

Policy & Analytics Advisory Group Meeting Summary

December 8, 2020

The Policy & Analytics Advisory Group includes a broad range of perspectives and provides a means for the public to offer recommendations to the Workgroup about how to ensure the California Cradle-to-Career Data System supports research, evaluation, accountability, and optimization of publicly funded services at the state level.

This document provides a summary of the key points that emerged from a half-day meeting to provide input on the draft legislative report that provides recommendations about the structure, purpose, and components of the data system. More information about the meeting, including a recording, materials referenced during the meeting, and the PowerPoint, are available at <https://cadatasystem.wested.org/meeting-information/policyanalytics-advisory-group>.

The following advisory group representatives attended the meeting:

Liza Chu, Asian Americans for Advancing Justice; Su Jin Jez and Gail Yen, California Competes; Evan White, California Policy Lab; Brian Guerrero, California Teacher's Association; Carlise King, Child Trends; Samantha Tran, Children Now; Emily Putnam-Hornstein, Children's Data Network; Andrea Venezia, EdInsights; Christopher Nellum, The Education Trust-West; Orville Jackson, GreatSchools.org; Heather Hough, PACE; Liz Guillen, Public Advocates; Jacob Jackson, PPIC; Angela Perry, TICAS

Overall Reactions

Heather Hough of PACE inquired whether it would be possible to reduce costs for the first year of data system development, particularly if the legislature does not provide the requested \$15-20 million. She felt it would be possible to proceed on some of the goals, even if full funding is not provided, and warned against creating an "all or nothing" framing. Andrea Venezia of EdInsights concurred and suggested prioritizing specific components of the data system to identify ways to reduce costs.

Samantha Tran of Children Now argued that the proposed fiscal impact is modest and could be accommodated even with the difficult budget situation. She recommended that the operational tools not be deprioritized because they are the ones that are most useful to students and families and will provide ongoing returns.

Andrea Venezia of EdInsights clarified that her concern was that the proposal should be feasible and generate clear returns early on. One way to emphasize the value of the proposal would be to list the return on investment for various stakeholder groups in the executive summary.

Samantha Tran of Children Now noted that the proposal will benefit from the leadership of the Governor and strong support by key leaders in the Legislature. She agreed that the report would benefit from putting the public good front and center.

Emily Putnam-Hornstein of Children's Data Network expressed concern about the ability of the data providers to hire new staff, as noted in the proposal, particularly if funding is short term. She agreed with the Workgroup that when earmarking staff time, multi-year funding is critical.

Su Jin Jez of California Competes echoed concerns about the budget ask, focusing on the fact that the proposal will be weighed against projects that already exist. This underscores the value of listing the benefits that will be created in the first year of funding. She also suggested reminding the Legislature that the proposed information would yield insights that the state does not currently have easy access to.

Liz Guillen of Public Advocates concurred, adding that it will be important for advocates to be clear on the goals and value of the system to create a unified voice in calling for data system funding.

Jacob Jackson of PPIC agreed and suggested that producing something tangible in the first year could minimize the risk that funding would be pushed off for a future year.

Su Jin Jez of California Competes thought it would be most valuable to start by developing the analytical data set and provide an initial set of reports on student outcomes that answer high-value questions. By showing the types of analyses that will be possible, potential data system users can advocate for further development of the data system. Orville Jackson of GreatSchools.org agreed.

Emily Putnam-Hornstein of Children's Data Network concurred and emphasized that the year one deliverable cannot be limited to a governance plan. Instead, there should be a dashboard or information generated through linked data.

Andrea Venezia of EdInsights was more cautious, noting that it may take nine months to get the staff and technology underpinnings in place. Therefore, it might be more prudent to propose a two-year window for the initial investment. Emily Putnam-Hornstein of Children's Data Network thought this would be a more realistic timeframe.

College Moore of EdInsights concurred and indicated that the timeline does not clarify the order of tasks within the first year, such as the need to first stand up the governing board, then hire the staff, then procure the tools, and only then compile and match the data sets.

Heather Hough of PACE agreed that one year would be aggressive for producing a dashboard. However, it is a reasonable timeframe for producing high value reports such as how many students went to college. Andrea Venezia of EdInsights encouraging prioritizing this analysis, as figures are likely to be impacted by the pandemic. Emily Putnam-Hornstein of Children's Data Network and Brian Guerrero of California Teacher's Association agreed.

