



**Measuring Educational Performance for Improvement:
A Framework for Diagnostic Use of Data
Webinar Transcript**

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[Event Producer] Hello and thank you for joining today's webinar, Measuring School Performance for Improvement: A Framework for Diagnostic Use Data. Before we begin, please take note of the following functionality features. All participants have been muted upon entry for the best sound quality possible. If you encounter issues in the WebEx platform, please use the chat window located in the bottom right corner of the screen. Select "Host" from the dropdown list, type your message in the window, and press "Enter." We will do our best to address your needs.

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Now I'd like to turn the webinar over to Brian Gill from Mathematica to begin our event. Brian, the floor is yours.

[Brian Gill] All right, thank you so much, Rick. So, as Rick said, my name is Brian Gill. I direct the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Lab at Mathematica. Thanks everyone for joining us today. For those of you who aren't familiar with the Regional Education Labs, they are ten labs across the country, funded by the Institute for Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education to work with state and local educators and policymakers on issues related to research analysis, and a lot of that work involves measurement of educational performance. So, today's webinar and the framework of the [SPRY] is informed by various measurement projects that we have conducted with state and local officials over the last five years. And I'm happy to say that several of those stakeholders we have worked with have joined today to talk about the framework, and, more broadly, about how they use measures of educational performance in decision-making.

So, we have Donna Johnson and Evan Kramer who work on accountability and research in the District of Columbia's Office of State Superintendent; Tonya Walford who directs accountability research and research in the school district of Philadelphia. She will be able to provide a distribute perspective. Gene Pinkard from the Aspen Institute has a wide range of perspectives based on his current work with various districts across the country, and his own experiences as a school and district administrator. And Carolyn

Phenicie from the Council of Chief State School Officers has graciously agreed to facilitate our panel discussion in a Q&A that will follow my presentation. So, thanks very much to all of our panelists for joining us today. It's great to talk about these ideas and potential policies implications.

So, I'll take the first 25 minutes or so to talk about framework for diagnostic use of data [inaudible] performance for improvement before we turn it over to the panel discussion and addressing some of the questions and answers that you as an audience have. After that, we'll finish with a very, very brief feedback survey that we hope you will take two minutes to fill out. Our funders at the U.S. Department of Education are eager to hear from you about what you thought about this.

And in the meantime, you can feel free to put any questions you might have for our panel into the chat, as Rick mentioned earlier. You can do that at any time during the presentation or the panel discussion. Carolyn will be monitoring those questions, and we'll answer as many as we can before the end of the hour. So, that's the plan for today.

Let me talk a little bit about the motivation. And that's about making data useful to educators and policymakers for improvement. As I'm sure you all know, you and other educators and policymakers are often implored to be data driven, to be evident-based. But, unfortunately, a lot of the data that are out there aren't actually useful for the decisions you need to make, and helping educators and policymakers make sense of the data so that it can be used for improvement and not just for research, is a major focus and [inaudible] of the Regional Educational Laboratories, including [inaudible].

In my view, the pandemic has made the need for actionable measures even more apparent than before. We need measures which are broad and actionable even more now than in the past. And one of the ways that's become evident is that, in the wake of the pandemic, with state assessments being entirely cancelled in one year, and seriously disrupted in another year, a lot of state agencies have less data than we're used to having at the same time that, many districts are drowning in data from the learning management systems that they had to rely on so extensively to promote instruction and are surely continuing to rely on for operational purposes.

Now, one thing I want to recognize at the beginning is that data use can go wrong in a whole lot of different ways for performance management. Some of you may be familiar the name Frederick Winslow Taylor, Frederick Winslow Taylor, at the turn of the 20th century, over a hundred years ago, was what you might call the original management consultant. This was a guy who, he wrote a book called "Principals of Scientific Management" based on going into factories and steel mills and taking a million different measures of distances between workers and machines and things like that, and claiming to be able to develop scientific management principles from that. Well, in fact, a lot of this stuff was bunk, and he was claiming to have good measures [inaudible]. But didn't have that. And I think that that's a caution we need to be aware of, those of us who look at data and analyze data [inaudible]. And they can lead this wrong in a variety of different ways.

First of all, measures can be incomplete, with measure reading and math proficiency about the health proficiency and science and social studies, we're going to be missing something. When we attach high

stakes to them, sometimes they can distort behavior. Maybe we double the reading in math classes and teaching [inaudible] in social studies. We can interpret measures in ways that aren't reliable if we have a measure that changes dramatically from one day to the next or one year to the next. We can end up chasing random variation. Sometimes we can miss attribute measures, seeing a student outcome and attributing it to a particular program when it may have caught by something else entirely. And then finally, there's often a disconnect between the outcome measures that we follow for students in the process of producing, so we may know something about how students are doing. We may even know something about how schools are performing, but, very often, the measures don't tell us what's happening in schools to produce those measures.

