Community Engagement Subcommittee Meeting Summary

March 4, 2021

This document provides a summary of key points that emerged over the course of the meeting. More information about the meeting, including materials, the PowerPoint, and a meeting recording are available at https://cadatasystem.wested.org/meeting-information/community-engagement-subcommittee.

The March 2021 meeting had the following goals:

- Share effective practices for professional development, particularly pertaining to addressing bias
- Recap content of data tools
- Review and provide comment on communications matrix
- Identify priority professional development needs and how it can be tailored to address common assumptions

The following representatives attended the meeting:

California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), Steven Sterling Mitchell
California College Guidance Initiative (CCGI), Maya Ramos Clayton
California EDGE Coalition, Anna Alvarado
California School Information Services, Amy Fong
California State Board of Education, Zaid Fattah, (Monte Vista High School)
Californians Together, Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez
Children Now, Stephen Blake
Concordia University Irvine, Peter Senkbeil
Del Norte County Office of Education, Jeff Harris
Fresno Unified School District, Heather Allen, Executive Director
Growing Inland Achievement, Sorrel Stielstra
High Tech High Graduate School of Education, Ben Daley
Imperial County Office of Education, Denise Cabanilla
Jobs for the Future, Mara Lockowandt
Moreno Valley Unified School District, Esperanza Arce
NAACP Pomona Valley Branch, Jeanette EllisRoyston
Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), Patricia E. Chavez and Lucero Chavez
San Bernardino City Unified School District, Rose Gonzalez
San Diego State University, Center for Equity and Postsecondary Attainment, Lauren Owen
Student Senate for California Community Colleges, Gerardo Chavez
University of California Office of the President, Jenna Allen
Washington Unified School District Board of Trustees, Jackie Wong

Effective Professional Development Practices

Andy Krackov from Hillcrest Advisory provided an overview of how to communicate data and be an effective interpreter of data. Highlights of his presentation included:

- The type of chart you choose matters greatly.
- When creating a chart, make the chart as simple as possible.

- Create data stories, not just data visualizations, grounded in a narrative about a particular person. These stories can be very short and visual.
- Talk to your users to get ideas about how to best to present findings, and recognize that different audiences will prefer different formats.
- Be careful with large numbers because they are often difficult to grasp.
- When possible, make interacting with data fun, such as having people guess what the figure will be.

Then, David Montes de Oca of the CORE districts described how his organization uses equity pauses to help people investigate structural inequities. He encouraged the Cradle-to-Career Data System governing board to develop a stated vision for education equity that will identify, assess, interrupt and transform policies and practices that are inequitable. He also underscored the importance of identifying specific changes to behavior that can interrupt those systems. This is particularly important when visualizing and summarizing the information in the data system, because data have been used historically to reinforce systems.

One way to change behavior is to encourage people to slow down and reflect more deeply on the information being provided, and on the assumptions and actions that first surface when examining data. This process of reflection can be designed to help people build their self-efficacy to act on information. Equity pauses include activities such as pre-writing in response to a quote that helps the person to better see their own perspective on the issue, then providing inquiry questions that encourage the person to think about how they could use the information and what additional information they need to better understand their students, and finally a toolkit that provides discrete activities that can help to break down inequities.

The presentations and examples of materials for these two presentations are posted at: https://wested.ent.box.com/s/dhcs0grjvtm7mvxozayd7ysvhbsqa86p

Recap of Proposed Cradle-to-Career Data System Tools

Maya Ramos Clayton of the California College Guidance Initiative reviewed the specific content of CaliforniaColleges.edu, which would be scaled as part of the Cradle-to-Career Data System, including the college and career planning tools, college eligibility monitoring tools, the portal for launching financial aid and college applications, support for correcting data entry errors in local data systems that disqualify students for UC and CSU, and the electronic transcript function. She also described the plan to upgrade the California Department of Education (CDE) CALPADS system as part of the scaling of CaliforniaColleges.edu.

Kathy Booth of WestEd described the plan to expand eTranscript California to allow students to share their educational history when they transfer between postsecondary institutions, including badges and certifications that will be needed as more colleges implement competency based education. eTranscript California will also be connected with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) so that college applicants can check their eligibility and share their history of accessing supports like CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal with colleges, so that colleges can provide more comprehensive supports to students.

Finally, Kathy Booth of WestEd reviewed the analytical tools that will be available including the dashboard and query builder, and the types of information that will be provided in these tools, and the planned summaries of key findings. Then she answered questions.

How will information will be loaded into the system?

It will be provided annually, with information coming from state agencies. The only exception is independent colleges, which do not have a state data system, so their information will be provided directly by those institutions.

Will apprenticeship information be included?

