

# Paving the Path to **SUCCESS**

 **DATA** FOR  
**ACTION**  
**2014**



## ADDITIONAL *DATA FOR ACTION* RESOURCES

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Please visit [www.dataqualitycampaign.org/DFA2014](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/DFA2014) for additional resources:

- **National Analysis:** National trends in states' progress on building and using state longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement according to the Data Quality Campaign's 10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use.
- **State-by-State Analysis:** Individual state profiles and the ability to compare states to one another.
- **Action Issues:** Deeper analyses about states' data capacity to support various education policies and practices, including teacher effectiveness; college and career readiness; and privacy, security, and confidentiality.



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# Foreword



Every fall I look back on the progress states have made to ensure that data are used to help students achieve—not just in the prior year, but since the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) first surveyed states in 2005—and I am astonished at how far states have come. Creating policies and practices that give educators and families useful information about students to improve their learning is a monumental task. This work takes dedicated resources, dedicated time, and dedicated professionals—lots of them. I am blown away by the strides made over the last nine years through strong leadership in states.

In 2005 few states had even the basic elements of data systems in place to begin developing good practices for using them; now all states have the ability to use high-quality data to empower educators, families, and everyone with a stake in education. With progress come new challenges as well. The nation is engaged in an important conversation about the value of student data and how to keep them safe from inappropriate access and use. State policymakers took on this crucial work, considering a total of 110 bills this year focused on safeguarding student data—30 of which became law.

Ensuring that data are kept out of the wrong hands is an urgent priority, and I believe there should be just as much urgency around getting data into the right ones. In many places, the people who stand to benefit most from education data—parents and families—have the least amount of information about their children’s learning. With high-quality data—data that are timely and presented in useful ways—parents will be empowered to make better informed education decisions. That is something all families deserve, no matter where they live.

Successful states are using DQC’s 10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use as a guide, which is evident in our survey results. Last year, Arkansas and Delaware became the first two states to achieve all 10 Actions, and this year they are joined by Kentucky. Stories of effective data use are emerging from these three states and across the country. It is another world from when we first started compiling state progress through the survey nine years ago, and the investments states have made are beginning to make a difference in classrooms.

That is what this is about. The data serve no purpose unless they are being used to help students, parents, educators, and everyone with a stake in education. But getting the right information into the right hands at the right time can make a world of difference for America’s students. Because it is not really about the data—it is about ensuring that every child has the opportunity to achieve his or her dream. With data lighting the way, all students can navigate their own path to success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aimee R Guidera".

Aimee Rogstad Guidera  
Founder and Executive Director, Data Quality Campaign

# Executive Summary

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) is dedicated to helping everyone with a stake in education, including parents, teachers, education leaders, and policymakers, effectively and appropriately understand and use education data. DQC helps parents and educators understand the value of data—why data matter and how they can help students be successful in the classroom and beyond. Data are more than just test scores, and by effectively accessing and using different types of data—such as attendance, grades, and course-taking—teachers, parents, and school and district leaders can help ensure that every student is on a path for success every day, not just at the end of the school year.

To report national and state progress on effectively using data to ensure that students graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workplace, DQC conducts an annual survey of the states on the 10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use, other key emerging data issues, and promising practices in the field. This report presents the findings from the *Data for Action 2014* survey, DQC's 10th annual survey of the states.<sup>1</sup>

## How Far Have States Come in Ensuring Effective Data Use?

DQC launched the 10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use in 2009. Designed to push states beyond their education data policies and practices at that time, the 10 State Actions call for states to move from *collecting* data only for compliance and accountability purposes to *using* data to answer critical policy questions, inform continuous improvement, and ultimately, support students on their paths to success.

“All of the information has been great. We know perfectly well by that information where our children are lacking and where we need to focus to help them better in order for them to raise their grades in all their subjects.” —Dora Elias, Parent, Tennessee



“Our job in essence here at the state level is to empower people to use data. If we did not have data, if we did not have a look at what happens to our kids over a long period of time, then we certainly would not be able to make well-informed policy decisions.” —Mark Murphy, Delaware Secretary of Education

In the five years since DQC introduced the 10 State Actions, states have made great progress in key areas:

- In 2009, eight states were **budgeting state funds for their data systems**. In 2014, this number increased to **41 states**.<sup>2</sup> While most states have received federal funding to support the development and implementation of their data systems, states are demonstrating that these systems are also a worthy investment of often-limited state dollars.
- In 2009, 12 states were **producing publicly accessible high school feedback reports** with information on how a class of high school graduates fares in postsecondary. In 2014, this number increased to **41 states**. States are not only collecting data to meet compliance or accountability mandates but also using data to gauge progress and inform decisions to support continuous improvement, specifically letting parents, educators, and communities know where their students go after graduation and how well they are prepared for college and beyond.

1 Prior to the *Data for Action* survey, DQC surveyed states on the implementation of the 10 Essential Elements of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems. See Appendix C for more information.

2 In 2009, the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico participated in the *Data for Action* survey. In 2014, 46 states and the District of Columbia participated in the survey.

- In 2009, no states were **prioritizing the development of educators' data literacy skills** to ensure that teachers and principals know how to use data appropriately. In 2014, **18 states** are implementing policies and practices, such as professional development and licensing, to ensure that educators know how to access, analyze, and use data to inform teaching and learning.
  - New teachers and principals need to be trained to effectively use and interpret data when they begin their education careers. **In 13 states, educator licensing and program approval policies include a demonstration of data literacy skills.**
  - **A growing number of states share information about how teachers perform in the classroom with educator preparation programs**, providing data to inform improvements in teacher training. In fact, the number of states sharing this information has more than tripled from 2011 to 2014 (**from six states in 2011 to 22 states in 2014**).
  - While the **number of states ensuring that parents, teachers, and other appropriate stakeholders**, such as principals or counselors, **have timely, role-based access to student data has increased from two states in 2011 to 11 states in 2014**, more work remains to provide access to those stakeholders who need the information most to make informed, critical education decisions every day.
- **Kentucky is the newest state to achieve all 10 State Actions**, joining Arkansas and Delaware. Kentucky's focus on providing teachers, families, and the public with useful data that meet their needs propelled the state from having two Actions in 2011 to all 10 Actions in 2014.
  - **The average number of Actions achieved by the states increased from 4.7 in 2011 to 7.0 in 2014.** All states have implemented at least four of the 10 State Actions.
  - **Seventeen states have eight or nine Actions** (Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Massachusetts, and Utah join the District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin). States are working to maintain the gains they have made in recent years to ensure effective data use.