So, the question here is, how do we avoid those pitfalls and ensure that the data that we're use and we're giving to educators and decisionmakers are diagnostic and actionable? And it's my contention that a framework for these kinds of measures can help with that, because it can help us to recognize the particular ways in which particular kinds of data can be useful and actionable for some purposes but not for others. So, what I'm proposing here is a three-part framework, where each kind of measure and each part addresses a particular question. The first one is student outcomes, answering the question, how are the kids doing, in the short- and the long-term, and that, of course, is diagnostic for identifying students and collectively identifying schools.

The second category is about impact on those values, how much does the school or the program or the educational process contribute to how kids are doing, which is distinct on the outcome itself? And that's the kind of measure, like, say, a value-added would [inaudible] for our student and our teacher, that might be diagnostic for identifying whether a school is underperforming or overperforming, and then third are measures related to processes that might be producing outcomes. That's address the question, what's happening in the school or the classroom, and those kinds of measures are diagnostic for identifying ways -- identify places where intervention may be necessary. Potentially, also, we're identifying underperformance and overperformance. So, I want to talk a little bit in the next few minutes about examples of each of these types, just as illustrations, some of which we worked on with our panel members today.

So, starting with student outcomes, you're all familiar with this. We're trying to understand how students are doing. And the first point to recognize is that you need broad and rich measure systems. So, there are lots of critiques, of course, of high-stake testing. In my view, the strongest one is that the tests don't measure [inaudible] to learn. And the Every Student Succeeds Act, to some extent, recognized this by expanding the older measures from which are beyond proficiency and reading to include things like graduation, chronic absenteeism, college readiness, and some other measures [inaudible]. But there are all sorts of other student outcome measures we might include as well.

And I want to be clear that I'm not talking just about state accountability systems, compliance accountability systems. Here we're just talking about measures that might be used for diagnostic and performance management purposes, whether they're included in formal accountability systems, whether they're at the state level or the district level, this framework is intended to be a broad one. In any case,

student outcome measures could include post-secondary enrollment, could include things like workforce participation in adulthood, those kinds of long-term things. And then they could also include things like social/emotional awareness that is getting so much attention, and things like citizenship, which we rarely talk about for measurement purposes, but this is historically a pretty important aim of public schools. So, I'm going to give you a couple of examples of the last two categories related to projects we worked on.

In particular, REL Mid-Atlantic has done some work on measuring social-emotional learning in both Pennsylvania and in the District of Columbia. In DC public schools, we helped the districts create an index of whether students are loved, challenged, and prepared using student survey method on social [inaudible]. This index isn't used for formal accountability purposes, but the district does report district-wide results publicly every year.

In Pennsylvania, we analyzed student and staff survey data and created an index of school climate that includes measures of social and emotional learning. Again, this one is not used for formal accountability. Schools choose whether they're going to participate in this the survey, and then decide what to do with the information. In the work we've done, we found that the surveys can produce useful information on social-emotional learning at the school level. Of course, they are primarily designed to provide information on individual students. But we've seen that it is possible to get good response rates across a school for the students, as well as from the staff. We have seen that school-wide social-emotional learning measures show good psychometric characteristics, and that social-emotional learning varies not only among individual students, but also among average across schools. We have also seen that there are reasons for caution in interpreting some of those. So, for example, it turns out there are systematic differences in social-emotional learning across grade levels.

This is data from the DC public schools showing how four different indices of social-emotional competencies change across grade levels systematically. And as you can see here, they demonstrate something that I think lots of students, parents, and teachers already know, which is that for many kids, ninth grade sucks, and the implication here, if we're think about this as understanding school performance as one measure of understanding and student needs, is that it probably is a good idea to make comparisons at the same grade level, because there are some issues, some developmental issues probably that affect this overall.

Civics is the second other outcome I want to mention that, of course, as far as I know, has not been included in formal accountability systems anywhere. They're fairly involved. But historically, you can go back to the Horace Mann, who was the found of public education in the country. Historically, the reason that we all pay taxes to support public education is because it serves the public purpose of preparing kids for citizenship. And, in fact, we've done research showing that when you do measure this, you can find that schools can have a big effect on whether students, once they graduate [inaudible] and become eligible, whether they actually register and vote.

This is from a study we did of a Charter School Management organization, called Democracy Prep, that focuses specifically on civic preparation. And they were able to increase the rates of registration voting of

their graduates by substantial amounts. This is the sort of thing that could be measured tracked in public schools more generally. So those are some examples of the first category, student outcomes.