Yes, information on participation, retention in, and completion of apprenticeship programs will be included in the data set. In the future, pre-apprenticeship data will also be included.

What is the source of early learning and care data?

Initially it will come from CDE, and only for state subsidized programs. The data set will expand over time with information from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

Will information on the justice system or incarceration be included?

Not for the first phase, but it could be added in future years.

Can individuals—including minors—opt out of the data system?

Yes, there will be a form on the website that allows any individual, including minors, to request that their information be removed from the linked data set.

For the dashboard on chronic absenteeism, will it be possible to see information on suspension rates at the institution? This is sometimes a contributing factor.

Yes, information on the suspension rates of individual institutions will be included in the data set, which can be used to contextualize results.

Will the dashboards include options for different geographic groupings such as school, district, city, and county?

Yes, it includes all those options, although it displays region instead of county on the dashboard. The query builder will include additional options including county, assembly district, and state senate district.

Communication Matrix

Maura Keaney of Collaborative Communications reviewed a preliminary communications matrix (available at bit.ly/C2CMatrix). The matrix will be used to develop materials for specific audience types.

Stephen Blake from Children Now recommended expanding the relevant tools for the Individuals categories to include the dashboards and query builder, as they may use this information for making decisions about where their children go to school or to advocate for change in their communities. He also suggested emphasizing the value of the information for cross-sector planning, such as linking health and workforce information to education.

Ben Daley of High Tech High asked for clarification about how the matrix will be used. For example, shouldn't the communications plan also tailor messaging for early adopters and integrators? Maura Keaney of Collaborative Communications clarified that the matrix is a first step and messaging will be expanded to those categories.

Amy Fong of CSIS asked if the communications plan will include metrics to measure how effective the strategies are.

Jackie Nevarez, a community participant, recommended that messaging for planners specify how Cradle-to-Career Data System tools can be used for accountability and funding purposes, including the College/Career Indicator, the School Dashboard, and federal funding sources.

Recommendations for Professional Development for Specific Persona Types

Kathy Booth prefaced small group discussions about professional development recommendations by clarifying a theory of action for ensuring broad use of the data system:

- Communications will focus on building awareness of the data system
- Professional development will help with understanding the information presented and its meaning (with an explicit focus on investigating how issues of equity can be examined)
- Technical assistance will help people identify ways to take action on the information

She also reminded the group that different types of people will access the information in different ways. For example, some will use the data system to pull data for their own purposes (data producers), some will pull data to share with others (data interpreters), and some will largely rely on information provided by others (data consumers).

Then subcommittee members worked in small groups to identify professional development priorities, based on the four main persona types.

Analyzers

To be successful in using tools like the request process, data dictionaries and code libraries, the research library, and the query builder, they need to know:

- How data are compiled, how data points are constructed, gaps in information, and how to use the data dictionaries to find this information
- Information on related data sets that are not part of the Cradle-to-Career Data System and how to use related those data sets to create a more complete picture
- How current the information is
- How many people have opted out
- For studies that are shared in the research library, the methodology used and the qualifications of the people who conducted the research
- How to use the query builder, including prompts and ideas for examining long-term outcomes or ideas for similar queries once you create one
- Provide capacity to save queries and to create comparisons
- Ways to use information to promote data stories that are useful in policy contexts
- Information on how to alert the managing entity with concerns when the information does not seem accurate

To address assumptions that analyzers will likely have:

- Clarity about which types of information may be requested and what that process entails
- Transparency about the data system and what is or is not included, including flagging where data is incomplete or of lower quality
- Provide examples of ways the data can be used

Planners

To be successful in using tools like CaliforniaColleges.edu, data dictionaries, the query builder, the dashboards, and resources, they need to know:

- How results compare across groups, including for the CaliforniaColleges.edu tools
- Clarity about how information is treated when students move across districts
- Details about how data points are constructed and categories are defined
- How many districts are participating in CaliforniaColleges.edu
- How data can be used for common frameworks like local control accountability plans
- Screencasts on how to access information, which should be constantly updated to show current views
- Screencasts on how to download data and match it up with local information
- Clarify where information comes from and how frequently it is refreshed, particularly for statuses that may change within a year such as foster or homeless status
- Provide multiple levels of access to data, including high-level summaries and the ability to drill down into greater detail
- Provide multiple levels of guidance documents, including tutorials with a general overview and detailed reference guides
- Create user groups and forums for discussion to inform the development and enhancement of the tools
- Ensure that the summaries of key findings are turned into documents, videos, and narrated PowerPoints
- How to use the data system to understand the impact of the pandemic

To address assumptions that planners will likely have:

