Notes from the Data Quality Campaign's Meeting, June 13, 2007
"The Right Data to the Right People at the Right Time: How Interoperable Data Help America's Students Succeed"
Wednesday, 13 June 2007 | U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC

Notice

The Data Quality Campaign expects to post a Webcast of the discussions on their Website www.dataqualitycampaign.org/events/ on June 29, 2007.

Context

The Data Quality Campaign "… is a national, collaborative effort to encourage and support state policymakers to

  * improve the collection, availability, and use of high-quality education data, and

  * implement state longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement."

"The DQC was created in 2005, with support from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as a way for many organizations who were working on separate but similar campaigns regarding educational data systems to come together to ensure coordinated and unduplicated efforts towards reaching their common goals."

The Data Quality Campaign has two alignments that make it relevant to higher education. First, there is interaction with SHEEO (State Higher Education Executive Officers). In most states the SHEEO representatives shares the same interest in longitudinal data as the Chief State School Officers (CSSO). DQC describes it task: "Currently, only Florida's data system includes all 10 essential elements [for a longitudinal database used for policy analysis]. All states should make it a priority to put them in place by 2009. *For this reason, a group of national organizations has launched the Data Quality Campaign (www.DataQualityCampaign.org) to encourage and support policymakers' efforts to fully develop and use longitudinal data in education. (emphasis added)"*

 DQC also is working with the Department of Education on the transfer of individual data from their local and state systems directly into higher education at the state and federal level to support policy analysis and of individual data to support new federal student aid programs that depend upon detailed data from high school to determine eligibility. These transfer included high school to high school (transfers), high school to colleges and universities (admissions, dual enrollment, and now financial aid), and among colleges and universities (transfers and dual enrollment). They could also consider testing services (Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate test results).

The Meeting

This meeting was held at the U.S. Department of Education. Ross Santy, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Data and Information, hosted. Larry Fruth, Schools Interoperability Framework Associations, and Elizabeth Laird, Data Quality Campaign, welcomed an audience of about 200.

Three panelists gave presentations and responded to questions from Santy and, at the end, from the audience.

Tracy Oliver, Naperville community United School District 203, Illinois gave examples of how the use of current longitudinal data was "Improving Return on Investment of Data Collection and Use." Their implementation experience was positive. Tracy credited SIFA-compliant commercial software and supplier support for their success.

Bethann Canada, Virginia Department of Education, described how the schools districts were extending or replacing local data systems to support a state database of individual records in her presentation "Streamlining and Empowering Local Data Systems." She said in the three years 98 of 132 schools districts had improved local data systems and could provide the state with the requested information (including the high school transcript) for almost all students in the state. She pointed there was no state mandate; the districts were upgrading in support of the Virginia Department initiative. Soon after the end of each school term, the state database has the data that supports the PESC high school transcript based on SIFA specifications for the local systems.

Ken Sauer described the Indiana project, funded by the Indiana Secondary Market (student loans), that supported the exchange of student transcript data using the PESC electronic transcript specification. The system was developed by Docufide. Docufide describes the project writing:

> "Indiana's public and private post secondary schools have witnessed an incredible increase in electronic transcript delivery after the state launched its e-Transcript Initiative (ETI) a little over one year ago. The state went from practically zero transcripts delivered electronically to close to 10,000 admissions transcripts processed; a quantum leap forward through the implementation and use of the ETI by more than 240 of the state's high schools.

> "The ETI, provided by Docufide, Inc., allows all high schools in the state to exchange transfer transcripts as well as deliver transcripts to Indiana colleges and universities electronically. Key to this initiative's success was the ability for Docufide to rollout the service to so many schools in such a short period of time. Unlike several other statewide attempts at electronic transcript delivery that have failed, Docufide's approach is unique

in that it works both for schools that align with data standards like SIF, and also for schools where no standards exist, which is the current state of affairs in most schools nationwide. Independent of the type of student system they use or alignment with standards, Docufide can capture their transcripts electronically in a secure, non-invasive way with nothing more than a one time simple application download. Transcripts are received electronically by Docufide as data files where they are then converted to XML and delivered in standards-aligned formats like PESC XML or EDI, as well as more commonly received PDF and even security paper options, ensuring delivery to any destination globally."

This system is now being used to provide high school records to college and university student financial aid administrators. ETI now covers 69% of high school, college, and university enrollment.