The second category, as I mentioned before, is impact on students, so with can measure how well the kids are doing in a variety of different [inaudible]. But, separately, it's important to try to get a sense of how much the school is contributing; right? And this is related to a debate that goes back to the origination of No Child Left Behind 20 years ago. A lot of the critics recognized that if we just look at the student outcomes, raw proficiency results that we have, then we can't really distinguish the school's performance or the school's contribution to that on what the students claim. And those kinds of critiques are what prompted the development of measures like value-added measures and student growth measure, which do a better job assessing how much schools are contributing. But we've got this situation now where we've been expanding the outcomes that people are looking at for secondary readiness, social-emotional learning, any of the others, without realizing that we may be replicating that same original [inaudible] if we don't apply the statistical techniques to distinguish the school's contribution from how well the kids would have done regardless of what schools they went to. And so, but we could, in fact, do that.

The last thing I want to say here is that accountability arguments about how much outcome versus impacts should be weighed, how much status should count versus growth, proficiency versus value-added, that those in some sense, miss the point, because these two types of measures, outcomes in the first category, impacts on this one, are diagnostic for different purposes. So, you could have a situation where a low-status/high-growth school could end up with the same overall rating, combine them, as a high status and low-growth school. In fact, those two schools need very different interventions.

And I want to talk about some work we've done with both DC and our colleagues on the panel here, and with Louisiana, on measures we're calling "Promotion Power," where the promotion power approach is designed to apply the same kinds of statistical methods that are used in value added and growth models to outcomes like graduation [inaudible], and, potentially, other outcomes could be applied to registration and voting, could be applied to earnings in the mid-20s. The idea being we try account for the differences and advantages and disadvantages as to serve and put schools on a level playing field, give the policymakers in the industry better diagnostic information. So what does that mean?

Here's some data from the work we did in Louisiana, where each dot shows a different high school across the State of Louisiana. And on the vertical axis, you see the college enrollment rate of students from each one of those high schools, wide variation. On the horizontal axis, you see the poverty line, increasing poverty to the right. So, it won't surprise anybody that the schools, on average, the schools that have higher poverty level tend to have lower college [inaudible] outcomes.

But I want to point you to the two schools we've highlighted. They have basically identical college enrollment [inaudible], but one of them is serving -- the one on the left is serving the population of students that's not very disadvantaged. Very few of them are in poverty. These kids would do well even if they were at another school. The yellow dot on the right, they get the same college outcomes with much,

much more disadvantaged population. They are way above that green line, suggesting that they are producing very large promotion power. They are promoting, dramatically increasing the college enrollment rates of their students, and we need to be able to distinguish, and policymakers need to be able to distinguish those schools from each other. This matters a lot. Schools with higher promotion power dramatically increase students' probability of graduating high school. They can be shown dramatically increases in students enrolling in college, persisting in college, and there are differences in earnings age 26, as you can also see, again, this data. So, those are the second category.

The third and final category, educational processes. We need to know what's happening inside the school. We need to know not only how the students are doing and how much schooling are contributing, but what might be the processes in the schools that are producing impact in outcomes. So, process measures can do some things that impact and outcome measures can't do, particularly, they can identify areas of possible intervention. So, even if an impact measure gives us good and reliable measure of performance, the schools serving different kids on a level playing field, it's a black box. It doesn't tell us how or why those things are happening.

So, the kind of things we might measure for processes could include observations of instructional practice. It could include surveys of school climate. It could include measures of student participation, such as the ones that so many districts are getting now from their learning management systems electronically. It could include things like the kinds of school inspections that have been common in England and parts of Europe for a long time. It could include measures of exclusionary discipline, particularly focused on equity. And even could include some of the old-fashioned traditional measures, things like class size and teacher conference [inaudible]. They can help compensate for some of the weaknesses of the outcome of some of the impact measures. As I mentioned earlier, you know, one of the challenges is that our measures of student outcomes tend to be incomplete. But even so, there's good evidence that people can recognize good schools and good teaching by observing it. Even students seem to be able to do this, research evidence suggests.

Then, in addition, the process measures are important because there are some kinds of impacts that we don't know how to measure at all. So, for example, there is lots of good research suggesting that it's possible, with the right methods, to produce measures of value-added of teachers in schools that are valid and reliable. But nobody's been able to figure out how to do this with for principals, for individual principals. We know that principals matter a lot, but that's a much different story from being able to identify individual principals on outcomes.

