



SLDS Spotlight

State Approaches to Engaging Local K12 Stakeholders

Engaging with local K12 stakeholders is crucial to ensuring the successful development and improving the ultimate utility and sustainability of statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs). Involving staff from multiple districts helps to identify, align, and leverage existing resources. Such involvement from districts can also help to develop tools that will assist local education agencies (LEAs) with improving their data collection and student record keeping, and to easily and effectively leverage the data to inform decisionmaking.

Effective engagement with stakeholders involves continuous and inclusive dialogue between state education agencies (SEAs) and LEAs. Although effective stakeholder engagement can be time-intensive, this level of investment is necessary to defining tools that will meaningfully support LEAs in the creation and use of quality data. Such dialogues cultivate relationships and help build tools that encourage the ease of implementation of longitudinal data systems (LDSs).

This SLDS Spotlight discusses the strategies used and lessons learned by Virginia, Oregon, Iowa, and Washington, DC through efforts to engage with stakeholders. These states offered insights for both engaging with and understanding the needs of districts and using that knowledge to create effective tools.

Iowa: Visualizing How Stakeholders Fit into the SLDS Effort



Currently, Iowa is in year three of a five-year, \$8.8 million IES SLDS grant to expand its SLDS to include workforce and postsecondary data, and to develop an e-transcript system. Prior to this project, Iowa realized that the initiative would not be successful without stakeholders' support.

Internal and External Study

Prior to implementing portions of the SLDS expansion, Iowa conducted studies, both internally and externally, to understand stakeholders' needs. For the internal study, Iowa engaged with nine bureaus, which make up Iowa's Department of Education (DOE), and 190 of Iowa's DOE staff through six meetings. Through the internal study, Iowa received input regarding the proposed data sets and how to effectively use them in the future. For the external portion of the study, Iowa created 12 focus groups and distributed an electronic survey to 6,000 recipients at all levels (teacher, principal, district, etc.).

"We're giving people a voice in the process," said Jason Grinstead of the Iowa Department of Education. "This is their project and a project for the state of Iowa. We truly believe this will produce a better end product."

From both studies, Iowa instilled a common vocabulary among staff and stakeholders and increased awareness about the importance of the SLDS.

This product of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program was developed with the help of knowledgeable staff from state and local education agencies. The content of this brief was derived from an SLDS monthly topical webinar that took place in September 2011 and follow-up correspondence. The information presented does not necessarily represent the opinions of the IES SLDS Grant Program. We thank the following people for their valuable contributions:

Dwight Franklin
*Office of State Superintendent of Education,
District of Columbia*

Jason Grinstead
Iowa Department of Education

James Harrington
Oregon Hillsboro School District

Susan Williams
Virginia Department of Education

Robin Taylor
SLDS Grant Program, State Support Team

For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program, additional SLDS publications, or for support with system development or use, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS>.