The Summary

PESC's Michael Sessa gave the summary and lessons learned. He pointed out there were various levels of integration of the systems. Success may have come from the similarity of "commodity systems"—referring to the number of SIFA-compliant systems available to PK-12—as well as the implementation of PESC specifications. He observed the "No Child Left Behind" initiative had created a sense of urgency to implement these data systems. He commented that interoperability requires standards. Whose job is it to ensure interoperability? He pointed out that the CCSO, SHEEO, and the states were focusing on interoperability because there is a benefit from (1) improved efficiency. He also said (2) the systems are providing a higher level of service to teachers, students, and parents and (3) the data is available in a standard form that facilitates policy analysis. These benefits are driving the implementation beyond pilots into stable productive implementations.

Issues

Linked identifiers - DQC suggests (as one of the ten "essentials and fundaments") state systems should provide and use "A unique statewide student identifier that connects student data across key databases across years." As it turns out, this has not been implemented in most cases. This suggests a procedure for "linking" records would be required in order to have a longitudinal student record. The Social Security Number was used for this linking for years and still is for federal student aid (and by practice for private lenders as well), but most colleges and universities are reluctant to provide Social Security Number for state databases where the future use is not well defined and may, in their opinion, violate privacy law.

Control of the data – David Moldorf, President, AcademyOne.com, raised a question about who controls the data—the school district, the state, the federal government, or the student. He suggested the data should be under the control of the student; that is, the student should have to give permission for the transfer of data from the high school, college, or university to other

institution or state or federal agency. This is similar to the issue of student portfolios when they are used for job placement. Students must "authorize" the transfer of data from their personal portfolio to a potential employer. And transcripts that depend upon a student request (though there are examples of "implied authorization" that permits content to be transferred to employers via a state agency). Although there are legal safeguards for data, there are ways around these safeguards. For example, banks may require a Social Security Number as a condition for having a bank account—and most do. The state may, and usually does, transfer detailed data from school districts to the state and, as planned, to the federal government without the student's permission. While this authorized transfer is typical in Europe, any major data security breach or misuse of the data in the U.S. is likely to raise Dave's question here.

Coverage – As the Virginia and Indiana implementations show, because of size only a few institutions are sufficient to provide substantial coverage of students. And the volume necessary to achieve a return on investment. One of the benefits that is often omitted—because it is hard to evaluate—is the value of timely data transfer. All of these systems are improving data transfers in terms of accuracy, timeliness, and reduced administrative costs.

[Excerpts]

The Right Data to the Right People at the Right Time: How Interoperable Data Help America's Students Succeed

Wednesday, June 13, 9-11 am (EDT)

As part of the Data Quality Campaign's goal to provide a national forum for conversations about the power of longitudinal data, this Quarterly Issue Meeting will report on the current status of district, state education agency, and higher education efforts to seamlessly share data with each other to create an environment for improved P-20 alignment and policy decisions.

Demands to provide information about an increasingly mobile student population require P-12 and postsecondary institutions to collaborate around not only their data systems but also coordinate their data standards, so the meaning of course codes, ethnicities, grades, etc. easily translate across institutions and systems. Please join us to hear from education leaders about the benefits, processes, and challenges of creating and maintaining data systems capable of exchanging information across district and even state lines.

Refreshments will be served at the beginning of the meeting to enable informal networking, and the panel presentation will be followed by a discussion between the presenters and the audience. A policy brief on this issue will also be released at the meeting.

Featured presenters will include:

- **Bethann Canada**, Virginia Department of Education
- **Tracy Oliver**, Naperville Community Unit School District 203, Illinois
- **Ken Sauer**, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Time: Wednesday, June 13, 9-11 am (EDT)

Location: *United States Department of Education*
            FB6 Departmental Auditorium
            400 Maryland Avenue, SW
            Washington, DC 20202

For those unable to attend the meeting, a **live broadcast of this session will be available online** and a video of this session and the policy brief will be available at the campaign's Web site after June 29, 2007.

We look forward to your participation in this dialogue.

Please complete the fields below if you are planning to attend the meeting **in person**. Instructions to participate in the webcast will be emailed closer to the meeting day.

The Right Data to the Right People at the Right Time: How Interoperable Data Help America's Students Succeed

United States Department of Education
FB6 Departmental Auditorium
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Agenda

9-9:10 am	Welcome

Welcome .... Larry Fruth
Schools Interoperability
Framework Association

Elizabeth Laird
Data Quality Campaign

9:10-10 am	Panel Presentation

MODERATOR- Ross Santy, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Data and Information
United States Department of Education

Improving Return on Investment of Data Collection and Use .... Tracy Oliver
Naperville Community Unit
School District 203, Illinois

Streamlining and Empowering Local Data Systems .... Bethann Canada
Virginia Department of Education

Aligning P-20 and Increasing Savings with e-Transcript .... Ken Sauer
Indiana Commission for Higher
Education

10-11 am	Discussion

Question & Answer .... All

Summarizing Lessons Learned .... Michael Sessa
Postsecondary Electronic
Standards Council