So, the process measures are important, and so I'll talk briefly about some work we've done specifically on school climate, which we worked on in Pennsylvania, in DC, and in Maryland. And we've seen interesting findings, suggesting that if talk to students and staff about school climate, you end up getting indications that they're correlated. They can tell you similar stories about school. But they also differ, interestingly and systematically. Teachers tend to think that their instruction is more rigorous than the students think. Students tend to think that they are better prepared than teachers.

On this issue, particularly as related to principals, one of the things we've been able to see -- this is from DC public schools -- is that school climate changes substantially when a school gets a new principal, and these are a variety of dimensions of school climate. We're seeing changes with a new principal that are much larger than the changes you see in the student population information. And that shouldn't be too surprising, because, of course, principals don't directly teach kids. To the extent that they influence those student outcomes, the influence has to be indirect; right? It's about how they change the instructional culture, how they change staffing, how they find ways to help their teachers perform better, all of which could take time and may not happen when things change. But the school climate, particularly this leadership [inaudible], can change quite quickly, suggesting that the climate measure can provide a window on the performance of principals that we wouldn't be able to get if we were only looking at student outcomes. So, that's the framework.

I want to close here with a couple of possible implications for policy and practice before turning it over to our panel. One is that, as a policy matter, I think it's important that we try to broaden our policy discussion performance beyond student outcomes and beyond formal consequences. In education policy in the last 20 years, when we've used the word "accountability," we have tended to mean something very specific, which is formal consequences attached to student outcomes. But, in fact, there's lots of evidence on cognitive science and psychology that there are many other ways to create accountability too. That's formal consequences for [inaudible]. The information alone can [inaudible]. There aren't consequences.

There are real reasons to be concerned about applying consequences to some particular kinds of measures, which might be too easily collected or influenced if formal consequences were [inaudible]. Social and emotional learning likely seem to be one of those measures that, if diagnostic value could decline, if high stakes were [inaudible]. Of course, lower stakes may lower the temperature and make it easier to talk about the implications of some of these measures, and transparency itself can help create an accountability. And beyond that, it's important to recognize that outcomes are not the only measures that matter; that we care about impacts and processes as well, and that those are useful for other kinds of decisions.

And then the second and final implication is that we need to recognize the limits of data in measurement. So, what I've tried to suggest in this framework is that good measures on school performance can identify, first of all, student and school aids, answering this first question about how are the students doing, looking at the student outcome measures. Good measures can identify different good measures, can identify on the performance and whether the school contributed to student outcomes. And the third type of measures, the process measures, can help identify the processes and address the question of what's happening in schools.

These are all useful. They are different, but they are complementary to each other. But even all of them together are not going to give us everything we need to help in school [inaudible], to help improve educational performance, because measurement alone can't actually tell an educator or an administrator what do to make things better. And I think it's important for us, particular as data analysts, to recognize that those actions for improving even once we've got the measures right, and once we've got a rich and

comprehensive, complementary set of measures, the improvement actions are going to have to be informed by expert knowledge from the field as well.

So, I will stop there. We are right about at the halfway point, and we are ready to turn it over to our panelist, and also to the questions that you have been sending in from the audience. So, I want to thank our panelist again for joining us today. We will pull the slides down so you can see all our panelists better now, and I will turn it over to Carolyn Phenicie from the Council of Chief State School Officers to moderate the discussion and kick us off with some questions. Carolyn.

[Carolyn Phenicie] Great. Thank you so much, Brian. I have a couple questions to get us started, but, again, for those viewing, if you want to take the time to ask a question in the chat and send it to all panelists, that is the easiest way for all of us to see it. So, I guess to start, I'd like to hear from both the SEA and the district perspective, why are these sorts of alternate measures important and what sort of have you found to be the most actionable. So, Donna or Evan, would you like to from the SEA perspective?

[Donna Johnson] Thank you so much. I think one of the -- and thank you, Betsy, I think it's Betsy in the channel, the question that we had there, and I think one of the things that we all have been excited to do in developing systems under the [ESA] framework is to do just that, is to build an accountability system that uses more than achievement, which is what we were tasked with under No Child Left Behind. And in DC, we have really utilized multiple measures to a great extent so that we actually have one of the least amount of weight possible on the achievement component, recognizing that achievement for us is measuring, meeting, or exceeding expectations, and those two metrics alone are just 20 points of our full accountability system. And so, utilizing a heavier weight on growth, looking at other metrics, such as leading indicators that are able to be measured and show meaningful differentiation across the system, things such as chronic absenteeism, looking at college/career readiness metrics, looking at ways that we can expand that and make sure that we're bringing in metrics that sometimes are some inputs but also measured by outputs and the rest are some that are more performance.

