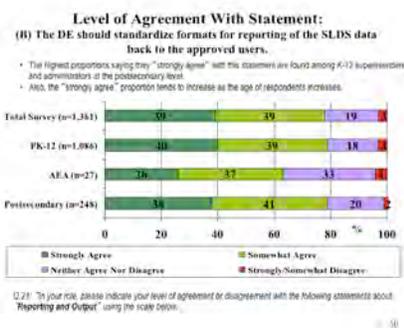
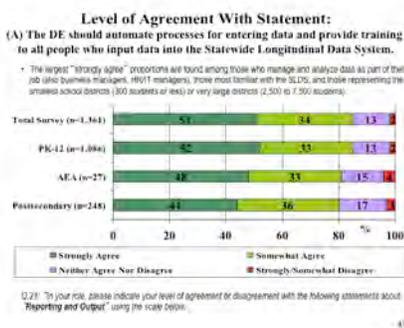
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Support for sharing data using the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) demonstrates stakeholder emphasis on aggregate, de-identified data. Two-thirds of respondents representing PK-12 districts and 79% of respondents representing AEAs agree the SLDS will facilitate sharing of data through the SIF. The level of agreement tends to be higher in respondents most familiar with the SLDS.

Questions posed regarding reporting and output from the SLDS also support the importance of quality aggregate data with adequate security. When asked their level of agreement on whether the DE should automate processes for entering data and provide training to all people who input data into the SLDS, 85% of respondents agree. The largest “strongly agree” proportions are found among those who manage and analyze data as part of their job, including business managers, human resource managers, and IT managers. Those representing school districts with fewer than 300 students and those with 2,500 to 7,500 students also have a larger proportion of respondents who strongly agree.

High percentages of respondents agree (78%) that the DE should standardize formats for reporting of the SLDS data back to the approved users. The highest proportions of respondents saying they strongly agree with this statement are found among K-12 superintendents and administrators at the post-secondary level.

Of all respondents, 89% agree that data reports should have clear context to prevent misinterpretation of data. The level of agreement with this statement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS and how much people use data in their jobs. The highest “strongly agree” proportion is found among those representing the Regents universities.



The opportunity for respondents to provide open-ended advice to the DE for development of the SLDS included the following relevant comments.

- The DE should limit access, provide security of data, and protect the privacy of individual students and teachers. (5%)
- The DE should protect integrity of data, prevent misuse of data for politics, pushing agendas, etc. (4%)

Priority H

Ensure transparency in Statewide Longitudinal Data System reports to the extent possible.

Rationale

The SLDS, first and foremost, will ensure confidentiality and privacy of individual student and employee information. That is a given. Beyond that, the SLDS should commit to transparency in access to aggregated data through the reports provided by the system.

There is a hunger for information, charts, tables, numbers, and individual stories that illustrate the condition of education and the successes, opportunities, and needs throughout our educational system. As the SLDS includes and links to additional databases it will develop reports that will be of certain value to stakeholders.

The Department has taken a positive approach to providing aggregate data to interested parties and filling requests for specific purposes. The SLDS will allow the Department to become proactive in data analysis and create opportunities for utilizing the value of aggregate data in informing policymakers, the media, the public, and all education stakeholders. Demonstrating transparency is another area in which the SLDS will allow Iowa's education systems at state and local levels to excel.

Focus Group Comments

As with many of the priorities, focus group participants value transparency in sharing useful data with the overarching purpose of supporting student growth and learning. They want to know what works, which requires comparing “apples to apples,” a phrase often heard in the discussions about the need to standardize reporting so comparisons are accurate and useful. There was also acknowledgment of what information the public deserves and has a right to know about their schools, with participants often citing their own experiences and desires as parents of students. Another overarching theme applicable to this priority was the recognition that education decisions are increasingly data-driven and educators are held accountable for results, making the SLDS a vital tool to inform decisions and illuminate successes and areas needing improvement.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- [In response to what is the most important thing to consider.] Transparency – that we're all talking about same things, that we're honest, and have an agreed-upon picture. (Superintendents/Principals)
- [We need to] look at systems we currently have, and build on that. Transparency and comparing apples to apples. IASB and ISEA with settlement trends. If we're all reporting the same thing, the numbers should match, but they don't. Even now, they're pulling out of BEDS, and newspapers are looking at salaries, but they're not comparing apples to apples. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- We like to have something to share with the community, parents and at board meetings. We feel a lot more informed about where our students started and ended up. Less flying by the seat of your pants. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)

