



Improving Outcomes and Equity: Transforming How California Uses Data

If the work is done right, California can set a higher bar for data use.

When California passed legislation providing for longitudinal student data in 2002, the state laid a foundation for a data system that can meet needs across the state for data collection. With the momentum of new leadership, California has the opportunity to build on that foundation and reimagine how it puts information about its more than 6.2 million students into the hands of parents, teachers, community-based organizations and leaders across the state. By securely linking data across early childhood education, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce (P-20/W) systems, California can enable transformative data use and empower students, parents, educators, leaders, and communities with the information they need to support student success.

For over a decade, all 50 states have sought to build infrastructure and create policies and practices to put data to work for educators, leaders, and families. The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) is a national advocacy organization that champions state actions for effective data policy and use that are grounded in evidence and lessons learned. As California leaders seek to build not only a system, *but a culture where data is being put to work in service of student success*, state leaders can learn from DQC's policy recommendations, which are built on successes achieved over decades-long state work. When most state education data systems were designed and implemented, there was little or no discussion about capturing credential pathways and career outcomes. California leaders have the opportunity to both learn from and leapfrog other states in empowering Californians with the information they need and deserve.

Credential transparency. With nearly 750,000 unique credentials in the U.S. alone, it is imperative that students, parents, workers, employers, educators, policymakers and others be able to see and explore the content, competencies, connections, costs, and earnings and employment outcomes of all programs, so as to be able to make more informed decisions about the best pathways to meet their needs. And as student data systems continue to improve, a question that naturally arises is how well education and training investments and services lead to sets of credentials that support successful employment, career pathways, economic and social mobility.

Aligning credential and outcomes data. Aligning and intentionally linking existing work around student-level data with credential and outcomes data offers an opportunity for fuller, more holistic understanding of the connections between education, training, and work-related results, and will allow for richer, more informed decision making by everyone including parents, teachers, administrators, and employers. This would significantly change the landscape in which students make decisions about credentials and how those who guide and support these choices can support them.

Making data publicly accessible. Making data about credentials, connected pathways, and employment outcomes publicly accessible has the potential to advance educational and economic equity for underserved communities in California. Research has shown that students who are of color, would be the first generation in their family to attend college, and/or come from low-income families are less likely than others to have access to high-quality educational career planning opportunities and resources. Making this data available would

bolster the work of families, educational systems and institutions, and community-based organizations to ensure that students of all backgrounds have access to credentials and career pathways that lead to skilled employment in our economy. This information would allow workforce development systems and institutions to support students of all ages - including incumbent workers in low-wage jobs that are disconnected from career pathways looking to upskill and increase earnings - make informed decisions about investing in training.

Regional efforts. The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce has long been a strong proponent of rich, effective, and secure data systems that lead to improvements in education, developing a skilled and diverse homegrown workforce in career pathways that provide gainful employment, and overall economic success and growth. The Chamber is actively engaged with state efforts to improve student data systems, and recently partnered with Credential Engine to implement an initiative to make essential data about all credentials available in the Los Angeles region fully searchable and comparable through a range of new or enhanced applications.

While the work to facilitate public access to credential data is originating in Los Angeles, we anticipate it will quickly expand to include Orange County (through, in part, collaboration with the Los Angeles/Orange County Regional Consortium of community colleges) and San Diego (in collaboration with the San Diego Workforce Partnership), and other Southern California counties. In time, these efforts will connect with emerging work in the Bay Area led by the Bay Area Funders Collaborative. These regional efforts will benefit from as well as inform and strengthen state-level work to establish new data systems that serve students, workers, employers, educators, and all of California's residents by advancing credential transparency and literacy and building infrastructure and best practices that could be scaled statewide.

CONSIDERATIONS

- **Recognize that there are a wide and diverse range of vested stakeholders who care about better data, including but not limited to:**
 - **Students**
 - **Parents/legal guardians**
 - **Workers**
 - **Teachers and administrators**
 - **Employers, regional business organizations, and economic and workforce developers**
 - **State, regional, and local elected officials and policymakers**
 - **Others, in all corners of the state.**
- **Use policy language to demonstrate the value of data to these stakeholders.**
- **Ensure data access for these stakeholders.**
- **Promote and support data literacy for all stakeholders.**
- **Drive and support state and regional-level education and economic goals.**
- **Empower state and regional leaders to address educational gaps by providing access to disaggregated demographic data to better serve underrepresented student populations.**
- **Establish sustainable, inclusive cross-agency data governance.**
- **Create secure and accountable mechanisms for these data to link to other data to allow stakeholders to make more fully informed decisions.**
- **Protect student, teacher, and all individual data privacy.**

Additional recommendations, resources, and supporting information can be found at:
www.dataqualitycampaign.org, www.credentialengine.org, www.californiaedge.org