One of the things that I think is important is that when we are talking about this -- we heard Brian talk about it -- is that many of the things we're talking about today are not just what we call big-A accountability, and really important to think about that in terms of what little-A accountability means. When we think about formal accountability or big-A accountability, we are looking at what we are using for, in our case at the state level, a federal accountability framework that meets the requirements of a law or specifics that are required. But there are many other ways that schools and districts utilize data to build their own school improvement program, to build and look at the accountability that they have to themselves within measuring their school's specific goals.

And I think a lot the things that we have heard Brian talk are ripe for that further exploration, of thinking about things that might not necessarily transition or equate into a full statewide system, have great opportunities and strength in a school-level development plan, or school improvement plan. And all too often, we are focused purely on a state-level accountability framework without thinking about all the

other places that these data have meaning and have impact. And I want to make sure that we are able to think about that, but specifically around how, in the state, we are exploring this. You know, that's one of the reasons why we partnered with Mathematica to look into this, because we really wanted to think about how do we measure these things in a broader system, and then take a look at that data and then say, okay, now what can be translated it into a statewide system and what might be something that we push down and share with our schools and LEAs as something they might be able to use at that system. So, hopefully that answer it is question, if not, I'll follow the chat and see if there's a follow up.

[Carolyn Phenicie] Okay, thanks, Donna. Tonya -- oh, sorry, Evan.

[Evan Kramer] I was just going to jump in briefly and say, totally agree with what Donna said about absenteeism and growth being sort of [inaudible]. I think the other one that's interesting in our context that we think about quite a bit, it's not really a measure of inputs, but is an output [inaudible]. So we look at the proportion of students [inaudible] and come back, and that gives a sense of how much folks are finding [inaudible] good places for their students [inaudible]. That's another way that think about the [inaudible].

[Carolyn Phenicie] Okay. Thank you. Evan, for future questions, your mic is sort of floating in and out. So, Tonya or Gene, from the district perspectives, how are these alternate measures, why are they important to you, and what has been particularly useful.

[Tonya Wolford] Sure, I can just jump in. At the School District of Philadelphia, we have, for over five years, had our school progress report, which incorporated many of the ideas that Brian was talking about, in particular relying on surveys. But we also looked at credit accumulation, growth. One interesting thing, which I think really validates some of what was said today, was we had our report divided into domains, so there's an achievement domain, progress domain, climate domain, and college and career readiness domain, and we maintained the same system over five years, so we've been able to see movement in district and charter over that time period. Well, the climate and progress domains are the ones that moved, but not the achievement and college and career. So that's really led to some important revelations within the district in terms of thinking about sort of sequencing of performance and what's important to focus on in the beginning; right?

So, if we had a school that was very well low on achievement out of the gate, it doesn't necessarily make sense to continue beating the school over the head with that achievement score; right? We need to look at something different and think about what has to come first. So, we, to a certain extent, ended up operationalizing the idea of looking at climate, and then looking at progress and progress stabilizing. All of that has actually led us to redesigning our framework now, and recognizing that since achievement was not moving over that time period, but we were building on a foundation, now we are shifting more to achievement again. But we are still keeping these other measures in mind.

Related to that, I will say it's not only -- like thinking about a framework, you do think about something at the end of the year. But one thing that's very important and where these other areas factor in is this idea of a framework that spans not only domains and metrics but also space and time, really. So, how do you

operationalize these throughout the year? How do you make them meaningful for different stakeholders? How do you pull in across the organization? And we're in an interesting time now with our board, shifting to goals and guardrails. They have adopted some real high-level goals for the district. That's influencing our new framework. That's influencing our within-year monitoring. That's influencing what people are looking at and talking about. So, we're trying to take into account a lot of metrics that are important at different points in time, but also expanding them across the entire organization to make them more productive for us, really.

[Eugene Pinkard] I'll add two quick things on this, underscoring everything that's been said about the importance of climate data, I think we'll circle back to that. The two things I'll add here are, when the pandemic started, one of the areas we recognized that was an important data set is just opportunity to learn data. Where do students have the opportunity to access learning opportunities, and that data set now includes things like broadband and device access, as well as stuff that we've always considered to be essential, access to grade-level content, access to rigorous and advanced courses, attendance, engagement, conditions for learning, and we're seeing districts across the nation take up the love, challenged, and prepared index, as well as similar indices that are relevant to the systems and the data that that they have.

The second thing I'll add to opportunity to learn data, and this applies to, really, everything I think that we're going to touch on, is just the importance of just aggregating data across subgroups, recognizing where, even if they hold dataset -- and I saw something in here about variants across age groups, I can't necessarily get into answer that specifically, but we may see a data trend that feels like it's headed in the right direction or wrong direction, but certain subgroups may be experiencing things in quite a different way. And so, to make sure that we're continually attending to that throughout this work is another place where states, districts, and even individual schools and teachers are in value on unpacking the data.