Orville Jackson of GreatSchools.org noted that this information is already available from the California Department of Education, but that information on persistence in college is lacking. Alternatively, the managing entity could release a set of data tables that outside entities could use to produce analyses.

Emily Putnam-Hornstein of Children's Data Network suggested that the data system could be built in stages. For example, development could start with three data providers, a dashboard on a single topic, and summary data for the research community.

Emily Putnam-Hornstein of Children's Data Network also noted that it will be important not to overpromise on deliverables given the challenge of swiftly implementing technical solutions when using government hiring and procurement processes. Heather Hough of PACE and Andrea Venezia of EdInsights agreed that it would be damaging to the project to overpromise what can be accomplished in year one.

Jacob Jackson of PPIC inquired if this would require developing a two-year budget.

Su Jin Jez of California Competes expressed concern that a two year-budget would make the proposal less feasible because it would be a bigger ask without clear early wins. She indicated that more information on the pilot should be included in the legislative report.

Carolyn Nealon of the California State Assembly noted that a two-year proposal would be riskier and could feed a narrative that the project could be postponed.

The group agreed that it would be preferable to have a one-year timeline for funding and deliverables.

Governance

The advisory group discussed the callout box describing an alternative vision for the governing board.

Several people expressed concern that the two-thirds voting threshold is the same figure as the share of seats for data providers. This creates an impression that data providers intend to overrule public governing board members. Therefore, the group discussed adjusting the number of seats on the governing board or changing the voting threshold.

Heather Hough of PACE clarified that a scenario where data providers could overrule public members was troubling because it could allow data providers to refuse to share data or prevent the data system from serving the public interest.

Su Jin Jez of California Competes preferred added more public members as opposed to reducing the number of data providers. Liz Guillen of Public Advocates and Heather Hough of PACE agreed, saying that the public voice should be equal to the data provider voice. So, for example, the presence of the two advisory boards made entirely of community members does not provide sufficient balance because they cannot vote.

Angela Perry of TICAS agreed that it would be important to have a balance of power but was worried about the governing board getting too big. Christopher Nellum and Jacob Jackson of PPIC noted that large boards create logistical challenges for meeting. Emily Putnam-Hornstein of Children's Data Network agreed, adding that smaller boards tend to support greater accountability.

Su Jin Jez of California Competes noted that the California State University and University of California boards are larger than the proposed expanded Cradle-to-Career governing board. She shared an overview of California higher education boards:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1et7IDnOuf8QV6MsGP-MIzp7ThyetoLITXswzGalkcUM/edit>

Carolyn Nealon of the California State Assembly noted that virtual meetings can help reduce the complexity of convening larger groups, as we have learned during the pandemic.

Through a vote, the group made a formal recommendation that the number of seats of the governing board should be expanded to 24, so there is equal representation from data providers and public members.

Next the group considered whether to adjust the voting threshold, such as requiring a two-thirds plus one scenario.

Su Jin Jez of California Competes felt that a two-thirds threshold is already too high. Brian Guerrero of California Teacher's Association agreed, suggesting a simple majority instead.

Jacob Jackson of PPIC and Heather Hough of PACE supported the use of a two-thirds threshold.

The group voted that the decision-making threshold should remain at two-thirds.

Specific Suggestions for the Report

Suggested report edits included:

- Clarify who will benefit from the data system and what the return on investment will be
- Describe the pilot project, clarify how it is leveraging existing resources, and how it will provide high-value information
- Focus on producing written reports in year one as an early win and push the cost for developing the data enclave to a later year
- Articulate why it is important to do the planned tasks for year one
- Emphasize the intention to produce annual printed reports that share key insights from the linked data, similar to those produced by the National Center for Education Statistics
- Note that the managing entity will need to have analytical expertise
- Rather than include the table with the timeline, create a narrative description of what will happen in each year and make the timeline a reference document that is posted on the website
- Do not anchor specific deliverables to discrete years—particularly the date when the pilot project will be complete

Community Engagement Subcommittee

Advisory board members were briefed on the purpose and composition of the new Community Engagement Subcommittee. Liz Guillen of Public Advocates expressed concern that groups focused on Latino immigrants were underrepresented and offered to provide a list of potential additional members.