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DATA QUALITY CAMPAIGN Announces 3-Year Progress

States make impressive gains in building longitudinal education data systems; now must use the information to improve student achievement

Austin, TX — Nov. 15, 2008 — Six states have all 10 elements of a comprehensive data system that can track student progress from preschool through college, and 48 states have at least half the elements, according to the third annual report released today by the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) during the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Annual Policy Forum. The Annual DQC Leadership Awards also were presented.

Since its launch in 2005, the DQC, a national partnership to improve the quality, accessibility and use of data in education, has highlighted the power of developing and using longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement. Longitudinal data — data gathered on the same student from year to year — make it possible to follow individual student academic growth, determine the value-added of specific programs, and identify consistently high-performing schools and systems.

Key findings from the 2008 survey of all 50 states and the District of Columbia:

- In 2005, no state reported having all 10 essential elements of a robust state longitudinal data system; this year, six states do (AL, AR, DE, FL, LA and UT).
- 48 states now have five or more of the 10 elements.
- 42 states (compared to 14 in 2005) report they have the data systems necessary to calculate the National Governors Association longitudinal graduation rate. All states except one (Idaho) will report this rate by 2010–11.

"The Data Quality Campaign has brought focus to the benefits of good data systems," U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings said. "Today, thanks in part to the DQC, 42 states have already done the hard work necessary to have systems in place to calculate a more accurate and reliable graduation rate, and almost every other state is on track to have systems developed by 2011. Information is a powerful motivator for change, and I'm pleased that these states have put together systems that will empower parents and policymakers throughout the country to work to reverse low graduation rates."

States also are committed to continuing to build and expand these data systems: 47 states plan to have eight or more of the 10 elements in place within three years. But much work remains, particularly on certain elements:

- Only 21 states have a teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students; another 13 states plan to have this element by 2012, but 17 states report no plans to implement it.
- Only 17 states collect student-level course completion and transcript information, and at least nine have no plans to do so.

- 29 states have the ability to collect college readiness test scores, but at least 12 states have no plans to implement this element.

States report that it is not a lack of technological know-how that is keeping them from doing this work. The lack of political will and resources to implement the elements and change the culture around data use are the greatest barriers.

“We need to transform our view of data in education and realize that quality student-level data presents a realistic — though not always pretty — picture of achievement in our schools. Chief state school officers in partnership with other state policymakers must reinforce the use of data as an integral part of our efforts to improve performance across the system, especially increasing student achievement. Thanks to the comprehensive state data system we have built in Arkansas, the information the state provides can help shape our decisions to ensure every student leaves high school prepared for the challenges of our increasingly demanding economy,” said Arkansas Commissioner Ken James, incoming president of CCSSO.

Four Leaders Honored

States and districts already showing exceptional leadership received the 2008 DQC Annual Leadership Awards:

- **Pennsylvania Gov. Edward G. Rendell and Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak jointly received the State Policymaker of the Year** for their efforts to build Pennsylvania’s P–20 data system while demonstrating the power of this information to principals, teachers and other stakeholders.
- **Kathy Gosa of the Kansas State Department of Education was recognized as the State Data Director of the Year** for her leadership in developing, promoting and implementing governance policies and structures that help ensure quality and confidentiality while maximizing the sharing of information.
- **Superintendent Joe Kitchens of Western Heights Public Schools in Oklahoma is the District Data Leader of the Year** for transforming his district into a continually improving organization that is informed by real-time, accurate data.

“Over the past several years, many states have ramped up their efforts to build data systems to inform education accountability and improve student achievement,” said Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, chairman of the Education Commission of the States. “This focus on measurable results and student performance is an important part of closing the achievement gap and making sure students are meeting goals throughout their school careers. We’re hopeful that every state will continue this progress, even when political or other barriers seem tough to overcome.”

The Next Step: Using Longitudinal Data for Continuous Improvement

While applauding the progress to date, DQC leaders called on states to help policymakers, educators and other stakeholders make much better use of these data to improve student achievement. For instance, 44 states have the capacity to track preschool children into kindergarten, and 28 can follow high school graduates into college, but it is not clear whether states are actually using this information to improve performance. If the data show, for instance, that certain groups or individual students are off track as early as 3rd grade, then schools can adjust their instruction to help these students catch up.