“Assessing the data that we have helps us to focus on the kids and what they need. We’re able to look more at what each individual child needs and match them up with other kids that have similar needs.” —*Lynne Seidenberg, Teacher, Rhode Island*

## How Federal Policies Support Effective Data Use at the State and Local Levels

Federal policymakers can support state and local efforts by promoting, supporting, and incentivizing effective data use at the state level in federal policies.

**Data Literacy:** States are currently working to ensure that all teachers have the capacity to use data to improve their instruction and maximize student learning. Federal policymakers can support state efforts by adopting a definition for data literacy in federal education policies.

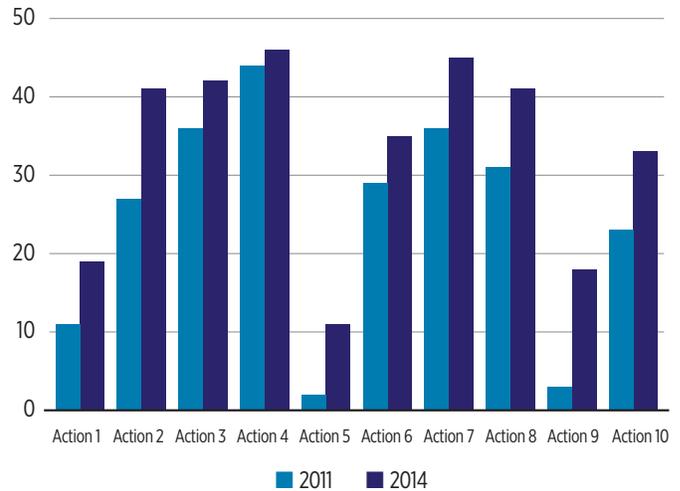
**Teacher Preparation:** Educator preparation programs train new teachers and school leaders. To ensure that they are successfully preparing teachers for the reality of the classroom, the programs need to know how their graduates are performing as teachers to increase the programs' transparency and effectiveness.

**Public Reporting:** Current public reporting efforts in most states are geared toward complying with state and federal laws, rather than being intentionally designed to answer stakeholders' questions. Federal policymakers can support states by aligning federal collection requirements to the questions that stakeholders actually need, want, and deserve answers to.

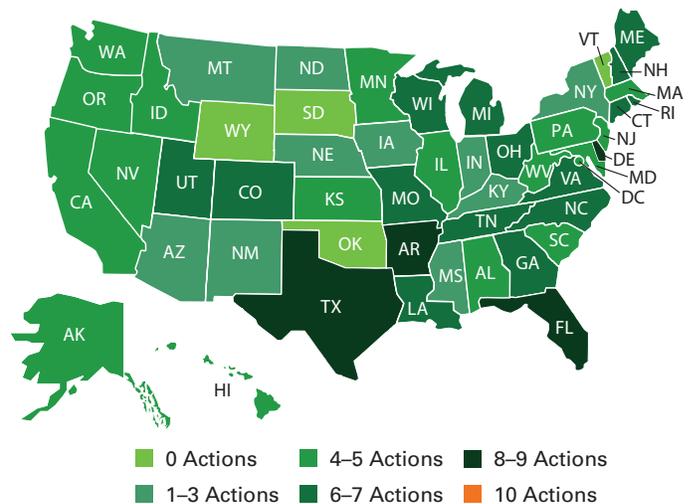
- In addition to the current student performance data that teachers provide to parents, **parents in 17 states** (up from eight states in 2011) **have access to data that follow their children’s progress over time**, helping these parents make critical decisions to support their children’s paths to success.
- While most states have securely linked data between K-12 and early childhood data systems and between K-12 and postsecondary data systems, **states are still working to securely link K-12 and workforce data systems (only 19 do currently)**. Technical challenges remain to accurately match students between these systems. However, these linkages are critical to understanding the pathways to success in education and the workforce.
- **Most states are allocating state funds to support their ongoing efforts** to provide educators, families, policymakers, and the public with information they need to make important decisions in support of student achievement.
- **Most states have policies in place that require the maintenance or use of a data system.** These policies create stable, sustained support for the use of data to inform continuous improvement.
- In 2014, many states sought to safeguard student data privacy by introducing legislation. In total, **36 states considered 110 bills directly addressing student data privacy.**
- **Most states have established a data governance committee** that has responsibility for and authority over data sharing, access, privacy, and use across agencies. Nine states have high-quality, formal, and transparent cross-agency data governance committees.
- High-quality public reporting is trustworthy; focused on meeting people’s information needs; timely and ongoing; and easy to find, access, and understand. **Seven states provide high-quality public reporting** that meets the information needs of parents.

