Memorandum

To: 50CAN Executive Directors
From: Cooper Conway, 50CAN William E. Simon Policy Fellow
Date: November 15, 2024
Re: Reimagining K-12 Data Collection to Empower Parents

Introduction

K-12 education in America is undergoing a profound transformation. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, alternative educational models like homeschooling, learning pods, microschools and charter schools have surged in popularity. The demand for personalized learning–including tutoring services–has grown exponentially, reflecting parents' desire for more tailored educational experiences for their children. Yet, amid this rapid shift, state systems for collecting and reporting educational data have lagged far behind, leaving families without the information they need to make the most of this more complex educational landscape.

A new era of data collection is urgently needed—one that reflects the broad range of learning environments students now navigate and provides families with transparent, actionable insights. Unlike the narrow focus of the No Child Left Behind era, which centered on annual standardized tests in core subjects for use by state agencies, today's landscape demands a more holistic and family-centered approach. It's time to move beyond the confines of the traditional classroom and embrace an approach to education data that captures learning both inside and outside school walls. And this time, rather than being driven by federal mandates, these changes should be pursued through bottom-up innovation and experimentation at the state level.

Currently, SEAs are primarily tasked with tracking metrics like academic achievement, graduation rates and attendance. Yet, as highlighted in a recent **report** from the Center on Reinventing Public Education, many states struggle with outdated and fragmented data systems that lack transparency and accessibility. To truly support families in navigating today's educational landscape, state reporting systems need a significant overhaul. By transforming data practices, states can empower families with the information they need to make informed decisions and expand educational opportunities for all students.

In this memo, a landscape analysis is provided to capture the current state of education data collection. This is followed by examples from New Mexico and Illinois of what a more family-friendly, holistic data collection effort might look like. Finally, we outline some principles of a new approach to data collection and policy recommendations.

The State of Data Collection in the States

In recent years, 50CAN has taken a number of steps to expand how we think about student learning opportunities. This includes the introduction of a policy framework called **Believe in Better**, which introduces five promises to American students: 1) The education that's right for you because every student learns differently; 2) Tutoring and care for every student in every community; 3) A world of open and connected learning, so that you have the tools you need to strengthen your community and succeed in life; 4) A family's right to know what's working—it's all about accountability; and 5) A clear path to the career you choose. It's about finding your fit and your pathway to a meaningful life.

At the same time, we have undertaken an effort to measure how well parents think their states are living up to these promises. Our recent **survey** of 20,000 parents, "The State of Educational Opportunity in America," measures learning opportunities and parental satisfaction in these opportunities across five categories: 1) School quality and opportunity; 2) Tutoring, summer, and mental health; 3) Out of school activities; 4) Information and engagement, and 5) College and career readiness. The results show major differences in families' access to opportunities depending on their state of residence, their family income and a number of other factors.

Using these categories as a jumping-off point, we reviewed the latest school report cards published by all 50 SEAs and Washington, DC, and assigned scores based on the information collected and provided to the public. Specifically, we looked at six indicators:

1. Achievement data and ability for parents to compare schools.
2. Instructional material information, tutoring and summer learning data.
3. Extracurricular activities, access to technology and volunteering information.
4. Accessible and up-to-date data.
5. Dual enrollment, AP, IB, IRC, internship, credentials and Career and Technical Education.
6. Surveys or input from students, parents or families.

States were labeled "green" if data was available for all metrics, "yellow" if at least one metric was reported, and "red" if data was unavailable. Here is what we found:

