ED*Facts* Modernization Update

Thursday, May 12, 2022

Forum Chair Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (MT), introduced Kelly Worthington, Barbara Timm, and Ross Santy, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Kelly, Barbara, and Ross delivered a presentation about the modernization of ED*Facts* that is currently underway.

The presentation first addressed the technical and operational reasons for modernizing ED*Facts*. All data collection initiatives that employ information technology (IT) will need to be assessed and modernized periodically, as systems and software become outdated and data security requirements advance. Operationally, the ED*Facts* team knew that some areas of the ED*Facts* process needed improvement and presented opportunities for change at both the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and state education agency (SEA) levels. ED recognized that ED*Facts*' current postsubmission quality control process needs improvement and that data are not usable at their due date.

These things being known, the ED*Facts* team prioritized the following solutions, understanding that fixing one challenge would help fix the others:

- Improve ED's data review-and-use processes.
- Provide tools to support state processes.
- Ensure that data are usable at their due date.

The ED*Facts* team piloted its modernization plan with school year (SY) 2021-22 data from the Common Core of Data (CCD). This pilot began by delaying states' submission deadlines by a month and improving the submission process to allow for data quality review at the beginning of the cycle. Earlier data quality review allows states to submit data after addressing issues and adding explanatory comments. As of the date of the presentation to the Forum (May 12, 2022), one SEA already had submitted its early CCD data file, which it normally would be working on well into the summer. The ED*Facts* team found that frequent reminders and preparation, data governance-oriented technical assistance, and a proactive approach to error identification and issue resolution are promising techniques for implementing the modernization.

The ED*Facts* team shared a list of functions and data areas available to SEAs, including improved security of a required multifactor login most likely managed through login.gov. Presubmission data quality checks will be streamlined and enhanced at the SEA level, with states responding to business rule failures before submitting their data rather than after. The checks will be limited to business rules that require action. The state response can be as simple as a detailed data note explaining why the data are failing the business rule.

The ED*Facts* team reviewed specific feedback provided by the Forum's ED*Facts* Modernization Working Group, stressing that the working group's feedback had been heard and would be addressed, where feasible. Several changes in response to this feedback are in progress:

- File due dates are being pushed back to allow for a more comprehensive presubmission review.

- A central portal is being created as a "one-stop shop" for data submission. For the transition year, states will continue to use the ED*Facts* Metadata and Process System (EMAPS) for their metadata, and the State Submission Plan will be integrated into the next version of the application.
- States will be able to submit files with data that shows business rules have been triggered by including meaningful data notes to explain the results.
- The Business Rules Single Inventory (BRSI) will be kept up to date with all edits from ED shared in advance. Updates to the BRSI are currently underway.
- Functionality for selecting prior comments and repeating comments for multiple items is being planned.
- User roles in the new system will be more flexible, allowing SEAs to designate data submitters, their levels of responsibility, and their data access.

Improvements still under consideration for the future include

- allowing SEAs to check data in the aggregate data quality rules system at any time;
- using Generate to pull data from previously reported files to avoid duplication of effort in reporting;
- finding ways to implement unit-level business rules inside an SEA's secure environment;
- strengthening stakeholder investment in the current system;
- creating Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) connections for all ED*Facts* file specifications; and
- involving CEDS in any updates or new items added to ED*Facts* file specifications.

Forum members and the ED*Facts* team discussed other aspects of the modernization process:

- *How will the modernization deal with mid-SY data resubmissions like teacher changes or school closures?* To the greatest extent possible, due dates have been adjusted so that files with business rules dependencies are aligned (enabling final data at the due date). Corrections needed after the due date will require a request to EDFacts' Partner Support Center (PSC) with an explanation of why the data were not correct at the due date. The request will be reviewed by the data steward to ensure the explanation is sufficient for tracking changes. After approval by the data steward, the SEAs will be able to resubmit.
- *Will the modernization work in tandem with legacy systems?* IT work will include the old and new systems. Data from SY 2022-23 will be reported in the new system, beginning with the submission of fall 2022 data in January 2023. Data from the current SY (2021-22) will be reported in the old system. There will be some overlap using both systems because of the reporting timelines for each SY. Once SEAs have finished reporting SY 2021-22 data, they can stop using the old system.
- *Will modernization address new NCES school IDs, publication pending, that cannot be validated locally?* For now, users who encounter this issue should file a support ticket with ED*Facts*' PSC.