“Data help me in my conversations with parents because they want to know where their kids stand; and oftentimes, if they have the data, they can address the issue and fix it before report cards come out.” —Amber Crum, Teacher, Arkansas

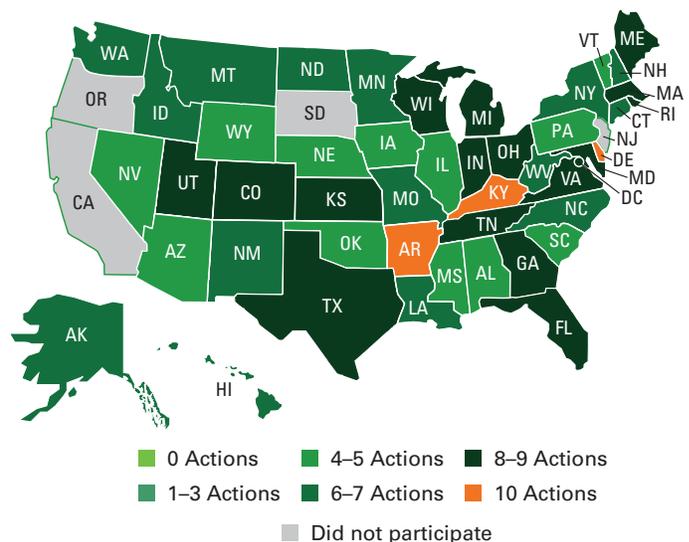
**Number of States with Each State Action: 2011 and 2014**



**2011**



**2014**



# Paving the Path to Success

All students deserve a great education to prepare them for what lies ahead in college and careers. Ensuring that every student is on a path to success means challenging gifted and talented students to take their learning further, supporting students with special needs so they can grow and thrive, and encouraging students who are just getting by to reach their full potential. Without access to the right data, pinpointing and addressing the needs of each student or knowing which programs directly benefit students of all abilities is difficult for teachers, principals, and parents.

Data on individual students, such as attendance, grades, and course-taking, can give teachers and parents the ability to understand students' strengths and needs to help improve student achievement. Data on classrooms, schools, and districts can provide school leaders, such as principals and superintendents, with information they need to ensure that resources are being allocated fairly, class sizes are manageable, and education programs are improving student achievement.

Parents are critical partners in their children's education. All parents, regardless of where they live, need access to their children's education data and information to help their children succeed. Parents need data that enable them to make the best decisions possible, including which schools their children should attend and what they can do as parents to meet their children's unique education needs. Parents also need access to timely information that is tailored to their needs to help them understand the implications of the courses their children take and how this will affect their children's ability to succeed in the future.

Data can spur conversations among parents, teachers, students, and school leaders, who all want to see students succeed. Data can help everyone with a stake in education have a common language and shared understanding of where students and schools stand. For example, an examination of attendance data may reveal a school in which some students are chronically absent despite the school having high average daily attendance. Discussions about which students are struggling to come to school or factors that may be hindering better attendance can bring together educators, families, and the community to better support these students. Problems that have previously been hidden are illuminated and can then be addressed.

## Data Are More than Just Test Scores

DQC defines data as the following:

- **more than test scores**, including attendance, grades, and course-taking, as well as teacher and financial information
- **any information people with a stake in education need to make decisions**, which means more than just state-level data
- **spanning early childhood and K-12 through postsecondary and the workforce** to provide a more robust picture of student outcomes

The most useful data have the following characteristics:

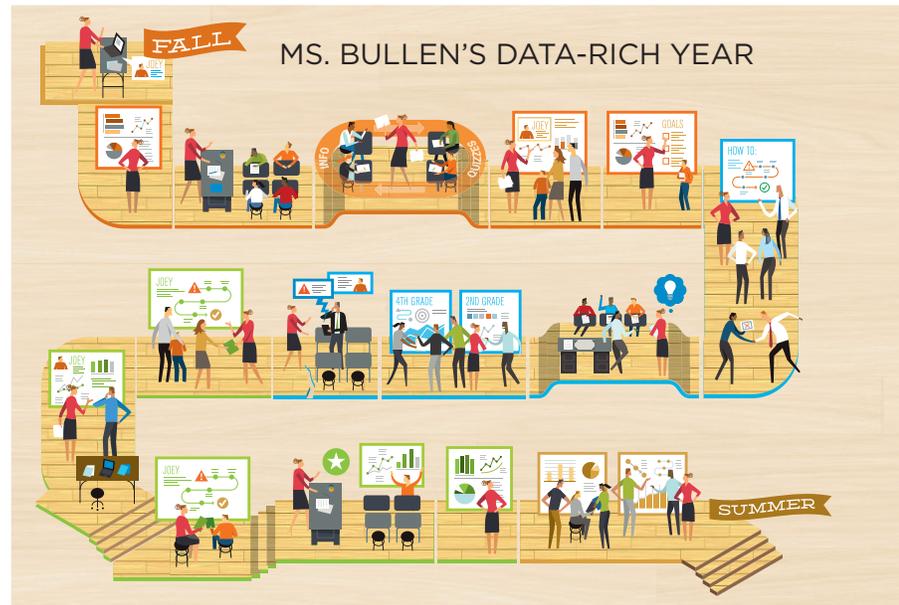
- **longitudinal**: following individual students over time and across systems and sectors
- **actionable**: timely, user friendly, and tailored to users
- **contextual**: robust, comparable, and presented as part of a bigger picture



# FOLLOW MS. BULLEN'S DATA-RICH YEAR

With the progress states have made in providing parents, teachers, students, and principals information they can use to help every student on his or her path to success, waiting until 12th grade to discover that students are not ready to graduate from high school is not necessary. Data, such as attendance history, course-taking patterns, grades, and test scores, combined with everything that parents and teachers know about a child through interactions and conversations, can have an immediate impact on students' education.

Follow one teacher, Ms. Bullen, and one of her students, Joey, on a journey through the school year to see how data help teachers, parents, and others make sure every student is meeting education goals and how the state supports their efforts. When used along with pedagogy, content knowledge, and professional judgment, these data can be used responsibly by educators like Ms. Bullen to improve outcomes for kids like Joey.



“In order to better serve my students and their families, it is important that I look at data that encompasses the whole child. In my classroom, I constantly use and analyze student data on class and individual performance on classroom measures to create student groups for targeted instruction. I gather student performance data daily in order to create effective groups and pairs of students based on their strengths and weaknesses for daily classroom activities.” —*Raquel Maya Carson, Teacher, Washington, DC*

**FALL**

What's their history?  
Who are my students?  
How do I prepare for them?

Before school starts, Ms. Bullen looks at her students' past performance and sets goals and makes working groups for all of her students—including Joey.

She connects performance data with test items and standards to see where Joey has excelled or fallen behind and designs an instructional plan just for him.

To help teachers like Ms. Bullen prepare for the school year and make adjustments throughout the year, teachers in 34 states have access, primarily through a secure state website or portal, to data about the students in their classrooms.

