

IMPLEMENTING A UNIFIED STUDENT TRACKING AND DATA SHARING SYSTEM

Background and Context

Accountability, transparency, and data-driven decision-making are key tenets of this Administration's approach to improving educational outcomes for the District's children. Such an approach relies on a system of comprehensive, accurate, and accessible data, protected by explicit confidentiality measures.

As of today, however, such a data system does not exist. At the most basic level, there is no effective mechanism for tracking individual student movement across publicly funded education programs in the District of Columbia. This inability to follow students as they transfer – or fail to transfer – between schools hampers effective drop-out prevention programs, as one example. While tracking student movement is an important start, we must go further by collecting and analyzing data to determine program effectiveness. Currently there is no easy way to analyze which teacher preparation programs yield the best student outcomes, which curricular reforms lead to increased achievement, or what combination of interventions particular groups of students are experiencing. Without a unified system that houses comprehensive and accurate data, we risk duplication and gaps in services, non-compliance with federal and local regulations and grant agreements, and a general lack of strategic decision making.

Our ultimate vision is to create a system that tracks students from early childhood through post-secondary and that provides information on the variety of publicly-funded education-related services children are receiving. Such a system would encompass both school-specific information and out of school activities and services. Data regarding student demographics, attendance, courses taken, standardized test scores, grades, participation in out-of-school time programs, and special education status would be entered into a secure data warehouse. This information would allow policy makers and researchers to catalogue the array of government-related inputs a child is receiving and better understand the impacts of these various interventions. It would also allow teachers and principals to better understand the needs of their students and what impact their instruction is having. The Education Services Modernization Program (EdSMP) represents the backbone of this long-term vision. Access to these data would be carefully defined and monitored to ensure confidentiality.

Our more immediate goals within the larger EdSMP project are: 1) to establish the ability to track student movement within and across local education agencies (LEAs) in the District and 2) to link student achievement outcomes to particular schools, teachers, and programs.

Progress During the First 100 Days

We have accelerated movement towards a functioning student data system by taking a number of key actions in these first 100 days.

Legislation to Support the Development of a Unified Student Data System

- As part of the FY2008 Budget Support Act, the Mayor is proposing legislation that will pave the way for early functionality of EdSMP.
- The legislation mandates the assignment of unique student identifiers to every child receiving publicly funded education services, upon initial receipt of such services. This identifier would stay with a child throughout his or her schooling experience, allowing for effective tracking of students within and across LEAs throughout the state. Ultimately, we expect these numbers to follow students into post-secondary education as well, allowing for the University of the District of Columbia to better anticipate its students' needs and to share information back to secondary schools regarding the preparation levels and success rates of their graduates.
- The legislation further requires the assignment of unique teacher identifiers in every DCPS and DC public charter school. This process will enable effective tracking of teachers within and across LEAs. It will also enable student outcome data to be linked to individual teachers, allowing for evidence-based analysis of program effectiveness.

Grant Proposal to the Federal Government

- On March 15, the State Education Office (SEO), on behalf of the State Education Agency, submitted a proposal to the Institute of Education Sciences to support the development of a longitudinal student data system. The highly competitive federal grant program provides funding and technical assistance for statewide student data tracking. We have requested \$5 million and are hopeful that the District of Columbia will be among the grantees, providing a significant boost for our project.

Addressing Privacy Issues of Data Sharing

- In order to improve the design and delivery of services – and ultimately improve outcomes for children – it is important for different entities to share data related to service delivery. Too often a child is being served by multiple programs that are unaware of each other, resulting in duplication and/or gaps. At the same time, it is crucial that personal information be respected and protected.
- As part of the development of EdSMP, and in line with the newly created Interagency Commission, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is taking a careful look at the necessary protections required when sharing data between agencies, based on local and federal guidelines. To the extent that agencies identify a need to share data for the purpose of improving services, the OAG will

support the development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) that explicitly set the parameters for such sharing.

Setting up Controls for Creation and Maintenance of Unique Student Identifiers

- The District of Columbia already has a system for generating and maintaining unique student identifiers for all DCPS and public charter school students. As currently functioning, however, the system is delivering mixed outcomes, with duplicate IDs in the system and single students having multiple IDs. The SEO, working with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer and DCPS, has taken some initial steps to isolate the problems in the system – both technical and operational.

Funding in City Budget for EdSMP

- To ensure the sustained development of a comprehensive data system, the Mayor is committed to funding a multi-year capital investment. The Mayor's FY2008 budget proposal, submitted to the Council on March 23, includes a proposed \$19 million investment over the next five years.

Next Steps (by July 30)

- Determine long-term solution regarding creation and ongoing maintenance of unique statewide student identifiers.
- Perform data scrub of current student IDs, with a goal of significantly increasing the accuracy of the system for the 07-08 school year.
- Complete MOUs for the first phase of data-sharing through EdSMP
- Complete procurement process for EdSMP enterprise architecture.
- Investigate the use of EdSMP to support all LEAs in efficiently reclaiming costs covered by Medicaid – a significant challenge currently for the District.