[Carolyn Phenicie] Gene sort of touched on this, but I'm wondering how the pandemic has affected your thinking around alternate uses of data, both in the sense that, you know, the usual standardized tests are interrupted, and the fact that students are coming back to school buildings with all of these new needs?

[Eugene Pinkard] I'm happy to just kick it off. So, one of the things that's allowed with ESER dollars, not SI, ESER, is attention to needs assessments, reopening plans, and these are spaces where what we've seen just from our personal experiences and social media and public conversation, but also what the research tells us about how young brains work and develop, is attention to relationships, attention to safety and trust, attention to climate. So, prioritizing some of those indicators, which I think we would describe as process indicators or leading indicators. The research is really strong that this isn't just a nice to have, that it actually drives later outcomes for students. But building that into how systems are thinking about how what they're collecting, how they're investigating this, and what they're asking administrators and educators to focus on is one of the significant shifts that's apparent. I should say that applies to adults as well, how adults are experiencing stress, howl adults are experiencing climate matters a lot.

[Tonya Wolford] Yeah, I was going to jump in. I think we're leaning in and relying a lot more on our survey data. So, we had our existing district life survey, that's the annual survey data of parents, students,

teachers, and principals. But we've also had to –org decided to develop a student wellbeing survey that we started, actually, during the pandemic, and now it's something that we expanded district wide that's monthly in order to better understand and collect feedback on how students are feeling throughout the year.

I think, also, obviously with the lack of outcome data from statewide assessments, we're leaning in a lot more on our within-year assessments. Right now, we have a universal screener for English Language Arts and Math, and so just exploring even participation on that has become an important factor, so, in terms of thinking about during fully remote, we relied on that some to understand patterns of students' engagement. But even now, we're definitely looking at the results, maybe in a different way or more intensively than we might have if we did not have our submitted data.

[Carolyn Phenicie] Donna, Evan, anything, perspective from the state level?

[Donna Johnson] Evan, I'm not sure if you were going to say something. I can jump in. You know, I think one of the things that is very challenging at the state level is that we do not have comparable data that tells us the status of our students across the entire state, you know, not just in DC but thinking about my colleagues in other states, and I know there are a few of them on the call, and, you know, that's been a challenge. And so, one of the things that we are all really looking forward to is being able to truly get that piece of comparable data that will give us a sense of where our students are at.

Right now, we know that our schools and our distributes have a variety of tools that they can use that are more diagnostic or more interim, but don't meet the same reporting requirements, don't meet the same levels of measurement that a statewide assessment does, and so it tells us something very different. There are a lot of times there's a rush to try any make plating predictions from there that are challenging and can be somewhat dangerous, so I think we have to look at all of that with a sense of caution.

But one of the most important things that a lot of school districts and states have prioritized is utilizing some of the additional recovery funds that have come in to think about those mental wellness supports that are necessary, whether if we need bringing in mental health counselors or funding for mental health programs, investing in student wellbeing surveys, staff wellbeing surveys. Those are all things that are going to be critically important to both provide supports for, as well as measure what the data is showing us, to know where additional supports are needed.

You know, one of the other things that is going to be really important is how our LEAs and schools utilize some of their local assessment data to target direct supports, such as high-impact tutoring, extending year programs, those types of things. So, absent a statewide assessment, something that we would use at more of a state-level policy or a district level to think overall and shift resources. Absent those tools, the diagnostic tools for schools are going to be important for how they implement those in real-time strategy that we have additional funds for right now.

[Brian Gill] I'll just add something here, which is that -- I referred to this briefly earlier in the presentation, but one of the things that has struck me, as we've worked with both states and districts over the last year or so, is that, even as states have lacked the kind of information they usually get in the form of state assessments particularly, districts very often do have a ton of information that can be useful, particularly for identifying the student needs, the kinds of things that Gene was referring to.

We recently did some work with Pittsburgh, where we could see that, you know, they had access not only to orderly and NWVA map assessments that were administered remotely, and not just in person, but also to daily data on participation through the Online Learning Management System. That was the kind of thing that allowed them and could allow lots of districts to have a really good idea of who the kids are who have suffered the most during the pandemic and who need to be reengaged most urgently.