## FALL

You can see his progress.



She goes over all Joey's data with his parents, and explains what they show about his current performance and how he may do over time if he stays on track.



Joey and Ms. Bullen meet to discuss his performance, behavior, and attendance data—and what Joey's parents want for him—setting goals for the year.

While teachers share current student performance data with parents, states have a unique role in providing a robust picture of each student's achievement, such as data that show changes in academic growth over time. Parents in 17 states (Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri, New Hampshire, Ohio, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin) have secure access to their own children's data, which follow their children's progress throughout their education.

Students with access to their own education data can be empowered to take an active role in their own learning. In 16 states, students have access to their own data, which chart their progress over time, primarily through local, secure portals or websites.

## WINTER



Throughout the year, data coaches and teachers work together to better understand and use different types of data.

Training can help teachers understand and use data throughout the year to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of the students who are falling off track or are ready for more advanced work. Most states (42) provide training to teachers to use and interpret reports, such as diagnostic reports that provide information on individual students to identify each student's strengths and academic needs. The most common training model used by states is a train-the-trainer model in which the state trains local staff who then train other teachers and staff in their schools and districts.

Well done in math! Maybe you should observe Ms. Oswald's vocab methods.



The principal reviews performance data with Ms. Bullen, using data to support and empower, not admonish. They note areas of strength and for improvement.

Examining her performance data with her principal helps Ms. Bullen continuously improve her own practice. To help improve the educator preparation programs that train teachers like Ms. Bullen, 22 states (Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington) share information about how teachers perform in the classroom with these programs.

## WINTER



An early warning system flags Joey and tells Ms. Bullen that he is at risk of getting off track, falling behind, or even failing.

An early warning report is designed to identify students who are most likely to be at risk of academic failure or dropping out of school, which can help teachers like Ms. Bullen intervene before it is too late. Thirty states produce early warning reports. In some states, early warning reports are used to help educators identify students who should take more rigorous courses in addition to students who are struggling.

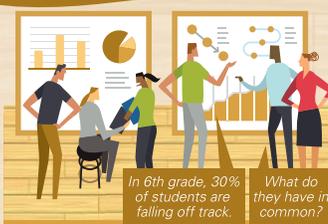
## SPRING



With his parents' approval, Ms. Bullen reviews Joey's performance data with his afterschool tutor. Together, they note areas for improvement.

Most states produce reports that analyze an individual student's data in different ways that can help facilitate the conversation between Ms. Bullen and Joey's tutor. Many states produce growth reports that show changes in a student's achievement over time (41 states) or college and career readiness reports designed to identify students who are on track for success in college or careers (26 states).

## SUMMER



During the summer Ms. Bullen and other district teachers meet to solve problems using data. They identify trends and promising practices from throughout the district.

Ms. Bullen and her colleagues can use the reports that the state produces on the progress of schools and districts to inform their work in identifying trends and promising practices. Most states (45) produce at least two publicly available reports, such as high school feedback reports that provide information on how a class of high school graduates fared in postsecondary institutions or cohort graduation reports that provide graduation rates for different groups of students, including English language learners or students with disabilities. Because these reports do not contain data about individual students, they also can be used by others with a stake in education, such as school board members, state and federal policymakers, and the public.

## Get More Ms. Bullen!

These are just a few of the ways Ms. Bullen, Joey, his parents, and others use data to support student success every day. Find out more about the steps Ms. Bullen and others take using data throughout the school year at [www.dataqualitycampaign.org/find-resources/infographic-ms-bullens-data-rich-year](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/find-resources/infographic-ms-bullens-data-rich-year).

Watch a video about Ms. Bullen's data-rich year at [www.dataqualitycampaign.org/find-resources/how-data-help-teachers](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/find-resources/how-data-help-teachers).

# SAFEGUARDING DATA

**Safeguarding data and ensuring their ethical and appropriate access and use are critical components of effective data use. States can safeguard data and ensure appropriate use by implementing policies, processes, and transparency measures that govern and communicate their data decisionmaking. When educators, students, parents, and other members of the public trust that education data are being protected and used to support students, they can see the value of data to improve education and benefit from the use of those data.**



Employing the policies, practices, and communication activities needed to ensure data privacy and security is a shared responsibility of state and federal policymakers, the state education agency, other agencies contributing and using student data, the state board of education, information technology staff, and others.

State policymakers must address four overarching areas of activity to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and security of student information:

- **Make state education data use transparent by promoting and communicating the value of data.**

States can help everyone with a stake in education understand the value of education data by raising awareness about the information the state collects and why (like the **information** that the New York State Education Department has posted on its website about its data initiatives and privacy protections). States can also demonstrate the benefit of data by producing public reports and resources that show how data are being used to improve student achievement. To learn more about high-quality public reporting, see page 13.

- **Establish governance structures to determine data decisionmaking processes and roles.**

States can design structures and delineate roles and responsibilities that establish procedures and personnel-based supports for the effective

implementation of privacy policies. Specifically, states should designate leadership for overseeing the safeguarding of data and should work collaboratively across P-20/workforce agencies to implement cross-agency data governance that ensures data decisionmaking and stewardship are shared by all relevant parties. To learn more about high-quality cross-agency data governance, see page 16.

- **Improve privacy, security, and communications policies and practices.** States can implement specific policies and processes to safeguard the privacy, security, and confidentiality of student data. States should ensure that their **privacy** and **security** policies are **comprehensive**, addressing both privacy controls, such as criteria for disclosures and rules for role-based access to student data, and security measures, such as encryption and audit requirements. Information about these policies and the state's data work should be communicated to the public in an accessible and understandable format.

- **Ensure educator data literacy.** Teachers and those that support them (schools, districts, and states) have a duty to use data responsibly. This responsibility means using data only to support, not limit, students; knowing how to adapt lessons and materials to a student's needs; keeping a student's data private; and communicating openly with students and parents about how they use data. One of the best ways to ensure that education data are being used effectively and ethically in the classroom is to make sure teachers are being specifically trained and supported in how

to use data responsibly. Through their initial teacher preparation programs and professional development and data collaboration opportunities throughout their careers, **data-literate** teachers can develop the skills to use data to understand and improve their practice in the classroom while using data ethically and protecting student privacy.