- Only ten states included a parental or student engagement measure like a survey of the school's climate on their school report cards.
- Only nine states had information on school curricula, summer learning or tutoring availability for students, and no state earned a green rating.
- No state received a green rating for data on broadband access, volunteering rates or extracurricular access, with only 14 states mentioning any of these topics.
- Sixteen states provided satisfactory measurements regarding CTE, AP, IB, dual enrollment and other course offerings.
- Nineteen states, plus DC, provided comprehensive information allowing parents to compare schools and their achievement data on standardized tests.
- Thirty states plus DC provided accessible and up-to-date information on their school report cards.
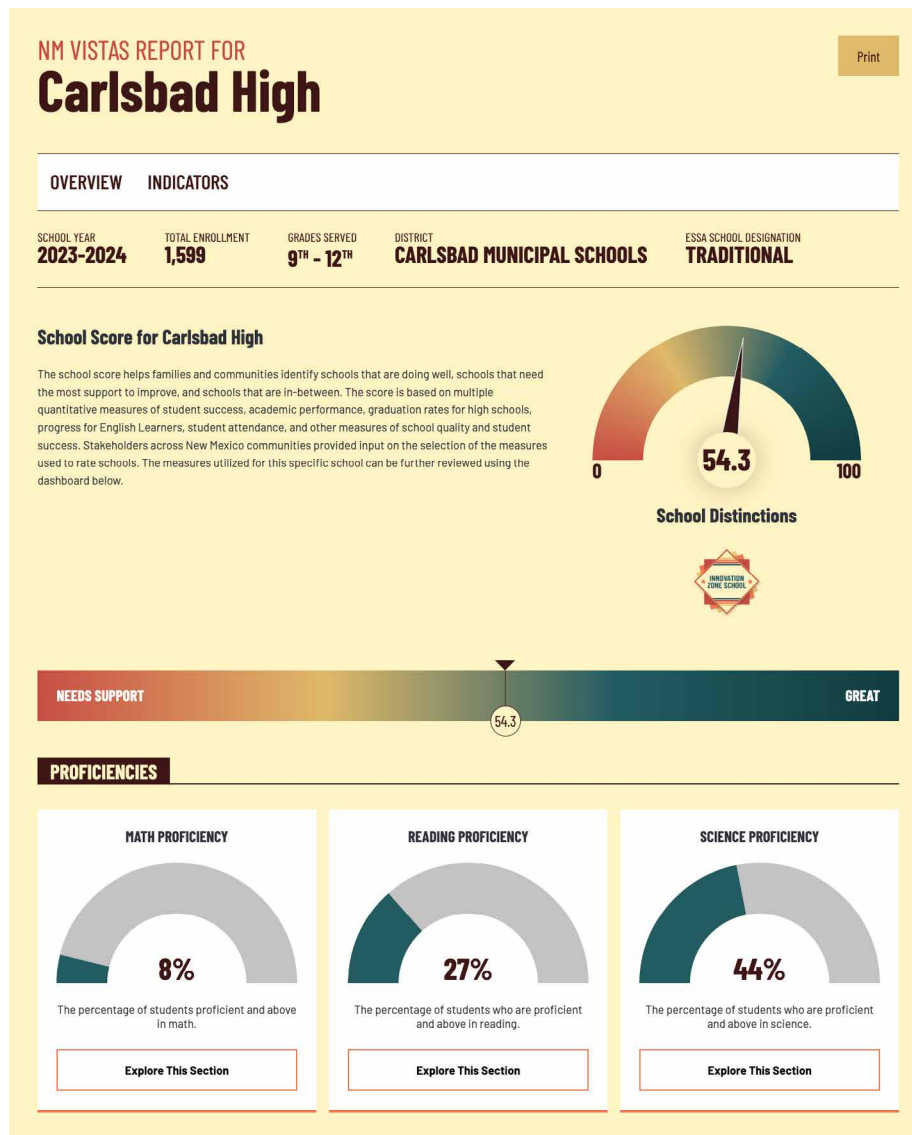
State	Achievement Data and School Comparison	Tutoring, Summer Learning and Instructional Material	Extracurricular Activities, Access to Technology, Volunteering Information	Accessible and Up-to-Date Data	College and Career Pathways/ Readiness	Parental or Student Engagement Measurement
Alabama						
Alaska						
Arizona						
Arkansas						
California						
Colorado						
Connecticut						
Delaware						
District of Columbia						
Florida						
Georgia						
Hawaii						
Idaho						
Illinois						
Indiana						
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Oregon						
Pennsylvania						
Rhode Island						
South Carolina						
South Dakota						
Tennessee						
Texas						
Utah						
Vermont						
Virginia						
Washington						
West Virginia						
Wisconsin						
Wyoming						

- California, Michigan, Wisconsin, and West Virginia have multiple ways to report data.
- For California, we used the "State Accountability Report Cards"
- For Michigan, we used the "Parent Dashboard for School Transparency"
- For Wisconsin, we used the "WISEdash Public Portal"
- For West Virginia, we used "ZOOMWV"
- The latest data that could be reviewed for Texas is from 2022 due to lawsuits

A Closer Look: New Mexico and Illinois

New Mexico's Public Education Department K-12 data collection practices are guided by the Every Student Succeeds Act and other state accountability specifications. This practice is common among SEAs and mirrors what most families can access in states nationwide.

