

Getting a Better Picture of Your Data



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Steps to better data

All-Student versus Special-Ed data

- Are the data compatible/comparable?
 - Different collection times &/or methods?
 - Different definitions?
 - Different calculations?

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Steps to better data

Consolidate state data collections

- Timing of collection – get more at once
- All-student ADM and 618 data

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Steps to better data

Be consistent in definitions

- Graduation
 - Who is really a “graduate”?
 - Diploma types
 - Does GED count?
- Dropout
 - What constitutes dropping out?
 - Moved, not known to be continuing...
 - Leaver codes galore: they **count** as dropouts

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Steps to better data

Build better data systems

- Data systems should communicate
 - Need compatible data layouts
 - Need common variables
 - Need compatible variable names & attributes
 - Need connections/links among systems
- Systems should be readily accessible to LEAs
- Systems should be easily queried
- Systems should allow disaggregation
- Systems should be regularly updated

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Steps to better data

Develop a longitudinal database

- Allows the calculation of cohort rates of graduation and dropout
- Provides a more accurate picture of what is really happening

- Requires unique student ID
- Takes 4 years to generate first cohort's worth of data

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Using your data

Get more mileage from your data!

- Look across the Indicators to get a better picture of who is dropping out and why.
- Use your data for planning and decision making... not just program evaluation and reporting.

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Using your data

Getting started: steps to take

- Identify objectives & define questions
- Determine the type of data you need
- Collect the data
- Summarize, analyze, & interpret
- Determine best ways to represent the data and results of analyses
- Put the data to work for your state
- Determine how you'll assess your success

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Key Messages

1. ***All-student and SpEd data need to be comparable. Be consistent in definitions, calculations, and methods used.***
2. ***Look across the indicators to understand who is dropping out and why.***
3. ***Use your data for planning and decision making.***
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

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Main Guiding Questions

- Are the same calculations used to produce the all-student rate and special-ed rates of dropout and of graduation? If you are not already using a cohort method, is your state moving in that direction?
- Can your state's database track individual students as they move through high school (even if they move to another school or district)?
- Does your state analyze data for one or more indicators and apply what's learned to reducing the dropout rate/increasing the graduation rate?

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Additional Guiding Questions

- When does your state collect general enrollment data (ADM)?
- When does your state collect Special Ed Child-Count data?
- What issues or constraints exist in your state regarding the timing of data collections?

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Additional Guiding Questions

- What constitutes graduation in your state?
- What constitutes dropping out in your state?

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Additional Guiding Questions

- ❑ What changes need to be made to your state's data system in order to increase its efficiency and let you get the most out of your data?
- ❑ How will you use the information from this session to improve your state's capacity to collect, analyze, and report valid and reliable data for data-based decision making?

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For Additional Information, Contact:

**The National Dropout Prevention
Center for Students with Disabilities**

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