[Tonya Wolford] And I do just want to add, I think this is really interesting, the situation that Covid has created in terms of the tension, or maybe not tension, but just juxtaposition of state and local data. Reflecting back on our school progress report, which is our annual report card, when we first launched it, there were a lot of questions of why are you doing it if the state is doing it, for instance. Well, during the period, the five years I described, the state actually switched their report cards, so we have this unbroken five-year view of district performance across this range of measures that we wouldn't have had if we only relied on the state. And now we're seeing a second major disruption in, really, the type of information that the state provides. And while we couldn't issue our annual report cards for 1920 or 2021, we adapted so that for the things that we do have data, we did issue a report card in 1920 to ensure, still, some continuity, and, again, as I mentioned, we're leaning in more with our in-year assessment program.

[Carolyn Phenicie] So, how is the best way or how can districts and LEAs use all this data and get it in a way that's interoperable with the SEA, that can help the SEA maybe make decisions about where to send their sort of state set-aside funds under these federal programs, or how can that relationship, I guess, work the best?

[Brian Gill] I think that could be -- yeah, I'd be curious about both the local and state perspective on this.

[Donna Johnson] Yeah, I think that it really is going to vary from state to state, depending upon what your data system is like in terms of the types of data that LEAs secede to the SEA. So, there's some variability there in terms of what you have in a data system. There are some states that have very, very specific data and commonalities that they send, and then there are others that send things in different reports, and so I think there's a little of different nature.

But in terms of thinking about how the states can support LEAs and schools in utilizing this data, I think it really speaks to an opportunity for focusing on data literacy and using data to make informed data decisions, and so, helping the LEAs understand both not only their data but give them a lens into what's happening in others around them. And so, whether that means building some understanding of what the data says, just as much as what it doesn't say, looking at what type of actionable dashboard tools might be

helpful to lead them in analyzing data in an appropriate manner, and partnering them in a manner that they're asking questions about their data and not just collecting data for the sake of collecting it, so making sure that they're collecting data for the sake of using. So, not a lot of specifics there, but I really looked at this as an opportunity for an enhancement of the data literacy that's so needed across our country.

[Evan Kramer] I think one -- oh, sorry.

[Eugene Pinkard] No, go ahead, Evan.

[Evan Kramer] I was just going to say one such example -- I hope my audio is coming through more clearly now -- is that a lot of us don't get in the space of interim assessments for [inaudible]; right? Some have aligned interim assessments, but most states view their assessment role as providing a state summative and sort of contextualizing those datasets. And one of the things we did this, fraught in certain ways, was look at some of the interim assessment and local assessments, formative assessment tools that folks are using to try and understand what are folks doing out there, to Donna's point, to try and think about what are the tools that we know folks are using, high quality, aligned with what we ultimately expect students to know and be able to do, and, also, where are the places where we need may need to support folks in using diagnostic tools more. So, we saw that there was a greater need for folks to understand, on an interim basis, how their English learners are doing, specifically in their English language acquisition. And as you can imagine, English language acquisition is sort of a question mark for us, having students' remote instruction has varied quite a bit. We want to make sure that as we're recovering, that we're prioritizing that. So, we have made investments in the VITA access model, or VITA model exam, which is to access, so that hopefully we will have a better sense in terms of our students of acquisition of English language skills. So that's one such example where response need, and what we're hearing from folks, can be a way we sort of pivot what we think about as typical role of SEAs.

I will say that the question, Carolyn, for me, the reason why it [inaudible] me, it's sort of hard to say in this moment, you know, how does an SEA interpret this role in supporting LEAs, because I think we're sort of in a time where the line, the roundness, the boxes in which we're typically maintained, and as maybe have different shapes and structures to them. So I hope that's helpful.

[Eugene Pinkard] Yeah, I totally agree with that, Evan, and so my comments will be briefer, because I don't want to repeat the points that you just made. I'll name that what we recognize, as all of this has emerged during the pandemic, but, really, prior to that, is there's a playbook for states to consider the variety of roles that they play in this. And we also generated a tool kit for principals, because the research is really clear about how impactful principals are, and specifically through their attention to climate. I saw there was a question that mentioned Neil Farrington and Dave [Fanescue], these are some of the folks that we actually worked with on creating the Climate for Principals, the tool kit for principals to address climate. And the reason I bring that up is that it's not an accountability conversation. One of the most

profound things that we heard -- and I saw this to be true when I was a school leader -- is that you have all of these numbers, but we can't mistake data and student surveys for student voice.

We have the numbers and the data, but the community has the story. And so, it's a lot of the work that is on the opposite ends that brackets the data collection. How are we equipping people to understand the data? Some states have invested in data systems and dashboards so that, across the state, everybody can look at the same indicators. And then on the back end, what do you actually do with that to create a sense of ownership and agency, where the cycle isn't just to collect the data but to engage folks in a conversation that drives the work forward and improves climate, in fact, by talking about the climate, because people feel a sense of validation. Like, you collected this data and it didn't just drift off into some black box or your evaluation system, it's actually driving my experience on a day-to-day basis. I'll share some of these resources as we go along.