- In the current Project Easier, K-12 districts can electronically get information about students who transfer between districts through peer-to-peer sharing – districts have to share information with each other. (Post-Secondary)

Survey Findings

Many of the survey findings related to providing data in aggregate form and protecting the confidentiality and privacy of individuals also apply to ensuring transparency in the SLDS system reports. The focus on transparency relates to ensuring all reports provided by the SLDS are made available to all so long as they respect the laws and regulations protecting the individual data.

When asked about governance and security of data, 50% of respondents agree that they are worried about public access and potential misuse of data. Relatively high levels of concern about the potential misuse of data are found among respondents representing teachers and respondents age 55 or older.

Findings supporting the need for transparency to the extent possible, while protecting data as required, include that 78% of respondents agree that the DE should standardize formats for reporting of the SLDS data back to approved users.

When asked further about reporting and output for SLDS data, 62% agree that standard reports by qualified analysts are needed to reduce the danger that data will be manipulated and misused. The level of agreement with this statement is higher among K-12 principals and superintendents than among teachers or those in special education. Generally, the level of agreement increases with the level of familiarity with the SLDS.

Priority I

Provide accompanying information about the context, application, and meaning of the data contained in reports generated from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

Rationale

The SLDS has the potential to mitigate the risks of education data being used out of context, misunderstood, or inaccurately interpreted. Concern about the inaccurate application of data was raised in the outreach meetings and was echoed by the Core Planning Group.

Providing reports that include narrative and explanations of the data are viewed as critical by the Core Planning Group. With a greater amount of increasingly complex data being made available proactively, those skimming or studying the reports need a clear and unequivocal explanation of the report. This might include, but not be limited to:

- The source of data over a specific time frame;
- A narrative explanation of what the data show;
- The meaning of the data for student growth and learning; and
- What the data do and do not tell the reader.

The value added to simply reporting aggregate data will be of ultimate benefit to stakeholders and the Department, providing a positive return on the time investment to proactively explain the reports. Telling the story of the data will supplement understanding and help ensure those not connected to the data every day will have an accurate understanding of its meaning.

Focus Group Comments

Participants in all stakeholder groups recognized the clear value of data in education along with some inherent risks, chiefly that people without expertise in data analysis tend to attribute causal relationships that are not valid. Business managers and post-secondary participants were especially concerned that the public and/or media might misunderstand data and analysis, drawing misleading conclusions. Business managers, and administrators to a lesser degree, spoke to their need to provide information to the school board, public, and the media – none of which are expected to have expertise in data analysis and objectively applying findings to the circumstances. An array of participants shared concerns that data could be used in ways that would become political in nature. The expectation was not to deny the public the information, but, rather, to emphasize to developers of the SLDS the importance of safeguarding the validity of data and its analysis by providing clear context and documentation along with data made public.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- There's a tendency for people who don't understand data to establish a cause and effect relationship when there isn't one – that's a huge danger. People see all kinds of patterns and assume it's a cause and effect. That creates a huge dilemma – a layperson having access to everything. Do we want people to be able to make all these conclusions? (Post-Secondary)
- Teaching people how to understand the data. How far can you carry your interpretation before you've gone too far? People say "the data says," but that's not true – the data doesn't "say" anything. It's how you're interpreting the data. Are we all getting the same meaning from the same set of data? (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- ...We have to be careful. That [data] picture may tell me a different story; I may read it differently than someone else. We have to provide narrative on how to read the figure. (Department of Education)
- We make the mistake that correlations are causal. A correlation people make is if you want to have a high ACT score come to a small school, or go to a school that is high SES [socio-economic status], and that's all you need to do. They may correlate but they're not necessarily causal. (Superintendents/Principals)