Part of responsible data stewardship is investing in the capacity of state data leaders to effectively manage data and help their districts do the same. Looking ahead, it is critical that states provide the support and resources needed to build a culture of data responsibility at the state level and to provide necessary support to districts. States can work to create a culture of respect for data privacy that transcends compliance by providing

materials and regular trainings about the value of data, how the state protects them, and how each employee shares in this responsibility. States can build district capacity to safeguard data by providing trainings on data privacy and security for district leadership, sharing contracting guidelines or templates for districts to use when contracting with an online service provider, and developing additional guidance on key topics.

Leaders in every state have a responsibility to use and safeguard data in ways that support all students. By addressing each of the areas listed on page 11, states will ensure the privacy and confidentiality of students' personally identifiable information as well as the strength of the structures and processes needed for ongoing transparent and purposeful data decisionmaking.

## Data Privacy Legislation

In 2014, many states sought to safeguard student data privacy by introducing legislation. In total, 36 states considered 110 bills this year directly addressing student data privacy. Of these, 21 states signed 30 bills into law. While the new laws adopt a number of approaches to protecting student privacy, several laws effectively implement broad data governance that helps ensure that data are used appropriately. Examples include the following:

- **Colorado HB 1294**, which described permissible uses of education data and required the provision of supports needed to ensure the privacy and transparency of the state's education data use, including a public data inventory, data privacy training for department staff, breach notification processes, and contracting guidelines for working with service providers

- **Idaho SB 1372**, which created an annual data inventory and the procedures for secure data collection, data management, and contracting with service providers
- **West Virginia HB 4316**, which delineated state, district, and school responsibilities in creating and maintaining a student data inventory and also provided for the creation of a state data governance officer

In all of these states, informed state legislators worked collaboratively to craft and shepherd into law governance-focused bills that enact concrete data governance processes and data transparency measures and identify roles and responsibilities in safeguarding data privacy. Together these measures ensure that the state's data activities are purposeful, transparent, safe, and trustworthy.



# PUBLIC REPORTING

Publicly reporting timely, actionable, and comprehensible data is one of the most powerful ways states can promote transparency, strengthen accountability, and ensure that everyone with a stake in education—parents, principals, policymakers, researchers, and members of the public and press—has access to the information needed to make good decisions. It is also one of the most visible ways states can demonstrate the tremendous value of their data systems.



Public reporting is the process of making aggregate-level data available for public consumption. These data can include school enrollment and finance, student performance, teacher effectiveness, school climate and culture, and more. Data can be made available in various ways including through reports such as school report cards, kindergarten readiness reports, and high school feedback reports; through public-facing data portals; or as data sets available for download. Regardless of their format, publicly reported data are aggregate level only, not student level, and never include personally identifiable information.

High-quality public reporting has the following characteristics:

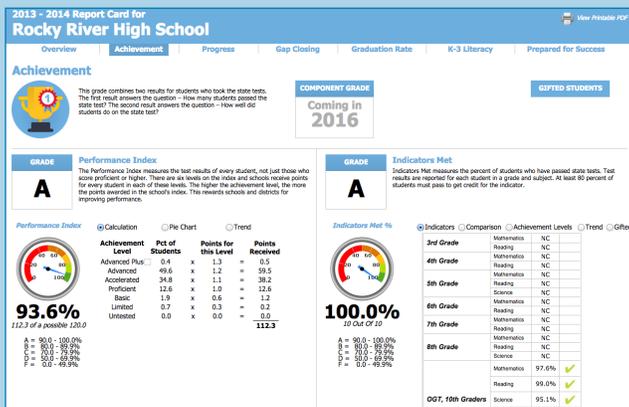
- **Trustworthy.** Trustworthy data are high-quality data—timely, longitudinal, contextual, and comparable.
- **Focused on meeting people’s information needs.** High-quality public reporting is focused on answering various questions from different audiences, ensuring that everyone with a stake in education has access to the information needed to make good decisions.

- **Timely and ongoing.** Data are most useful when they are made available in a timely manner and updated as soon as new data are available.
- **Easy to find, access, and understand.** If stakeholders cannot find, access, and understand the data, little can be gained from making them publicly available.

On the *Data for Action 2014* survey, states provided links to publicly available websites where parents, often the key audience for public reporting, can find the answers to questions about schools in the state, such as, “Are there appropriate resources (e.g., staff, money, available coursework) at my school and in my district to support learning?” “What happens to students after they leave the district? Are they successful?” and “Does each and every student have equal access to effective teachers?”

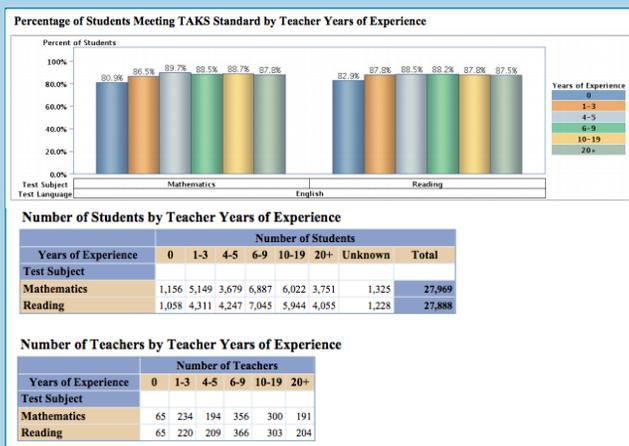
A review of these websites based on the high-quality characteristics revealed that the following states are great examples of high-quality public reporting with parents’ information needs in mind. To learn more about public reporting, visit the DQC website at [www.dataqualitycampaign.org/PublicReporting](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/PublicReporting).





## OHIO: School Report Cards

Ohio's highly interactive School Report Cards platform provides parents detailed information on school-level student performance, including trend data, state and district comparisons, and levels of achievement. Explanations of indicators, indices, and measures of student achievement are clearly presented, helping parents understand the data.