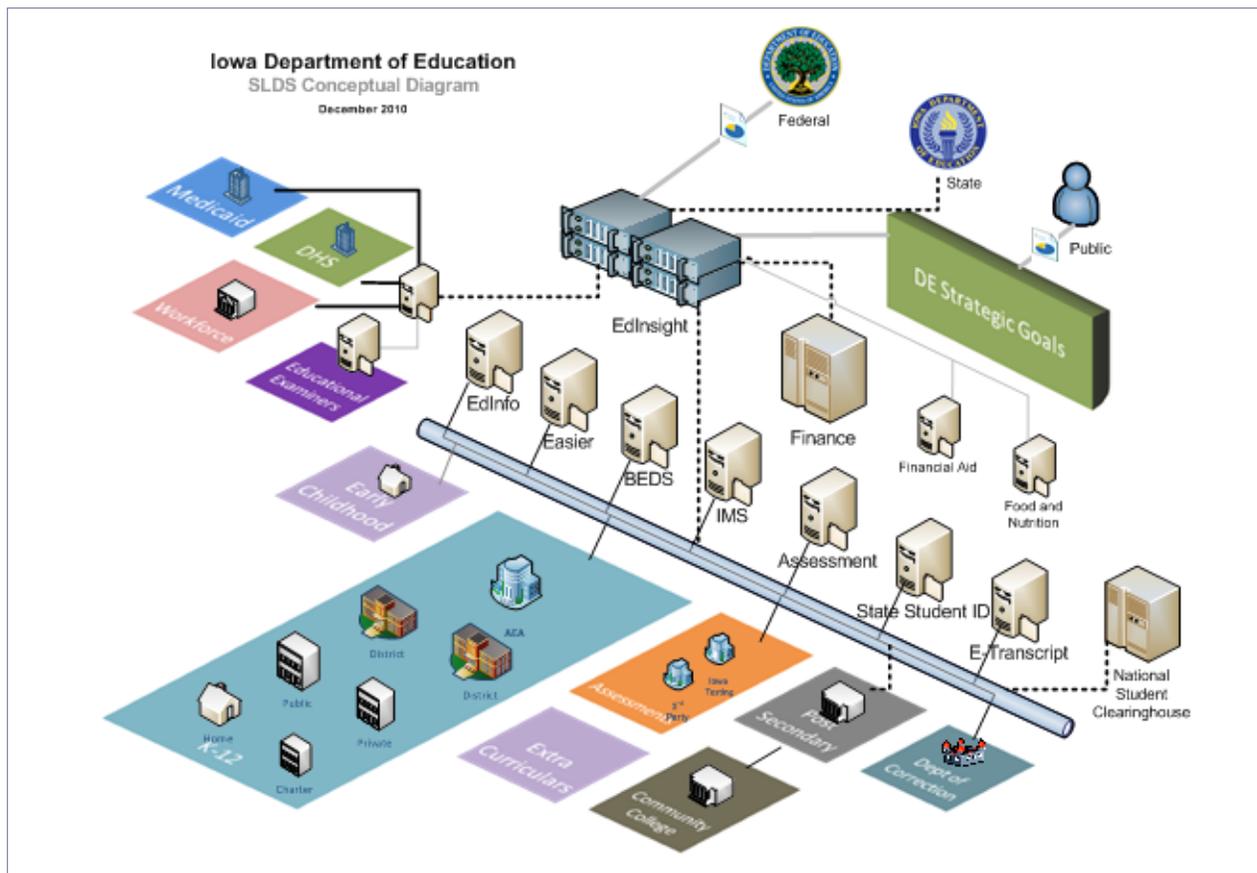


Figure 1. Iowa's SLDS conceptual diagram

Expansion of Iowa's SLDS

From feedback received through the internal study, Iowa created a conceptual diagram of Iowa's SLDS (see Figure 1). The diagram displays how Iowa's expanded SLDS will work and the organizations that will be involved. By creating a visualization of how the SLDS will expand, Iowa hopes stakeholders will understand the "bigger picture" of how the system will work to benefit them.

Washington, DC: Gathering Diverse Stakeholders

In 2007, Washington, DC, led by new mayor Adrian Fenty, began an initiative to develop an SLDS. Prior to implementing the system, DC held about a dozen focus groups—which included city council members, community-based organizations, LEAs, and private foundations—to assess the needs and requirements of such groups. By understanding the stakeholders' needs prior to implementation and development of the SLDS, DC was able to increase buy-in among stakeholders.

DC also organized all stakeholders' requirements and needs into a matrix. From this matrix, a timeline was created to address those needs. DC has used this schedule for the past four years to plan the development of tools and training for stakeholders.

Prioritizing and Organizing Stakeholders' Needs

Once DC understood the stakeholders' needs, it faced the challenge of balancing those competing needs and meeting the high priority requirements in a timely manner. To help stakeholders understand the challenges involved in developing a system that would meet their needs, DC shared a project timeline. This tangible resource helped stakeholders appreciate the complexity involved in developing the system.

Another challenge DC faced when engaging with stakeholders was addressing their concerns. From the focus groups, DC learned that many educators were apprehensive about the development of a teacher-student data link, and especially the potential risks introduced if there was ever a data breach. To address this issue, DC supplied stakeholders with information about its data security practices. DC also informed users that the data would be managed in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and that educators would have the ability to review all data before they are shared with the public.

Meeting with Stakeholders Beyond Implementation

After implementing its SLDS, the District of Columbia created committees to continue to engage with stakeholders and address ongoing issues. Such committees drove aspects of DC's LDS forward. For example, DC's Steering Committee developed a project charter and assisted the District with securing an SLDS grant and local funds from government agencies in DC involved with the SLDS.

The establishment and effective use of committees ensure that major stakeholders remain involved and active after the implementation process. Now, DC meets with an advisory board that includes members of the public charter school board, DC Public Schools, and charter school advocacy organizations. This committee works to resolve issues, improve data quality, and establish policies related to DC's LDS.

Oregon Hillsboro School District: Building Trusting, Collaborative Relationships



In 2000, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) issued guidelines to administer online assessments. This change, however, was met with resistance from LEAs. At the time, most districts were using paper assessments and did not have the IT capacity to implement online testing. ODE soon realized that LEAs and the SEA had to work together to overcome this challenge and work toward a solution for implementing the new guidelines.

“We went from ‘here’s what’s going to happen’ to ‘how can we make this happen?’” said James Harrington, Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Oregon Hillsboro School District.

By forming cohesive relationships—the SEA with LEAs, and LEAs with other LEAs—Oregon was able to unify priorities and pool resources.