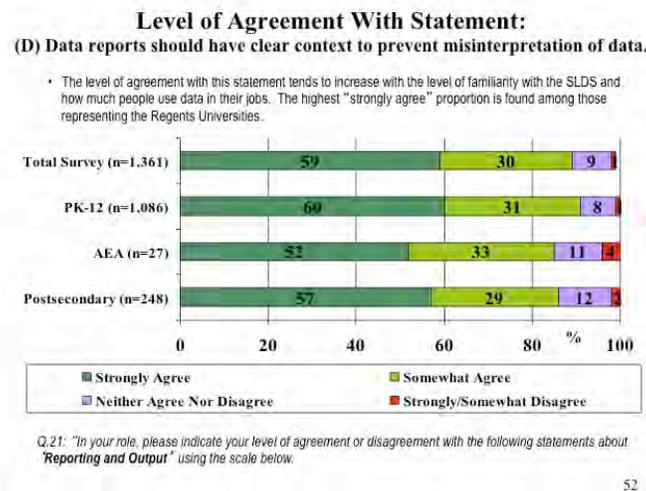
Survey Findings

Survey results clearly showed a need for information to explain and place data in context accurately. Many of the barriers to use of data could be diminished or eliminated by SLDS data outputs with accompanying information. Those barriers are: time to devote to using data, time and resources for collecting and reporting data, overload of data, lack of training and expertise in data analysis, and lack of knowledge about what data would help me do my job.

The finding that 50% of respondents agree they are worried about public access and potential misuse of data also supports the priority to provide information to help explain the meaning of data and, thus, help to prevent misuse of those data.

When asked about use of data, 71% of all respondents say that approved users should have access to raw data so that they can conduct their own analysis of data and format the reports to meet their own needs. The strongest agreement with this statement is found among respondents age 44 or younger, those representing Regents universities, and those who manage and analyze data as part of their job. With further analysis conducted by approved users who analyze data as part of their job, additional context, application, and meaning of the data could be provided to end users of those data.

When asked about reporting and output of the SLDS, 89% of respondents agree that data reports should have clear context to prevent misinterpretation of data. The level of agreement with this statement tends to increase with the level of familiarity with the SLDS and how much people use data in their jobs. The highest “strongly agree” proportion is found among those representing the Regents universities.



Priority J

Provide training and professional development to stakeholders in the use of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and how to effectively and accurately utilize the data reports.

Rationale

As the SLDS continues to be enhanced and developed to include a broader range of data sets, the learning curve for the typical education stakeholder will grow exponentially. Though understanding of data is becoming the expectation, the dimensions offered through the SLDS have not yet been fully explored at the everyday level. Professional development and training are critical to the accuracy and quality of data going into the system, not to mention stakeholder acceptance of and full utilization of the SLDS.

The Core Planning Group believes it is essential that training and professional development be structured and deliberate, with consistency across the state to ensure equity in opportunity to utilize the SLDS as it continues to provide new types of reports to stakeholders. Training and professional development at all levels may include such topics as:

- Understanding the fundamental importance of data quality, which at its most essential level requires accuracy in entry of all data.
- Reviewing and understanding the processes in validating data.
- Professional development for all stakeholders in utilizing and conceptualizing the interaction of multiple data sets to create types of information not previously available.
- Training in the procedures, access, and technical aspects of accessing and working within the SLDS to get information.
- Professional development in the relevance of data in student growth and development and how they relate to school improvement processes.
- Professional development sessions to allow review and discussion of relevant data or to review data to develop strategies or plans.
- Statewide or regional professional development for administrators to identify and review ways to improve school and district performance.
- Professional development for local school boards and state policymakers on the SLDS and how it may inform their work.

A transition to engagement in an evolving, yet new, complex and comprehensive data system with an intimidating name – Statewide Longitudinal Data System – will require consistent and incentivized delivery of training and professional development statewide. With current awareness and understanding of the SLDS at low rates, the Department needs to quickly launch an ongoing training and professional development effort to convert educators to be active and adept users of the SLDS.