## TEXAS: Public Education Information Resource

Texas's Public Education Information Resource portal provides a wide range of reports at the local, district, and state levels, including extensive data on teacher performance. In one report, student academic achievement is displayed by teacher years of experience, allowing parents to better understand how teaching experience affects student performance.



## WISCONSIN: Information System for Education Data Dashboard

Wisconsin's Information System for Education Data Dashboard website includes school- and district-level data to answer parents' questions (e.g., "How much money is received and spent in this district?") in both graphic and numeric formats. Questions to consider when looking at the graphs and raw data files are also readily available to help parents interpret and use the data.

# CROSS-AGENCY DATA GOVERNANCE

**Data governance provides state agencies a structure in which to define the roles and responsibilities needed to ensure clear processes for collecting and reporting education data and accountability for data quality and security. To make informed policy decisions across agencies, such as the state education agency and early childhood, higher education, and workforce agencies, cross-agency data governance is needed. Data governance is more than an information technology issue. States can think broadly about data governance as a base on which to build the relationships and trust needed to securely share data across agencies to answer questions such as, “How well do state higher education institutions’ educational programs and capacity align with the state’s current and anticipated workforce needs?”**

DQC convened experts representing various sectors (e.g., early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce) to describe the characteristics of high-quality cross-agency data governance. The expert group defined the following levels of cross-agency data governance, with a formal and transparent committee being the highest quality implementation. States with experience developing cross-agency data governance found that their committees evolved from advisory to formal and transparent over time, but states in the beginning stages of this work can learn from their experiences to implement a high-quality cross-agency data governance committee.

## Levels of Cross-Agency Data Governance

- **Advisory:** The cross-agency data governance committee consists of a voluntary group of policy or content-based representatives from agencies that share data and serves as an advisory body. The committee is structured around completing basic operational activities (e.g., overseeing data sharing across agencies and responding to data requests). The committee’s work is often ad hoc in nature, and the committee does not have a formal, sustainable structure or authority to make or enforce data-informed policy decisions.
- **Formal:** A sustainable, multi-tiered cross-agency data governance committee establishes the vision and mission of the cross-sector data governance work and

sets policy. The committee includes executive-level policy or content-based representatives from agencies that share data and representatives from other key groups. Data-related decisions are policy focused, and the committee has formalized internal procedures.

- **Formal and transparent:** A sustainable, multi-tiered cross-agency data governance committee establishes the vision and mission of the cross-sector data governance work, sets policy, and ensures that the policy and data work are carried out. The committee has executive leadership responsible for final decisionmaking. This committee includes executive-level policy or content-based representatives from agencies that share data and representatives from other noneducation agencies in alignment with the governance committee’s mission. This committee is led by a chairperson who represents a broad perspective or cross-sector view. Data-related decisions are policy focused, formalized, and transparent. Internal processes are formal, documented, and transparent. The committee is proactive in communicating with external stakeholders and advocates for the governance committee and its value.

The following are examples of states with formal and transparent cross-agency data governance committees that can serve as models for other states. For more information and analysis, including a roadmap for states on developing a high-quality cross-agency data governance committee, visit [www.dataqualitycampaign.org](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org).



**Alaska** boasts a strong governance system with an especially strong breadth of participants and vision and mission to guide the work. The state's

**Alaska Navigator: Statewide Workforce and Education-Related Statistics** initiative is empowered to develop the mission of the state's education data work, create the policies that govern the system's priorities and activities, and ensure that the policies are implemented thoroughly.



**Georgia's longitudinal data system** has a strong Data Management Committee that facilitates collaboration and communication among numerous state agencies and stakeholders. The Data Management Committee includes executive-level policy and content-based representatives from the agencies contributing data as well as representatives from noneducation agencies. In addition, the committee is led by a neutral chair and vice chair, who are elected by committee members.



**Hawaii's Data Governance Committee** is powered by a clear vision and mission and empowered with the authority to carry

out numerous key activities. The state's cross-agency data governance work is distinct from the work of the state education agency's internal data governance structure. In addition, the committee has operational and decisionmaking responsibilities and carries out processes including budgeting the state's data work and communicating with the public about the value of data and the state's reports.



**Kentucky's** robust data governance system, part of its **Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics**, is strengthened

by the broad scope of processes the committee is charged with carrying out. The state's data governance committee is responsible for defining the purpose of the state's longitudinal data system as well as the policies that govern how student data can be accessed and used. The committee members also are responsible for numerous activities including developing policies to govern the state's cross-agency data work, determining how the state's data are stored and mapped, and overseeing data requests.



The **Maryland Longitudinal Data System Governing Board** is responsible for many activities, including protecting the privacy and security of the state's data and determining appropriate

data access and sharing practices. The board's broad membership ensures that the state has the expertise and capacity to execute these responsibilities. The board is comprised of representatives with policy and content backgrounds as well as representatives from noneducation agencies. In addition, the board is led by a neutral chairperson, who is appointed by the governor.



**Minnesota's Governance Committee** has a clear vision and mission for the state's education data work but also sustainability measures to ensure that this high-quality work endures. The state's data work and governance are authorized by state law and guided by a long-term strategic plan. In addition, the Governance Committee is run by dedicated staff with the skills to execute the state's work.



**Mississippi's State Longitudinal Data System**

Governing Board is comprised of distinct subcommittees with the expertise and capacity to guide the board's work. These subcommittees are staffed by representatives from policy, legal, information technology, and research as well as experts in data stewardship, data collection, data quality, and privacy. The state uses **detailed bylaws** to direct the activities of the board and its subcommittees.



**Utah's** Data Alliance boasts a **Data Governance Committee** with robust reach and authority across

numerous areas. The committee is a distinct, independent structure with multiple subcommittees with operational and decisionmaking responsibilities. The committee is run by skilled staff capable of carrying out the body's responsibilities. The committee's participants represent executive-level policy leaders and representatives from noneducation agencies. In addition, sustainability measures are in place to ensure that the committee receives support from the state and has the authority to carry out its responsibilities.