Engaging All Stakeholders

After issuing guidelines to administer state online assessments, ODE formed an IT manager group that leveraged the leadership of the local CIO council (since 1996, district CIOs had met monthly to collaboratively resolve IT-related issues). The IT manager group worked as an advisory council that discussed communication strategies, organized

work groups, and examined resources that would encourage online administration of assessments. “The work [within the IT managers group] began a powerful dialogue,” said Harrington.

Soon diverse stakeholders became involved with the online assessment implementation process. These parties willingly communicated their needs and interests with other stakeholders, which helped them align priorities and form cohesive relationships. Relationships and dialogue among stakeholders ultimately encouraged an interest in and a movement towards quality data collection.

As a result of the work of the IT managers group, Oregon formed a state data collection committee in 2002. From the state data collection committee, stakeholders were able to see the potential in a quality data collection and the importance of an SLDS. This further spurred the state's burgeoning interest in forming a state data warehouse.

Meeting State and Local Needs

In 2003, five of Oregon's biggest LEAs began a regional data warehousing project. Shortly thereafter, however, the state received grant funding and became involved in the data warehouse initiative. Because Oregon and its districts had different uses for the student data, they had to work together to create an LDS that satisfied the needs and requirements of all parties.

Working groups and advisory committees were created in Oregon to assist with the state's LDS. In 2010, a data warehouse governance committee was established to develop the implementation of Oregon's P-20 data system¹. This committee acts as the liaison between the SEA and LEAs when implementing changes and updating the data system. Technical working groups have also been formed to initiate technical collaboration to improve K12 data system development. Through committees and working groups, LEAs and ODE have been able to effectively collaborate on the development of an SLDS that can meet the needs of stakeholders at both the state and local levels.

¹ Prior to 2010, Oregon received several grants that expanded the state's LDS and created resources for data-driven professional development. In 2007, Oregon received an SLDS grant to create the Oregon Direct Access to Achievement (DATA) Project, an online professional development resource that encourages a culture of data literacy within the state. In 2009, Oregon was again awarded an SLDS grant to further develop its data warehouse through curriculum-based measures, large scale data sets for policy analysis, and performance and progress measures. Later, Oregon received a 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant to implement K12 teacher-student linkage components and expand its SLDS to a P-20 system.



Virginia: Importance of Advisory Groups

To assist with the development of the state's student record collection tool, Virginia created the Student Information Advisory Group (SIAG). The state collaborated with this 20-person advisory group—made up entirely of LEA members—for 18 months. During this development period, SIAG and the state discussed aspects of student record collection that would be crucial in developing this tool (e.g., element analysis, verifying and validating the data, etc.). Later, when Virginia began developing a student-teacher linkage tool, the state continued to rely on direct input from stakeholders. To capture a wide breadth of data, Virginia conducted five on-site school visits. Through these in-depth visits, the state assessed the needs and recognized unique challenges facing each school. For both student record collection and student-teacher linkage tools, direct input from stakeholders helped Virginia support LEAs, plan tools, and carve out feasible data collection goals.

Training When Implementing New Tools

Once Virginia established the state's record collection tool, face-to-face training was conducted at eight different locations across the state. Educational materials used for the training were later posted as a reference resource. To create student-teacher linkage resources, Virginia held monthly meetings and regional webinars to train LEA users and answer questions about the tool.

Increasing Buy-in Rather Than Forcing Compliance

Virginia created several tools at the request of LEAs to increase the ease of student record keeping and teacher-student linkages. Such tools included a pre-submission application tool, a tool that helps LEAs do an edit check of student record collections throughout the year; and an overview report tool, which shows which districts have already submitted their student record collection. By seeking feedback throughout the tool development and implementation phases, Virginia ensured that LEAs were (and felt like they were) a part of the process. This helped to increase buy-in among these critical stakeholders.

Providing Ongoing Support After Implementation

Virginia has offered several direct communication opportunities around its student record collection and student-teacher linkage tools. Before any updates to the collected data elements are implemented, the state hosts pre-change webinars, during which the state reviews the data element proposals and gathers feedback about the suggested changes.

“We take [stakeholders'] input very seriously,” said Susan Williams of the Virginia Department of Education. “If we find out we are asking for a data element that doesn't live in their student information system, then we don't add it to the student record collection.”

In addition to pre-change webinars, Virginia emails “Tuesday telegrams” to LEAs that alert them of any data collection issues or updates to the SLDS.

Additional Resources

Florida Department of Education (2008). *How Do You Leverage Longitudinal Data to Inform Stakeholders?* Presentation available at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/LDSShare/SLDS.aspx>

National Center for Education Statistics (2011). *Stakeholder Communication: SLDS Best Practices Brief*. Available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/best_practices.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics (2010). *Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems, Book II: Planning and Developing an LDS*. Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011804.pdf>

State Support Team (2012). *Stakeholder Engagement Plan Guide and Template*. Available to states upon request to support@sls-sst.org.