Focus Group Comments

Participants in many of the focus groups emphasized that in order to improve data quality, staff who input data need training, including to understand the critical nature of the data they enter and how it is used. Many expressed disappointment that the most-interrupted and lowest-compensated staff are those most likely to be assigned data entry responsibilities. Stakeholders were clear that significant technical training on the system for everyone using the SLDS will be necessary for it to be effective in supporting education in Iowa. Time also needs to be allocated for staff to analyze and apply what is learned from data, with the direction and support of the institution. Professional development on the SLDS is necessary for teachers, business managers, human resources managers, administrators, and others. With the expansion of DE's current data capacity and creation of the SLDS over time, the DE must accompany its system with adequate and ongoing training for those who will be accessing and utilizing the data.

A few representative comments of focus group participants are included here.

- It's the consumer trending, like Amazon.com. If you have enough data to identify trends, you can predict things about vulnerable groups, and see better pathways to success. But you need experience in working with data to do that in-depth analysis. (Post-Secondary)

- It's tough to get people to understand data – whether they accept what the data show. For example, financial and building enrollment data – whenever you try to close a school, people don't understand. It's tough to blend the human side of school attendance with the financial and enrollment side. People don't care about the facts of small enrollment. What we hear is 'We want to do what's best for kids' and they might not understand that's what we're trying to do. The community doesn't want to accept it. (Superintendents/Principals)
- I think there needs to be a way for teachers to be able to access this information and make decisions. There will need to be training for teachers on how to use data. (Teachers/Curriculum Specialists)
- A lot of our data systems' foundation is built upon people who don't know why they are entering data, its importance, and don't have much training. (Superintendents/Principals)
- The DE should offer more webinars for training – don't make us drive. They need to record the webinar so we can access it later if the time doesn't work. They should put an outline summary of the webinar with key points so you don't have to watch the whole thing if you missed it. (Business Managers, IT, HR)
- The downside is we think we can make instant changes, but then we have a training issue. (Superintendents/Principals)
- It does have to do with training on the information system. We have to do a better job training our staff on why the information they're entering is important and needs to be accurate. Building secretaries are rushed. They don't care about accuracy and consistency because they haven't been told what it affects and where it goes. It's not just the student roster. (Business Managers, IT, HR)

Survey Findings

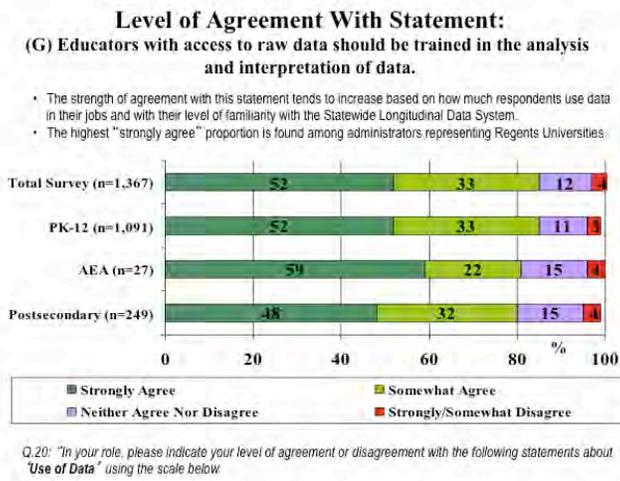
The survey findings placed great importance on training, professional development and effectively using the data contained in the SLDS reports. At the most basic level, it is important for SLDS developers and those implementing elements of the system to remember that only 6% of all stakeholders responding to the survey have high familiarity with the SLDS and nearly one-half (48%) have never heard of the SLDS.

When identifying barriers to use of the SLDS, 32% say lack of training and expertise is a significant barrier and 56% said it is a moderate barrier. A number of the other barriers to use of data might also be reduced or eliminated with sustained training and professional development efforts.

As the SLDS continues to be developed, education staff at all levels in state and local organizations will need to learn how to provide information to and get information back from the SLDS. Enabling users to take advantage of the value in specific characteristics of the SLDS that were tested in this survey, such as accessing the single portal, automating data collection, and automating the high school transcript process, will require changes from current practices and learning new elements of the SLDS. Training will be useful to smooth those transitions.