“Principals and their teachers need professional development to build their capacity to use these new sources of data to improve student achievement and sustain progress made,” says Gerald N. Tirozzi, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

The DQC’s managing and endorsing partners have renewed their commitment to work together over the next three years to build political support among policymakers to:

- Grow and sustain longitudinal data systems that follow individual students throughout the P–20 education pipeline;
- Ensure broad, yet appropriate, access to these data; and
- Increase the capacity throughout the education system to understand and use these data to improve system performance and student achievement.

The DQC is a national, collaborative effort to encourage and support state policymakers to improve the collection, availability and use of high-quality education data and to implement state longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement. The campaign provides tools and resources that assist state development of quality longitudinal data systems, while providing a national forum for reducing duplication of effort and promoting greater coordination and consensus among the organizations focusing on improving data quality, access and use.

The campaign is managed by the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the founding funder; additional support has been provided by the Casey Family Programs and the Lumina Foundation for Education.

In September 2008, NCEA conducted a survey about state data systems to determine the number of states that have built the infrastructure to tap into the power of longitudinal data. NCEA conducted similar surveys in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

For more information, visit www.DataQualityCampaign.org or e-mail Info@DataQualityCampaign.org.

Progress on the 10 Essential Elements of Longitudinal Data Systems

Longitudinal data — data gathered on the same student from year to year — make it possible to follow individual student academic growth, determine the value-added of specific programs, and identify consistently high-performing schools and systems. The DQC has identified the following 10 essential elements of a longitudinal data system and annually reports state progress in implementing each element:

1. A unique statewide student identifier that connects student data across key databases across years (*48 states report having this element, up from 36 in 2005*)
2. Student-level enrollment, demographic and program participation information (*49, up from 38 in 2005*)
3. The ability to match individual students' test records from year to year to measure academic growth (*48, up from 32 in 2005*)
4. Information on untested students and the reasons they were not tested (*41, up from 25 in 2005*)
5. A teacher identification system with the ability to match teachers to students (*21, up from 13 in 2005*)
6. Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned (*17, up from 7 in 2005*)
7. Student-level college readiness test scores (*29, up from 7 in 2005*)
8. Student-level graduation and dropout data (*50, up from 34 in 2005*)
9. The ability to match student records between the P–12 and postsecondary systems (*28, up from 12 in 2005*)
10. A state audit system assessing data quality, validity and reliability (*45, up from 19 in 2005*)

Quotes from DQC Partners

"Access to high-quality data that links K–12 to higher education is critical to realizing the goal of college and career readiness. As states continue to develop their P–20 longitudinal data systems, the unrealized potential of data to inform, shape and advance education reform is clear. Data tells us what's working, what isn't and where we need to focus. And good data is critical in aligning K–12 to higher education, closing the expectation gap and easing the transition between the two systems. The DQC has been instrumental in leading the data agenda forward in all 50 states, and Achieve is pleased to be a managing partner and support the DQC's efforts."

— *Matt Gandal, Executive Vice President, Achieve*

"The DQC's report demonstrates that major progress has been made during this first phase of the campaign, but the road ahead remains a long one. The next step is for states to ensure that the data collected are accessible, understandable and strategically used to address individual student needs. Data is the key to unlocking potential, and the Alliance for Excellent Education looks forward to continuing this vital collaboration with our DQC partners to make sure all students are provided with the excellent, personalized education they deserve."

— *Gov. Bob Wise, President, Alliance for Excellent Education*

"Education leaders across the United States recognize that this nation must dramatically improve high school graduation rates; close the achievement gap; and improve transitions between preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school and postsecondary. None of these goals can be accomplished in a systematic manner without the use of good data. Education is one of the last professions to use data to inform and guide policy decisions that can improve the overall system. The groundbreaking work of the DQC has been fundamental in moving our education system forward. We must continue to support and expand this work."

