

Frequently Asked Questions for the Cradle-to-Career Data System

What is the Cradle-to-Career Data System?

The Cradle-to-Career Data System will be California's source of actionable data and research on education, economic, and health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. It will also expand access to tools and services to navigate the education to employment pipeline.

How was the Cradle-to-Career Data System established?

In 2019, the California State Legislature passed the [California Cradle-to-Career Data System Act](#), which sets out requirements for the development of a statewide data infrastructure. This data system will ensure that educational, workforce, financial aid, and social service information is fully leveraged to address disparities in opportunities and improve outcomes for all students from cradle to career.

In early 2020, the California Governor's Office launched an 18-month planning process with support from WestEd. More than 100 people are participating in a user-centered design process, drawn from 16 state agencies, plus education institutions, research organizations, data experts, and advocacy groups. When the process completes in June 2021, these experts will have produced detailed plans for the first phase of the California Cradle-to-Career Data System.

When will the data system be built?

If funded by the legislature, the data system would be developed starting in July 2021.

How can I use the data system?

The Cradle-to-Career Data System will provide information through several different types of tools:

Access to Information About Institutions and Groups of Students

- Easy-to-use dashboards
- Sophisticated query tools
- Short printable summaries on key facts
- A library of research studies
- A process for requesting additional information in order to conduct research studies

Access to Information for and About Specific Students and Courses

The following resources will be provided by expanding two existing tools to serve the whole state: CaliforniaColleges.edu/California College Guidance Initiative and eTranscript California

- College and career planning tools and curriculum
- College eligibility monitoring tools

- Electronic transcripts, including nontraditional learning artifacts
- Option to share social service history with college application
- Support for data cleaning at local education agencies

Why is the Cradle-to-Career Data System needed?

By securely connecting data that schools, colleges, social service agencies, financial aid providers, and employers already collect, it will be easier to:

- Identify the types of supports that help more students learn, stay in school, prepare for college, graduate, and secure a job
- Provide information that teachers, parents, advisors, and students can use to identify opportunities and make decisions
- Help agencies plan for and improve educational, workforce, and health and human services programs
- Support research on improving policies from birth through career

What kind of information will be available?

The types of information will vary by data tool.

Dashboards

Information will be displayed as infographics that allow users to see trends over time and the outcomes for different groups of students, such as by race, gender, socioeconomic status, and many characteristics from disability to veteran status.

Results can be viewed at the local institution, regional, and statewide levels. Examples of questions that the dashboard will answer include:

- Which colleges do K-12 students apply to, get accepted to, enroll, and persist in?
- How many students are eligible for financial aid but do not apply? How many students apply for financial aid but do not receive it?
- When students in community colleges transfer to a four-year institution, do they successfully earn a bachelor's degree?
- Do students earn a living wage after they leave college?

Query Builder

Users can select variables of their choice to generate tables and charts, with the ability to get more specific information about student experiences, such as:

How do community college transfer outcomes vary for students differ based on:

- Educational goal
- Declared major
- Course taking patterns
- Transfer preparation level

- Award type and program
- If they enrolled in multiple community colleges

Research Studies

Users can propose research project that access information that is not available in the dashboards and query builder, to answer questions such as:

- In what ways were high school and postsecondary outcomes impacted for children who were in primary school during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How do institutional factors, social service participation, and community context influence whether high school students enroll in college, their first year success, persistence, and completion? How do those factors interact with students' demographic and economic characteristics?
- How many students were working while in postsecondary education in addition to receiving financial aid, how much did they earn, and what was the student contribution toward total cost of attendance?

How are you addressing equity issues?

The data system will be designed to produce analyses and actions that support all Californians.

In the dashboards and query builder tools, results can be viewed for specific populations, including factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, foster status, and homeless status. In addition, the data system will include information on factors that impact opportunities and outcomes, such as institutional characteristics, participation in social services, and parents' highest level of education.

Staff for the Cradle-to-Career Data System will ensure that everyone can benefit from the available information by:

- creating resources, training, and technical assistance that foster evidence-based decision making, strengthen analytical capacity to use available data tools, and enable end users to understand structural factors that influence outcomes
- ensuring information, resources, training, and technical assistance take the needs of various communities into account, such as ensuring that all materials are accessible and provided in more than one language

By providing information on college and career options, supporting students in reviewing whether they are taking the right high school courses to meet their goals, and ensuring that students and families understand their options for financial aid, the data system will help to level the playing field about the information necessary to prepare for and afford a college education.

By making it easier for students to provide critical information when applying to college, including electronic transcripts, if they have built skills through non-traditional venues, and whether they are eligible for social services, the data system will support

postsecondary institutions in providing stronger wrap-around supports and credit for prior learning.

How often is the information updated?

The information for the analytical tools, such as the dashboards, query tools, and research studies will be updated once a year.

The information for electronic transcripts, college eligibility tools, and social service history will be updated daily.

How will you protect my privacy?

Security and privacy concerns are central to the planning process.

- Extensive safeguards will ensure that information in the public dashboards and query tools is shown for groups, rather than individuals.
- Before information can be released for research purposes, requestors must go through a rigorous review process and sign legal documents that ensure they use data appropriately.
- Information on individual students regarding their college and career plans and eligibility will be password protected and can only be released to authorized individuals.

Will the website be accessible by those with disabilities?

Yes. The website will be accessible by those with disabilities.

Will the website be translated into different languages?

Print materials and resources will be provided in more than one language.

How will this help me and my family?

The data system provides many ways to build your expertise, find supports, and advocate for your community.

- The dashboard and query builder tools can help you compare specific schools and colleges to support decisions about where to enroll or how to advocate for better resources.
- The data summaries and research reports can help you better understand the factors that influence whether students attain their goals so you can be more informed when participating in planning activities in your community.
- The college and career exploration resources and eligibility tools can help you determine future goals and how to attain them.
- The electronic transcripts can help make it easier to apply to college and provide information that will enable colleges to put together a package of supports that make it easier to reach your goals.

How can I learn more?

Information about the data system is available on the [project website](#), including [detailed descriptions](#) of the specific data that will be available and how it can be accessed.

How can I join an email list to stay informed?

Please join our email list to stay informed by filling out the information [here](#).

Are your meetings open to the public?

The public is invited to join and listen to all of our meetings on the free website service Zoom. Recordings of meetings and transcripts are also posted on the website. Click [here](#) to join our listserv to receive updates and meeting announcements.

How do I submit public comments?

Please fill out the form [here](#). We also offer an opportunity for public comment at each of the meetings. Email mmaster@wested.org for more information.

Will you have more informational webinars or trainings?

We will hold more webinars in Spring 2021, focused on getting input on ways to help people understand and use the information in the data system. WestEd is also available to give presentations to institutions and groups.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

You can contact the Cradle-to-Career Data System planning team at: mmaster@wested.org.