Though it has been noted previously, 50% of respondents are worried about public access and potential misuse of data. Professional development for education stakeholders may help in framing data and reduce the opportunities for misuse.

In questions about use of data, 85% of respondents agree that educators with access to raw data should be trained in the analysis and interpretation of data. The strength of agreement with this statement tends to increase based on how much respondents use data in their jobs and with their level of familiarity with the SLDS. The highest “strongly agree” proportion is found among administrators representing the Regents universities.



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Responding to a question about reporting and output of the SLDS, 85% of respondents agree that DE should automate processes for entering data and provide training to all people who input data into the SLDS. There is no significant variation in the high percentages in agreement with this statement.

The open-ended advice provided to DE for development of the SLDS included the following comments related to training and professional development:

- Provide training on using the system to local administrators, teachers, and AEAs. (12%)
- The DE should provide training on interpreting data to local districts as well as the AEAs. (4%)

Summary of Priorities

The ten priorities described in this report – and implemented as a whole – will address stakeholder needs and concerns and will increase the value, acceptance, and utilization of the aggregate data reports provided through the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The Core Planning Group applauds the Department for its ambitious undertaking and supports it as implementation of these priorities and other elements of the system continue.

The Department has shown its commitment to stakeholder engagement and transparency in the process undertaken to gather stakeholder input and develop these priorities that represent the findings.

In keeping with that spirit, the Core Planning Group appreciates and supports the Department's plan to disseminate this report to all participants and invitees in the outreach initiative that spanned the past year. It is also the collective hope of the Department and the Core Planning Group that the information in this report will help stakeholders in their understanding of Iowa's Statewide Longitudinal Data System and encourage active engagement in its development and use in their work to support student growth and learning.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE OF STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Designing a planning process, outreach, and research that meaningfully engaged stakeholders was central to the approach of both the qualitative and quantitative research. Key stakeholders were involved in all steps of the process, from initial planning to the final development of this report. The activities of the SLDS Visioning and Outreach process spanned a 12-month period, beginning in March of 2011 and concluding at the end of February 2012. A timeline of the process and outreach activities is included below.

Date	Activity
March – April 2011	Environmental Scan
May – June 2011	Focus Groups
June 2011	Initial Core Planning Group Meeting
July – August 2011	Survey Development
September 2011	Core Planning Group Meeting
October – November 2011	Survey Revision
November 2011	Core Planning Group Meeting
December 2011 – January 2012	Survey Fielded
January 2012	Core Planning Group Meeting
January – February 2012	Survey Analysis
February 2012	Core Planning Group Meeting
February 2012	Final Plan Submitted to Iowa Department of Education

Core Planning Group

The Core Planning group was created as an advisory group to the SLDS Visioning and Outreach Initiative, representing key stakeholders in a variety of educational settings. Engaging a small, but diverse, set of stakeholders consistently throughout the process added immense value to the work by:

- Providing insight and experience from the field;
- Offering ideas and guidance to DE leaders and SPPG staff;
- Providing input into identifying key issues, informing focus group themes, and feedback on survey development;
- Conveying information about the SLDS Visioning and Outreach Initiative to their colleagues and other stakeholders; and
- Deliberating on findings of the stakeholder engagement to frame the strategic vision and reports.

The SLDS Core Planning Group met for five in-person meetings over the course of the Initiative,

gathering for day-long sessions in order to maximize the time for group members who traveled to Des Moines. Additionally, group members spent time outside the meetings reviewing focus group findings, survey results and report documents, as well as communicating with their peers about the elements of the Initiative.

Qualitative Research

Environmental Scan

The first step in the qualitative research involved an environmental scan process in which SPPG sought to gain a complete picture and understanding of the work and progress related to the SLDS, state and federal requirements, related technology projects, and current stakeholder involvement and perspectives. The purpose of the environmental scan was twofold: it allowed SPPG to quickly become grounded and achieve an in-depth understanding of project history and expectations, as well as to create relationships with internal and external stakeholders whose engagement was essential to achieve project outcomes.