— *Roger Sampson, President, Education Commission of the States*

"In schools and districts across the country, educators are closely monitoring data in their efforts to close the gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from their peers and raise achievement for all. They have harnessed the power of data to evaluate instruction, identify struggling students for support and ensure that everyone — teachers, administrators, parents and students — is committed to the same high expectations. It's time that we all follow their lead and make this an integral part of the day-to-day operations of every school system in the nation. The DQC's efforts are critical to moving this agenda forward."

— *Kati Haycock, President, The Education Trust*

"The Schools Interoperability Framework [SIF] Association is pleased to be one of the original managing partners of the DQC. States are making tremendous progress toward building, maintaining and utilizing longitudinal data systems. This accurate data informs crucial decisions necessary at all levels within education, and continuing the dialogue and building capacity for leaders is the next vital step. By enabling interoperability, the more than 2,200 members of the SIF Association are proud to assist states and districts by enabling the connection of administrative data with teaching and learning data for making informed decisions for schools, teachers and states."

— *Larry L. Fruth II, Ph.D., Executive Director and CEO, SIF Association*

"As an organization that relies greatly on the accessibility and quality of data, we continue to be pleased — and in some cases, amazed — at the amount of progress that has been made in the last three years toward the building of longitudinal data systems among states. Standard & Poor's has seen firsthand the progress that many states have made, and we are hopeful that more and more states, with the help of the DQC and its partners, will be able to advance in the development and use of these important data systems."

— *Thomas Sheridan, Vice President, Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services*

"Increased academic achievement depends on data systems that bridge transition points — preschool through college — as well as educators who are determined to use data to improve performance. The DQC has provided a blueprint educators at every level can use to complete the job."

— *Paul Ligenfelter, President, State Higher Education Executive Officers*

"Educational data and research are key to improving performance throughout the education system and, most important, to raising student achievement. ACT is proud to be an active endorsing partner of the DQC, and we salute its progress over the past three years. We look forward to the day longitudinal data systems are fully aligned with college and workplace expectations and being used effectively in all 50 states. This will create a truly national resource for educators to ensure all students are ready for each major academic transition — into school for the first time, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, high school to college and college to the workplace."

— *Cynthia B. Schmeiser, President and COO, Education Division, ACT*

"Solid data is critical in any measurable undertaking if you wish to realistically monitor your progress, make necessary adjustments and legitimately reach your goals. I commend the DQC and all its partners for working together to ensure that we can measure the success of the many improvements to our current education system so that we can ensure success for all students."

— *David Saba, American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence*

"There has never been a greater need to understand how well we are helping our children progress in education, from elementary school through college. As the results of the past year show, the DQC has made great strides in closing the gap between what we think and what we know. However, there is still much work to be done. The National Student Clearinghouse has built a reputation on receiving, processing and providing accurate student data. Consequently, we are proud to lend our support to this important initiative."

— *Ricardo D. Torres, President, National Student Clearinghouse*

DQC Managing and Endorsing Partners

Managing Partners

Achieve, Inc.
Alliance for Excellent Education
Council of Chief State School Officers
Education Commission of the States
The Education Trust
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of System Heads
National Center for Educational Achievement
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
National Governors Association Center for Best Practices
Schools Interoperability Framework Association
Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services
State Educational Technology Directors Association
State Higher Education Executive Officers

Endorsing Partners

ACT
Alliance for Quality Teaching
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence
American Youth Policy Forum
APQC
Business-Higher Education Forum
Center for Teaching Quality
College Summit
Consortium for School Networking
Educational Policy Institute
ETS
GreatSchools
Institute for a Competitive Workforce (An Affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce)
Institute for Educational Leadership
James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy
Jobs for the Future
Knowledge Alliance
League of Education Voters Foundation
Learning Point Associates
Midwestern Higher Education Compact
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
National Association of Secondary School Principals
The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
National Student Clearinghouse
New England Board of Higher Education
Pathways to College Network
Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council
Pre-K Now
Roads to Success
Southern Regional Education Board
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

For more information, visit the DQC Web site at www.DataQualityCampaign.org.