Carlsbad High School, one of the largest in the state, has a school report card showing the school's enrollment, attendance, graduation rate and per-pupil expenditures. It also includes the student body's proficiency rates in various subjects and information on their college preparedness. Moreover, many performance measurements are compared to district and state averages. Still, New Mexico falls short in providing detailed information for families seeking direct school comparisons, details about extracurriculars and other alternative learning offerings.

NM VISTAS REPORT FOR
Carlsbad High

Print

OVERVIEW   INDICATORS

SCHOOL YEAR	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED	DISTRICT	ESSA SCHOOL DESIGNATION
2023-2024	**1,599**	**9TH – 12TH**	**CARLSBAD MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS**	**TRADITIONAL**

School Score for Carlsbad High

The school score helps families and communities identify schools that are doing well, schools that need the most support to improve, and schools that are in-between. The score is based on multiple quantitative measures of student success, academic performance, graduation rates for high schools, progress for English Learners, student attendance, and other measures of school quality and student success. Stakeholders across New Mexico communities provided input on the selection of the measures used to rate schools. The measures utilized for this specific school can be further reviewed using the dashboard below.

0   **54.3**   100

School Distinctions

INNOVATION ZONE SCHOOL

NEEDS SUPPORT ———————— 54.3 ———————— GREAT

PROFICIENCIES

MATH PROFICIENCY	READING PROFICIENCY	SCIENCE PROFICIENCY
8%	**27%**	**44%**
The percentage of students proficient and above in math.	The percentage of students who are proficient and above in reading.	The percentage of students who are proficient and above in science.
Explore This Section	Explore This Section	Explore This Section

Illinois sets a better example in collecting and disseminating important K-12 data that informs parents about available education options. The Waukegan High School report card provided by the Illinois State Board of Education reports College and Career readiness metrics by showing participation data for over a dozen career concentrations. AP, IB and Dual Enrollment course data are also reported as separate measurements, which is very different from many states' current practice of lumping all post-secondary opportunities into a single CTE metric.