SPPG worked with DE to identify individuals for the environmental scan. Members of the Core Planning Group were included in the scan, and a total of 16 interviews were conducted with individuals representing the following stakeholder groups:

- Area Education Agencies
- K-12 Administrative Staff
- K-12 Superintendents
- K-12 Teachers
- Iowa Department of Human Services - Early Childhood
- K-12 Private Schools
- Regents Universities
- School Administrators of Iowa
- Community Colleges
- Iowa State Education Association
- Iowa Workforce Development

The informal interviews with stakeholders focused on identifying key issues and their visions for how longitudinal data can best support their work. The information gathered from the environmental scans was used to inform the planning process and outreach, and prepared the members of the Core Planning Group for their role in the project. Outcomes from the scan also informed the development of content for the statewide focus groups.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted to obtain qualitative data that provides depth and understanding to the SLDS development and implementation efforts. It was important to engage a broad range of stakeholders and ensure statewide participation. The methodology SPPG used to design and conduct

the focus groups brought participants together to respond to a consistent set of questions. Five categories of stakeholders were targeted, with sessions organized by stakeholder category. It is worth noting that participation in focus groups is inherently self-selecting. SPPG made every attempt to ensure that the broadest range of perspectives was represented in each stakeholder group. Findings of the focus groups brought qualitative data to the effort to design an SLDS that best meets the needs of education. In addition, the information gathered was also used to develop the subsequent statewide survey of stakeholders to further refine users' needs and applications for education data.

Stakeholders targeted for participation in the focus groups were grouped into categories of similar function to be invited to a session:

- Public and private K-12 superintendents, principals, and AEA directors
- Public and private K-12 teachers, curriculum directors, and instructional specialists
- Public and private K-12 IT specialists, HR directors, and business managers
- Regents institutions, private colleges and universities, and community colleges
- Department of Education staff

Locations for focus groups were selected to provide geographic balance generally and by category. Twelve focus groups were conducted: one with DE staff; two with post-secondary stakeholders; and three sessions each for the three public and private K-12 categories listed above. Time of day was selected to best fit with anticipated needs of the category of stakeholder. Teacher sessions were held after school hours. The others were conducted during the routine business day, though avoiding the beginning and end of the school day for the administrator groups.

Electronic invitations were issued via email by the DE division director to maximize the importance and visibility of this effort and utilize the most likely means that messages be delivered and read. DE maintains the most current contact information for principals, superintendents, HR directors, business managers, AEA leadership, and the three types of higher education institutions. SPPG received registrations from 146 individuals, and a total of 96 people attended and participated in the focus groups, with an equal distribution of participants across the target categories.

SPPG prepared a report with a summary of the findings from the focus groups, which was distributed to the Core Planning Group, DE, and Central Surveys and used to inform the development of the statewide survey. The report is also included as companion document to this report.

Quantitative Research

Survey

A statewide online survey was conducted to obtain quantitative data from the same stakeholder groups as those participating in the focus groups. Central Surveys, Inc. of Shenandoah, Iowa, led development of the survey, working closely with SPPG, with input and engagement of the Core Planning Group and DE. Additionally, Central Surveys observed at least one focus group with each target group. The survey was constructed using logic sequences to ensure participants were only asked questions that applied to

them.

Prior to releasing the link to the survey, an email was sent to all those in the survey sample informing them of the purpose of the survey, privacy information, and with instructions to expect the survey link to arrive via email in the next several days. SPPG relied on the Department to field the survey and disseminate survey reminders. The original target date to test the survey was early in September. However, shortly before the survey release date, the DE indicated the Director would be releasing a different survey related to education reform around the same date as the SLDS survey. In an effort to reduce confusion and prevent the target audience from feeling inundated by surveys, the release of the SLDS survey was postponed until the DE survey was completed. The survey was sent to participants in mid-December to the following target groups, with the methodology for each group indicated below. The term “universe” means all individuals in that target group received the survey.