[Tonya Wolford] Yeah. And I was just going to add, I think that brings us back to some of the initial comments around drowning in data, and even the areas that Brian was talking about, because drowning in data can happen within a year, but it also can be occurring over time; right? So, while we did have a pandemic and while we're missing PSSAs -- in Pennsylvania that's our end-of-year for grades three through eight -- we know a lot about what's going on; right? Outcomes didn't go up during the pandemic. Students are lagging behind. Social-emotional learning has suffered. Climates are strained, and this is, at least in probably large urban districts, I think, across the country. Processes are impaired; right? People aren't back up and running necessarily to full speed. There are more absences because of illness and things like that.

So, I think, thinking about the data that we had and where we were, and taking that into consideration, and making decisions is very important, recognizing that maybe a lot didn't change, 19,20-2021. I also think just this idea needing to give some space and time and maybe dig into what Gene was just saying around, like, the community voice, and I was kind of getting to that, with sort of operationalizing the data. What do people think about it? How are they processing it? How are they handling it, especially in these times where it's not business as usual still?

[Carolyn Phenicie] So, now that we have all this data, whether it's the new opportunities, or data the during the pandemic, or some of these innovative measures that Brian talked about, like the high school promotion, power index, how do you sort of take that data and let school and local leaders, or whoever, share best practices, you know, learn from their own data and from their peers and really sort of use this to improve outcomes and situations for students?

[Eugene Pinkard] I mean, I could talk all day. I'm trying not to go first.

[Brian Gill] Feel free. We're at the last three minutes anyway, so.

[Eugene Pinkard] Okay. Then I'll be super quick. One of the things that we haven't named is that it's a little bit scary and disturbing the way things like SEL are getting politicized. And so, one of the things that I'll just name, as we're unpacking this and thinking about the equity propositions for doing this work, is that the

research is also clear about the long-term impacts of attention to SEL, to climate, to creating a sense of belonging for students. I think we can equip state education agencies and we can equip school leaders with the language to help communities understand that when you look at reports like reports from McKinsey about what are future proof skills, and studies out of Chicago on what are the school experiences that are more likely to increase graduation rates and college persistence, these are those things. It's these indicators, in addition to cognitive skills and reading and writing, that are equally important for folks to be successful in the workplace and in life. And if that's what we want in our richest vision of what's possible for kids, we've got to equip both with the data and the language to help communities understand that.

[Donna Johnson] I would echo everything that Gene just said. One of the things that I think ant is, pre-pandemic, we had in DC, I started something is that we called our "All-Star Tour," where we went and visited different schools, pulled together panels of educators and leaders within that school to talk to them about what they were doing to get specific successes, whether it was successes around attendance growth or successes around their graduation rate or college career readiness metric or something that was leading to a high level of academic growth, a variety of different things. Maybe it was just the significant gap closure that they had made between their Hispanic Latino population that hadn't existed before.

And so, focusing and talking with them, and learning, and then developing an opportunity or a platform in which they could share that with others, I think, is probably one of the more valuable ways that we can enable our schools and LEAs to share what's working for them, and then that it gets back to that data literacy piece, which I don't have the answer to when we can expect data fluency, you know, but I'm not really sure when that is. I think we have to keep chipping away at data literacy first.

But I think we have to talk to our schools and LEAs around what all of these ideas that they're hearing from other schools, what can they take away from and implement in their school. So, it's not going to be exactly the same. They're not going to have the same environment, but there may be pieces of things that are salient for their environment or things they can adapt, and giving them the space and the flexibility to do that, as well as an opportunity to try some things and see how it works, and then share back. And I think, right now, we're in an opportunity to where people have a little bit of space to do that, and they have some flexibility with additional funds to invest in things that they might not have tried before, and do that with bottom line always being, how can we better support our students, and keeping that question first and foremost in everyone's mind.

[Carolyn Phenicie] Thank you so much, Donna, and thank you to our other panelists, and thank you for having me, and I will throw it back to Brian to close us out. Brian, you're on mute.

[Brian Gill] Sorry. Thank you, Carolyn. Thanks to the panelist, and thanks to the audience. I'm sorry we were not able to get to all the questions that came in. There were so many of them. But I hope you found this helpful. We'll be signing off now. Please take just one minute to respond to the feedback survey. And I hope everyone has a chance to relax and get a bit of a break over the holidays. Thanks again for joining us. Bye-bye.