Furthermore, the school report card includes the number of physical education days and every other course the school offers, such as foreign languages and alternative academic offerings like AVID, summer school, JROTC and Read 180. Many of these data points are presented on scatter plots and dashboards, allowing comparisons with nearly every school in the database.
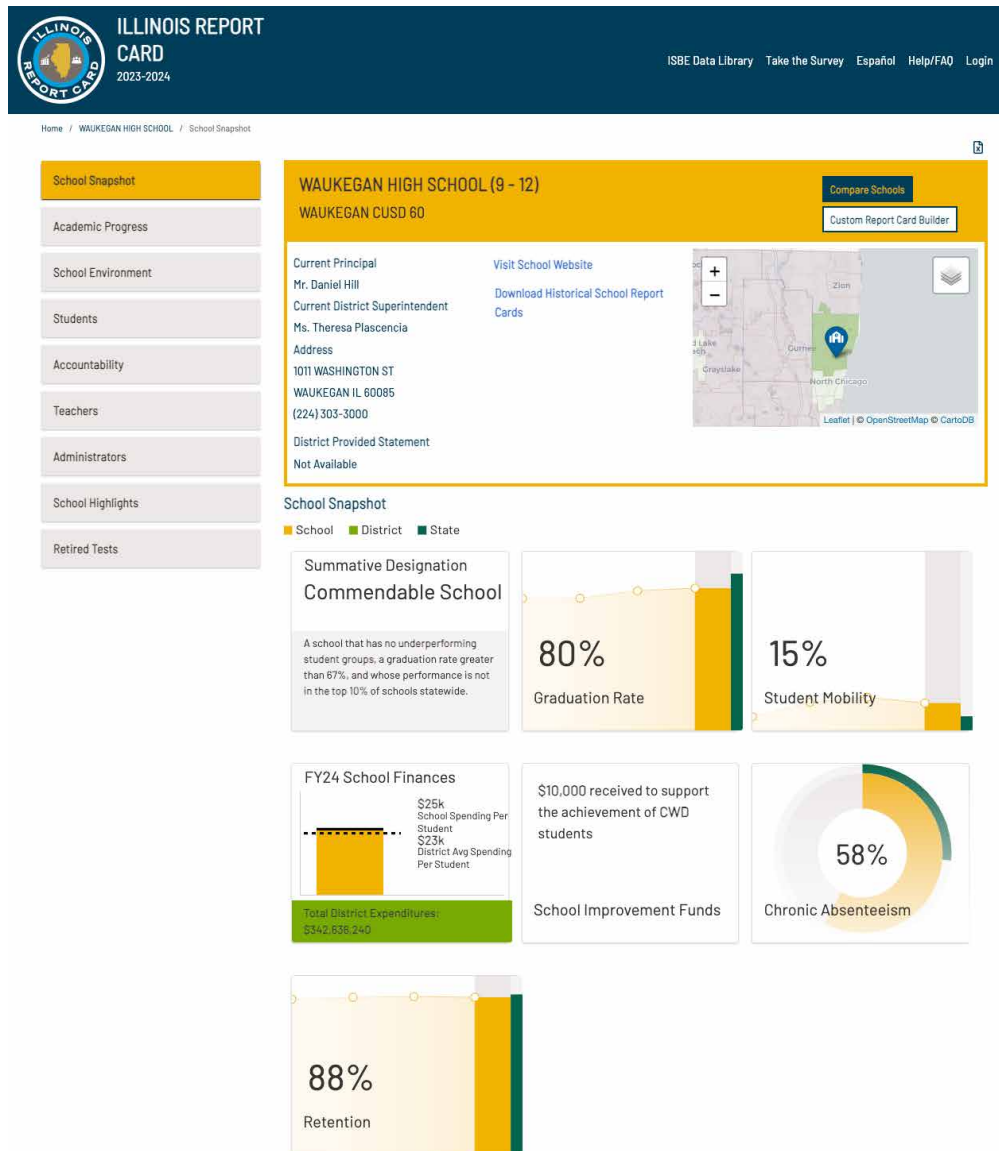
Policy Recommendations: Learning from Proof Points

In the coming year, states have an opportunity to broaden data collection to include a wider array of educational opportunities that matter to parents and reflect families' unique goals for their students' educational careers. At the same time, SEAs have an opportunity to rethink how they present these results to offer insights into students' progress to help parents guide their children's learning.

Recommendations:

1. **Increase reported information**. Including non-academic measures in school report cards from state education agencies would provide parents with a more complete picture of their child's schools. **New Jersey** took a step in the right direction in 2022, requiring schools to provide information on the ratio of students to mental health and security professionals

2. **Invest in user-experience**. Dashboards and other visual tools can help parents, educators, and policymakers make informed decisions on behalf of students. **Indiana's Digital Readiness Dashboard** is an excellent example for other states interested in dispersing helpful information related to technology access to stakeholders. Additionally, Parent Portals can be a central hub for all student-related information, as **Virginia** recently demonstrated by creating a law mandating parents receive information including individualized student test data in their portal.

3. **Create student profiles**. In 2022, **eight states** had legislation similar to the Student's Right to Know Act. In **West Virginia**, this means providing students with information about the costs of higher education institutions, available job training and more. **Idaho's Campus Choice Program** goes a step further by notifying every Idahoan high school senior in the fall that they are automatically accepted into certain state colleges upon graduation.

4. **Implement AI technology**. Artificial intelligence's potential to help families navigate educational data remains largely untapped in K-12 education. We have an opportunity this year to learn from states like **Texas**, which is experimenting with AI to save time and resources expended on grading STAAR exams.

5. **Improve the timeliness and consistency of reporting**. Data should be updated frequently and consistently so teachers, administrators, and families can take action if a child is not meeting expectations. **Delaware** uses an Early Warning System plug-in to identify students at risk of dropping out by monitoring student attendance, behavior, and course performance. Additionally, in **Colorado**, each school district has a set annual date when they must provide a report with disaggregated information, including unique metrics, such as student reports about school climate.

