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LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION IN MARYLAND

Fact Sheet
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What is a Longitudinal Data System for education?

A longitudinal data system for education tracks student participation and performance throughout the student's education and work career, including courses taken, grades achieved, test results, attendance, and movement from school to school and school system to school system. The data system also includes teacher data without personally identifiable information, providing reports about teacher preparation programs, professional development, etc.

What are the benefits of a Longitudinal Data System for education?

A longitudinal data system provides the ability to monitor individual student and subgroup achievement to better ensure that progress is being made. It maintains a student's educational record to help schools more quickly meet the educational needs of students who are transferring from school system to school system. It improves the quality of the data collected and reported, makes the data more accessible and, at the same time, protects the privacy of individuals. A longitudinal data system provides a better basis for sound instructional and policy decision-making. Implementation of the longitudinal data system will allow Maryland to meet the federal regulation that requires states to report and hold schools accountable for a cohort graduation rate, tracking students from the time they enter grade nine for the first time until they graduate.

What is the status of a Longitudinal Data System in Maryland?

Maryland has in place three of the 10 essential components identified as critical to the implementation of a longitudinal data system for education by the Data Quality Campaign, a national collaborative initiative working to encourage and support efforts to develop and use longitudinal data to improve education.

What components of the system does Maryland already have in place?

Maryland has already completed the following three components:

- Component 2: Student-level enrollment, demographic and program participation information
- Component 8: Student-level graduation and dropout data
- Component 10: State data audit system assessing data quality, validity and reliability.

In 2009, Maryland will add Component 4: Information about untested students and the reasons they were not tested.

What components will be added next and when?

A \$6 million federal grant (over five years) will provide funds for Maryland to put three more components in place by 2014. They are:

- Component 1: Student data connected across and databases using a unique student identification number
- Component 3: Ability to match individual students' test records from year to year to measure academic growth
- Component 6: Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned.

What will it take to implement the student-level transcript information?

Component 6, the student level transcript information, requires the state to have standardized course codes at all levels: elementary, middle, and high. Maryland will work collaboratively with school systems to come to a consensus on a voluntary course coding system. School systems will be able to use the course coding system or provide information linking local courses to the state's coding system. School systems will have need sufficient time to prepare for collecting data on courses taken at all grade levels. It may take up to five years for full implementation of this component.

Will there be a teacher identifier system?

Component 5 calls for a teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students. In 2009, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation allowing the State Department of Education to assign each teacher a unique state identification number. This identification number will allow MSDE to link a teacher's data (years of experience, certification, degrees, training, etc.) without using personally identifying information such as name and Social Security number. Linking teacher and student data will ultimately be required to meet federal data reporting requirements and will provide policymakers and educators with such information as quality of teacher preparation programs and the need for specific professional development. Presently there is no specific timeline for Maryland to implement this component, but sources of funding are being explored.

What about the remaining components?

Component 7, Student level college readiness test scores, focuses on data related to such college readiness tests as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, SAT, and ACT. Student performance on these exams are good indicators of whether students are prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and work. Maryland currently has no timeline for implementing this component.

Component 9 is the ability to match student records between the P-12 and higher education systems. Maryland has had preliminary discussions with the Maryland Higher Education Commission concerning possibilities for extending the data system into higher education and ultimately, the workforce; however, no timeline has been set and sources of funding will need to be identified.