- **Public and private K-12 superintendents and principals (universe):** DE used an internal database of all public and private K-12 superintendents and principals; the survey was sent to all individuals on the list.
- **AEA directors and relevant staff (universe):** DE used an internal database of AEA directors; the survey was sent to all individuals on the list with instructions to distribute to relevant staff who work with data.
- **Public and private K-12 school district business staff (universe):** DE used an internal database of all K-12 school district business staff (Business managers, HR staff, IT staff, Accountants); the survey was sent to all individuals on the list.
- **Post-secondary staff (Regents universities, private colleges and universities, and community colleges):** DE used an internal database of community college presidents, and key contacts at private colleges, universities and the Regents. The survey was sent to all contacts with instructions to distribute to staff in positions related to student records/transcripts, admissions, academic affairs, curriculum specialists, those focused on incoming students or students needing specialized/remedial instruction, program directors who coordinate programming with high schools, and institutional researchers.
- **Public and private K-12 and AEA teachers (sample):** Given the high number of teachers, a random sample was drawn from the database of teachers licensed in the state of Iowa. A sample of 3,500 teachers was drawn for the initial survey distribution. That group had a very low response rate in the first two weeks of the survey, likely due to the survey release date coinciding with winter break. A second sample of 3,500 was drawn from the same source, and the survey was sent to that sample immediately following the conclusion of winter break. The January dissemination yielded a better response.

The total number of stakeholders responding to the survey is 1,686. Accurate data are not available on the number of individuals who received the survey link and had an opportunity to respond. Because of spam filters in districts and lack of assurance that the survey was forwarded to others within organizations, no exact sample size can be reported for this survey. Because of the timing of the survey, the private colleges and universities were not well represented in the responses, meaning no generalizations can be made from the survey about private college and university perspectives.

More than three-fourths (78%) of the respondents indicated they are employed by K-12 school districts. That figure included some district-based preschool programs. Additionally, private preschools are 1% of respondents. Area Education Agencies comprise 2% of respondents, and post-secondary make up 19% of the responses.

More than half (53%) of respondents are female; 47% are male. Caucasians make up 93% of respondents. Respondent ages are as follows:

Age Range	Percent of Respondents
34 or under	10%
35-44	25%
45-54	36%
55-64	28%
65 or over	2%

Among the 1,323 respondents identifying themselves as K-12 educators, 33% are principals or assistant principals, 30% are teachers, 16% are superintendents, 11% are business managers or human resources staff, 5% are special education, and 5% are in positions such as curriculum coordinator, information technology (IT) staff, or central office staff. Respondents work in the full range of school building levels with 45% working at an elementary school building, 36% at high school, 33% at middle school, and 16% in preschool. Another 16% reported they do not work at a school building.

Public school K-12 respondents were 91.4% of respondents, private schools were 8.4%, and charter schools were 0.2% of the responses from K-12 stakeholders. Schools participating represented a balance among districts of all sizes.

The post-secondary respondents number 325. Community college respondents were 88.5% of the post-secondary responses, followed by the Regents universities with 13.8%. As noted earlier, private colleges and universities were challenged to return their surveys by the timing of their winter break. More than half (53%) of the post-secondary respondents are faculty members, followed by 30% administrators, and 17% other, such as admissions/registrar, institutional researcher, advisor, and curriculum coordinator.

The full survey report is included as included as a companion document to this report.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Associate of Arts Degree
ACT	American College Testing, provider of the ACT College entrance exam
AEA	Area Education Agency
BEDS	Basic Educational Data Survey; a data collection process used between the Iowa Department of Education and schools, districts and AEAs
Chart of Accounts	DE data collection for accounting information
DE	Department of Education
EASIER	One of the major DE student level data collections to identify enrollment, curriculum and graduation/drop out statistics
EdInsight	Department of Education's State Data Warehouse
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a federal law
HR	Human Resources
IASB	Iowa Association of School Boards
ISEA	Iowa State Education Association
IT	Information Technology
ITC	Iowa Transcript Center
ITP	Iowa Testing Programs; the provider of the Iowa Assessments
K-12	Kindergarten through 12th grade
PK-12	Pre-Kindergarten through 12 th grade
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SIF	Schools Interoperability Framework; standards-based electronic communication of education data
SLDS	Statewide Longitudinal Data System
SPPG	State Public Policy Group; private contractor that delivered the SLDS Visioning and Outreach Initiative
State ID	Ten-digit Unique State Identifier used in Iowa throughout a student's academic K-12 period