6. **Support data collaboration**. In 2023, **Alabama** passed legislation creating a system for partner agencies to share education data from early childhood education through post-secondary education and the workforce.

7. **Develop private data partnerships**. Establishing partnerships with ed-tech companies can provide an immediate understanding of student progress and areas for improvement. New Hampshire's Department of Education has a partnership with **Khan Academy** that makes their AI teaching assistant, Khanmigo, available to students in the state. SEAs would be wise to collect data on student learning by collaborating with organizations that offer similar tools and make the insight available to parents.

APPENDIX

ESSA Required Report Card Element	State	LEA	School	Potential Report Card Elements States Could Include
Student Achievement Data (i.e., the number and percentage of students at each level of achievement on the State mathematics, reading/language arts and science assessments) LEA: Including how achievement in the LEA compares to the State as a whole Schools: Including how achievement in the school compares to the LEA and the State as a whole	X	X	X	Performance data from project-based or experiential learning
Percentages of students assessed and not assessed in each subject (i.e., participation rates)	X	X	X	Percentage earning college credit or industry credentials
Performance on another academic indicator (ex: growth rates)	X	X	X	Participation in college and career pathway programs and internships
English Language Proficiency (i.e., number and percentage of English learners achieving English language proficiency as measured by the State's English proficiency assessment)	X	X	X	Data on life skills readiness, including financial literacy and civic engagement
As applicable, number and percentage of recently arrived English learners exempted from one administration of the reading/language arts assessments or whose results are excluded from certain State accountability system indicators	X	X	X	Data on educator mentorship and retention rates
High School Graduation Rates (4-year)	X	X	X	School mental health resources and access to counseling
Extended-Year High School Graduation Rates (if state chooses)	X	X	X	Participation in community-based or service-learning projects
School quality/student success indicators used in the State accountability system	X	X	X	Participation in extracurricular activities (clubs, sports, arts)
AA-AAAS Usage Data (i.e., number and percentage of students assessed on AAAA-AS, by grade and subject)	X	X	X	Family access to various educational options (virtual, non-traditional)
Postsecondary Enrollment (public institutions)	X	X	X	Student access to high-quality instructional materials
Postsecondary Enrollment (private/out-of-state)	X	X	X	Enrollment in summer learning and recurring tutoring services
In-School Suspensions			X	Family and student surveys on school performance across various metrics
Out-of-School Suspensions			X	Academic courses available
Expulsions			X	Alternative learning providers nearby
School-Related Arrests			X	
Referrals to Law Enforcement			X	
Chronic Absenteeism			X	
Violence Incidents (including bullying and harassment)			X	
Preschool Enrollment			X	
Accelerated Coursework Enrollment (e.g., AP and IB)			X	
Progress toward long-term goals, including measurements of interim progress	X	X	X	
Educator Qualifications (e.g., inexperienced, emergency credentials, certification)	X	X	X	
Per-pupil Expenditure Data (aggregated and disaggregated -Federal and State/Local)	X	X	X	
"NAEP Performance – mathematics and reading, grades 4 and 8"	X	X		
School Improvement Funds Information (Names of LEAs and schools receiving school improvement funds, amount of funds received by each school, types of strategies implemented in each school)	X			
State Accountability System Description	X	X		
Indicators to meaningfully differentiate all public schools in the State	X	X		
System for meaningful differentiation among schools	X	X		
Specific weight of the accountability indicators	X	X		
Method of identifying schools as consistently underperforming, including time period the State uses to determine consistent underperformance	X	X		
Method of identifying schools for comprehensive support and improvement	X	X		
Exit criteria established by the State for (1) schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement and (2) schools identified for additional targeted support and improvement, including the number of years after which, if the exit criteria are not satisfied, in the case of Title I schools, such schools will be identified for comprehensive support and improvement	X	X		
Number and names of all schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement	X	X		
Number and names of all schools identified for targeted support and improvement, including those identified for additional targeted support and improvement (i.e., schools implementing targeted support and improvement plans)	X	X		