- Clarify why information they expect is to be there is not included
- Pay attention to the terms and definitions that they are used to using, rather than using unfamiliar terms
- Clarify that data systems that look at student outcomes without examining context and predictive analytics can perpetuate bias
- Help planners become agents of change
- Provide detail about the quality of the data and clarify that not all data is validated
- Engage experts to identify key structural factors that can be used to inform action

Practitioners

To be successful in using tools like CaliforniaColleges.edu, eTranscript California, resources, and summaries, they need to know:

- How tools like eTranscript California and CaliforniaColleges.edu can help students and how they compare to other tools that practitioners may be using
- Where to find simple, high-level information
- What to do with available information by providing step-by-step guides
- How a-g requirements relate to community college requirements

To address assumptions that practitioners will likely have:

- Information coming from various sources about the Cradle-to-Career Data System should be consistent
- Clarify that the information is reliable and that they will not be held personally accountable for any errors in the underlying data
- Demonstrate how easy it is to access information from the data system
- Show how data can be used by practitioners to address underlying inequities, such as by providing training on equity pauses

Individuals

To be successful in using tools like CaliforniaColleges.edu, eTranscript California, and summaries, they need to know:

- When to use the tools and what to do with the information—for example while in late elementary school to begin thinking about post-high school options and while in high school to ensure students are meeting milestones
- That CaliforniaColleges.edu is a one-stop location to get the information necessary to prepare for college and career
- Clarity that they can start using the system at any point, with tailored information on the various points when an individual might access the tools, and information on what happens if they stop using the tools for awhile or change districts
- How the data system will support assessment of their eligibility for various supports
- Whether they are included in the analytical data set and from what point in time

To address assumptions that individuals will likely have:

- Emphasize that all students can go to college
- Ensure that someone is serving as a data interpreter that can provide free, relevant, and accurate information to individuals
- Be specific about the volume of data that is available – both in Cradle-to-Career Data System and in other public data sets, and what types of information are not available due to privacy considerations
- Explain the validity of information, particularly in cases where the data tells an unexpected story

Recommendations for Professional Development Strategies to Address Inequity

Finally, in a full group discussion about ways to make inequities more visible and supporting people to identify actions they can take, subcommittee members raised the following points.

Ben Daley of High Tech High noted that it is easier to just post information than to intentionally draw attention to inequity and encourage taking action to address it.

Jackie Wong of the Washington Unified School District Board of Trustees reminded the group that while people think data is neutral, but it is not. Therefore, the managing entity has an obligation to acknowledge that the entities that are providing the data are part of inequitable systems. Specifically, care should be taken that the data is not used to focus on the outliers and imply that other students should be doing as well, without acknowledging systemic issues that make it difficult for all students to succeed.

Noaveyar Lee, a community participant, concurred, noting the outcomes we get are a result of the structure of educational systems. She encouraged the managing entity to focus on districts, school sites, and parents and provide compelling reasons for these audiences to use the data system. For example, it could provide sample discussion prompts that could be used at the district level.

Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez of Californians Together noted that for school districts to engage deeply in equity work, they will need more than data on student outcomes. They also need information on the practices that inform these outcomes. The managing entity could partner with professional associations and school boards to compile these case studies and clarify how to use the examples in tandem with student outcomes data.

Amy Fong of CSIS suggested providing research grants and partnering with funders to encourage the use of data in the Cradle-to-Career Data System for research and evaluation. Jackie Nevarez, a community participant, and Jackie Wong of the Washington Unified School District Board of Trustees supported this suggestion.

Jackie Nevarez, a community participant, noted that when the managing entity creates summaries of information, it will be important to connect individual lived experience to the broader numbers. It is also important to help people understand, as they look at dispiriting figures about historical inequities, that they have the power to change these outcomes. She underscored the importance of the data system for fostering public transparency about the inequitable impact of current systems.

Steven Sterling Mitchell of CCEE recommended developing specific training that is focused on calling out the difference between using data to make inequity more visible versus confirming implicit bias. Amy Fong of CSIS and Jackie Nevarez, a community participant, agreed.

Gerardo Chavez of the Student Senate for California Community Colleges cautioned against broad generalizations based on the data. Each student's experience is unique and each student may experience different levels of inequity.

Ben Daley of High Tech High reminded the group that sometimes policy makers are regarded as the experts, but students, families, and teachers are also experts. Jackie Wong of the Washington Unified School District Board of Trustees agreed.

Amy Fong of CSIS suggested offering training on the ethical use of data. She also noted the value of creating communities that can help people as they engage in inquiry, particularly to address new questions that come up as people start to use the information in the data system.

Noaveyar Lee, a community participant, agreed that this would be especially important for people in leadership positions, because they sometimes use data as a weapon to threaten and intimidate practitioners.