**Washington's** data governance group is assigned roles and activities that allow it to meaningfully and authoritatively govern the state's data system. The group is responsible for defining the purpose and appropriate uses of Washington's state longitudinal data system and is accountable to the governor and **legislature**. The group's activities include protecting and maintaining data as well as determining data ownership and access. In addition, the group is responsible for making sure the data system's activities are transparent.

# Conclusion

Students cannot wait until high school to realize that they are not on track to graduate, especially students who do not have access to as many educational opportunities as other students. Students are not just a test score. But data can be used every day to help every student succeed regardless of where he or she lives. See what is possible with clear, timely, user-friendly information and demand the data you need today.



# Appendix A: Detailed 10 State Actions Status

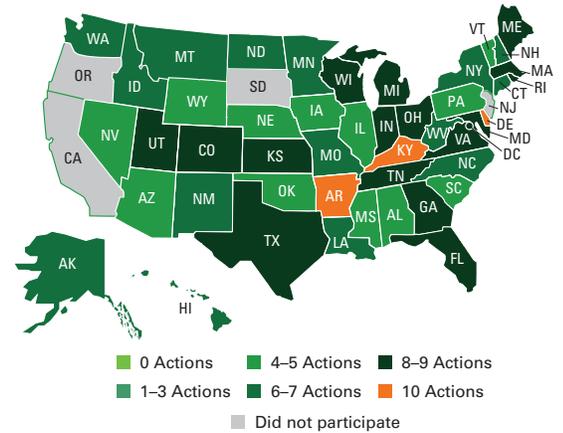
National Status, 2011 and 2014

State Action	NUMBER OF STATES	
	2011	2014
<b>1. Link state K–12 data systems with early learning, postsecondary, workforce, and other critical state agency data systems.</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>
K–12 and early childhood data are annually matched and shared with a known match rate.	46	43
K–12 and postsecondary data are annually matched and shared with a known match rate.	38	43
K–12 and workforce data are annually matched and shared with a known match rate.	11	19
<b>2. Create stable, sustainable support for longitudinal data systems.</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>41</b>
The P–20/workforce state longitudinal data system (SLDS) is mandated, or data system use is required in state policy.	36	45
The P–20/workforce SLDS receives state funding.	31	41
<b>3. Develop governance structures to guide data collection and use.</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>
A state education agency data governance committee is established.	46	45
A cross-agency data governance committee/council is established with authority.	39	43
<b>4. Build state data repositories.</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>
K–12 data repository is built and implemented.	44	46
<b>5. Provide timely, role-based access to data.</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>
Multiple levels or types of role-based access are established.	47	42
Parents, teachers, and appropriate stakeholders have access to student-level longitudinal data.	8	17
Superintendents, state policymakers, or state education agency staff and other stakeholders have access to aggregate-level longitudinal data.	37	42
State policy ensures that teachers and parents have access to their students' longitudinal data.	6	13
The state is transparent about who is authorized to access specific data and for what purposes.	17	28
<b>6. Create progress reports with student-level data for educators, students, and parents.</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>
The state produces reports using student-level longitudinal data.	34	42
Teachers and appropriate stakeholders have tailored reports using student-level longitudinal data.	32	35
<b>7. Create reports with longitudinal statistics to guide system-level change.</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>
The state produces reports using aggregate-level longitudinal data.	39	46
State-produced reports using aggregate-level longitudinal data are available on a state-owned public website.	36	45
<b>8. Develop a purposeful research agenda.</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>41</b>
The state has developed a purposeful research agenda with other organizations.	36	43
The state has a process by which outside researchers can propose their own studies.	39	45
<b>9. Implement policies and promote practices to build educators' capacity to use data.</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>
Teachers and principals are trained to use longitudinal data to tailor instruction and inform schoolwide policies and practices.	39	40
Teachers and principals are trained to use and interpret specific reports.	38	42
The state plays an active role in training educators to use and interpret specific reports.	37	41
Preservice: Data literacy is a requirement for certification/licensure, or data literacy training is a requirement for state program approval.	22	32
Teacher performance data are automatically shared with in-state educator preparation programs at least annually.	6	22
<b>10. Promote strategies to raise awareness of available data.</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>
The state communicates the availability of data to noneducator stakeholders.	49	43
The state trains noneducator stakeholders on how to use and interpret data.	29	34
The state education agency makes data privacy and security policies public.	39	46

The subcriteria listed for each Action are the criteria used to determine whether or not a state receives credit for that Action. A state must indicate that it has implemented all subcriteria to receive credit for that Action. In 2011, the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico participated in the Data for Action survey. In 2014, 46 states and the District of Columbia participated.

## Individual State Status: 2014

STATE	ACTIONS										TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Alabama		✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	5
Alaska	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			7
Arizona		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			5
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
California*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Colorado		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Connecticut		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	7
DC	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	8
Delaware	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Florida	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Georgia		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Hawaii		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			6
Idaho		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		7
Illinois		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			5
Indiana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9
Iowa		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				5
Kansas	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Louisiana		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Maine	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9
Maryland	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Massachusetts		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Michigan		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Minnesota		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	7
Mississippi		✓						✓			4
Missouri	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	7
Montana		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	6
Nebraska		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			5
Nevada		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				5
New Hampshire				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
New Jersey*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
New Mexico			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
New York		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	7
North Carolina	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	7
North Dakota	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			7
Ohio		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Oklahoma		✓	✓	✓			✓				4
Oregon*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Pennsylvania		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				5
Rhode Island	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	8
South Carolina				✓			✓	✓	✓		4
South Dakota*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Tennessee	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		8
Texas	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Utah	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9
Vermont				✓			✓	✓		✓	4
Virginia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9
Washington	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	7
West Virginia		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	7
Wisconsin		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8
Wyoming		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	



\* This year, California, New Jersey, Oregon, and South Dakota did not participate in the Data for Action survey.

