

Voices from the Field



Wyoming

Background. Wyoming provides an example of how states can begin the CEDS adoption process despite having limited resources. While the state has not yet secured federal funding to build a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), using the State Core Model, they have successfully mapped their data system to CEDS and have created collaborative mechanisms that will be integral to building a robust P20 system that aligns with CEDS.

Driving Demand for Data. Despite the lack of federal financial support for its education data efforts, Wyoming's need to evaluate statewide education programs, coupled with federal education initiatives, have built statewide demand for a comprehensive SLDS that follows students' progress throughout their educational careers.

In 2004, the Wyoming State Legislature provided funding for a feasibility study of a statewide education data system. This study came at a time when the Wyoming State Department of Education and the State Legislature both wanted to evaluate the effectiveness of some of their premier education initiatives. The outcome of the feasibility study was to use the SIF protocol to develop the core infrastructure of the statewide data system. The SIF protocol allowed districts using different local systems to connect to the state system.

In 2006, the statewide data system was able to address stakeholders' interest in knowing if the prestigious Hathaway Scholarship program, which rewards eligible Wyoming students with scholarship money to attend the University of Wyoming or a Wyoming Community college, was producing positive student outcomes through college and career.

Meanwhile, USED's SLDS grants brought states together like never before to discuss models and best practices for collaboration and the need to share and exchange data across state lines. It was during conversations about SLDSs with New Mexico that Wyoming realized standardizing data across state agencies was just one piece of the puzzle, and that the definitions of data

elements would need to be aligned before states could exchange and compare data to answer critical education questions.

Federal legislation such as the America Competes Act also helped elevate the importance of sharing education data through PK12, postsecondary and the workforce, effectively opening the lines of communication and setting the stage for cross-agency collaboration.

Setting the Stage for Collaboration. The Governor appointed a taskforce to ensure coordination and collaboration across state education and workforce agencies to evaluate programs thoroughly and collect data efficiently for state and federal reporting purposes. The taskforce includes representatives from the State Department of Education, the University of Wyoming registrar, financial aid, and IT offices, the state community colleges, the Wyoming Community College Commission, the Department of Workforce Services and Employment, and superintendents from two school districts. Even with the support of the Governor and the State Legislature, the taskforce quickly realized that convening such a diverse group of stakeholders was only the first step in building a comprehensive P20 system. Building trust between the various entities has been a top priority for the taskforce members who are now developing Memorandums of Understanding to guide conversations on governance structure and define rules for interaction. However, funding shortfalls have made it difficult to spearhead the process and the taskforce is just now looking for a project manager to lead the state's P20 efforts.

An Opportunity for CEDS. By establishing a taskforce and effectively opening the lines of communications within and across K12, postsecondary and workforce sectors and states, such as New Mexico, Wyoming is laying the groundwork for the development of a statewide P20 system. Also, because they are using the SIF protocol and have already completed the mapping process, the state is well positioned to build a robust data model that aligns and grows with CEDS.

Conclusion. Like so many other states, overwhelming financial constraints faced by Wyoming remain the biggest challenge to building a P20 system in alignment with CEDS. Wyoming's education leaders, however, are using the time wisely—gathering valuable input from diverse stakeholders and setting up processes that will help optimize SLDS funding once it becomes available.

The CEDS Initiative is made up of stakeholders from all levels and sectors of education in a collaborative effort to develop the Common Education Data Standards. The initiative consists of a two-pronged approach:

- The CEDS Stakeholder Group is coordinated by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is responsible for prioritizing the scope of the CEDS based on community feedback, reviewing existing data definitions and standards, developing new data definitions and standards when necessary, publishing draft CEDS elements for comment, incorporating comments and finalizing each version.
- The CEDS Consortium, facilitated by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), participates in the development of the standards and is responsible for their advocacy, communication, adoption and implementation. The Consortium is comprised of representatives from CCSSO, SHEEO, Data Quality Campaign (DQC), SIF Association, Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education (ex officio).

The Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) Initiative, a coalition of education stakeholders, is working together in a collaborative effort with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to ensure that common definitions of key data elements become commonly and voluntarily adopted and widely used within and across K12 and postsecondary sectors. CEDS will increase the ability to share and compare data consistently, allowing more informed decision-making at all levels and better educational outcomes for all students through early childhood, K12, postsecondary completion, and the workforce.

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