# Appendix B: Methodology

***Data for Action* is a powerful tool to inform efforts in education to better use data in decisionmaking. It is a series of analyses that highlight state progress and key priorities to promote the effective use of longitudinal data to improve student achievement. *Data for Action* annually measures the progress of all 50 states and the District of Columbia toward implementing the 10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use and addressing other key policy issues.**

## PROCESS

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The *Data for Action 2014* survey is DQC's 10th annual survey of states and focuses on states' progress toward the 10 State Actions. DQC uses an online survey tool to collect information from each state. The survey consists of three parts. States answer a series of questions about each of the 10 State Actions, emerging data issues and promising practices in the field, and quality implementation areas. States also are asked to provide documents or website links as evidence of having specific policies or reports. DQC determines whether or not states receive credit for each Action based on states' responses (see Appendix A). DQC sends each state a confirmation email indicating which Actions the state will receive credit for that year and works with states to ensure that the information the states reported and the analysis of their responses are as accurate as possible.

States responded to the *Data for Action* survey in summer 2014. States' responses reflect the status of their work at the time they responded to the survey. States may have made additional progress on the 10 State Actions since submitting survey responses.

The survey responses are self-reported by each state. While DQC works with states to help them respond to the survey, DQC does not instruct states how to respond. States also can answer questions differently from previous years to reflect recent changes in state policies or practices or a new understanding of what effective data use looks like.

While this year's survey included improvements to clarify questions and provide more information about the meaning of the 10 State Actions, the key survey questions and the criteria used to determine credit for each Action have not changed from the 2011 survey onward, which allows for a longitudinal analysis of the 10 State Actions. Analyses of the emerging data issues and quality implementation areas can be found on DQC's website, [www.dataqualitycampaign.org](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org).

## RESPONDENTS

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Forty-six states and the District of Columbia participated in this year's survey. DQC invites each state's governor's office to participate in the survey. DQC believes that the governor's office is in the best position to bring all appropriate stakeholders together to respond to the survey, given its focus on developing and using P-20/workforce data systems to improve student achievement. The governor's office can appoint a designee to respond to the survey in collaboration with stakeholders. This year, California, New Jersey, Oregon, and South Dakota did not participate in the *Data for Action* survey.

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

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Questions and comments about *Data for Action 2014*, including requests for data, should be directed to [datafraction@dataqualitycampaign.org](mailto:datafraction@dataqualitycampaign.org).

# Appendix C: 10 Essential Elements of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems

**In 2005, DQC identified the 10 Essential Elements of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The 10 Essential Elements provided a roadmap for states as they built statewide longitudinal data systems to collect, store, and use longitudinal data to improve student achievement.**

In 2007, recognizing the importance of these elements, Congress approved the America COMPETES Act, including 12 “Required Elements of a P-16 Education Data System,” which are very closely aligned to DQC’s 10 Essential Elements. The America COMPETES Act’s 12 Elements have been applied to grants to states for statewide longitudinal data systems since 2009.

Since 2005, DQC has aimed to create a culture in which quality data are not only collected but also used to increase student achievement. With the inclusion of the 10 Essential Elements in the America COMPETES Act’s 12 Elements, DQC now focuses our annual survey on the actions states are taking to ensure the effective use of data for student achievement.

To ensure that these elements continue to be met, DQC monitors the implementation reports states submit to the Department of Education and urges Congress to formally incorporate the required elements directly into the legislation authorizing statewide longitudinal data systems.

The 10 Essential Elements are the following:

1. A unique student identifier
2. Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information
3. The ability to match individual students’ test records from year to year to measure academic growth
4. Information on untested students and the reasons why they were not tested
5. A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students
6. Student-level transcript data, including information on courses completed and grades earned
7. Student-level college readiness test scores
8. Student-level graduation and dropout data
9. The ability to match student records between the P-12 and postsecondary systems
10. A state data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability

Read more information about the alignment between DQC’s **10 Essential Elements and the 12 America COMPETES Elements**.

# Appendix D: Quality Implementation Expert Group Members

The following experts came together to determine the criteria and evidence needed to measure the quality of states' implementation of cross-agency data governance committees.

- **Kate Akers**, Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics
- **Melissa Beard**, Washington Education Research and Data Center
- **Molly Chamberlin**, formerly of the Indiana Center for Education and Career Innovation
- **John Dorrer**, Jobs for the Future
- **Jennifer Engle**, formerly of the Institute for Higher Education Policy
- **Ross Goldstein**, Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center
- **Karen Lee** and **Jean Osumi**, Hawai'i P-20 Council
- **Jennifer Lerner**, American Youth Policy Forum
- **Jason Perkins-Cohen**, Job Opportunities Task Force
- **Albert Wat** and **Amanda Szekely**, National Governors Association

The following experts are members of DQC's public reporting task force, which developed the characteristics of high-quality public reporting. The quality of states' implementation of public reporting is based on this group's work.

- **Patte Barth**, National School Boards Association
- **Halli Bayer**, formerly of StudentsFirst
- **Erika Bernabei**, Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink
- **Cory Curl**, Achieve
- **Bob Farrace**, National Association of Secondary School Principals
- **Kylie Grunow**, The Chalkboard Project
- **Allison Horowitz**, The Education Trust
- **Bruce Hoyt**, formerly of the Denver Public Schools Board of Education
- **Lee Ann Kendrick**, National PTA
- **Sam Olivieri**, GreatSchools
- **Trevor Selby**, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Evan Stone**, Educators for Excellence
- **Brandon Williams**, formerly of the Illinois State Board of Education
- **Chris Woolard**, Ohio Department of Education

# Acknowledgments

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) thanks the *Data for Action 2014* state respondents for the time and energy they invested in developing thoughtful responses on their state's behalf. DQC also thanks our partners for their guidance on the survey instrument, key findings, and dissemination.

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*Using Data  
to Improve  
Student  
Achievement*

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The **Data Quality Campaign (DQC)** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, national advocacy organization committed to realizing an education system in which all stakeholders—from parents to policymakers—are empowered with high-quality data from the early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems. To achieve this vision, DQC supports policymakers and other key leaders to promote effective data use to ensure students graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workplace.