National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC)
Meeting Summary
Monday, August 7, 2023
Morning Session

NESAC Committee Kickoff

NESAC Acting Chair Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (MO), and NESAC Vice Chair Adrian L. Peoples, Delaware Department of Education, welcomed members to the meeting and led the group in introductions. Cheryl briefly reviewed major activities and discussions from the 2022 NESAC virtual meeting and reviewed the 2023 meeting agenda.

Opening Session Follow-up: Forum Working Groups

Members shared their feedback and takeaways following the Forum Working Groups Panel presentation by Cheryl, Allen Miedema, Northshore School District (WA), and Jon Wiens, Oregon Department of Education. Practitioner-focused resources, such as those developed by the Forum and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, can help state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) use data and information to act.

Technology for Teaching and Learning: Agencies have leveraged the work of collaborative groups to vet apps and negotiate privacy agreements.

Student Learning Data During Pandemic School Closures and Beyond: Agencies are aiming to alleviate the burdens placed on teachers during the pandemic. Attendance and enrollment in the wake of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic remain a struggle.

Data Literacy

- Data literacy enables the ability to examine data from different perspectives and frame messaging in a way that can compel stakeholders to view data through a particular lens. An understanding of data at various levels enables the ability to drill down and discern nuances within the data.
- Data literacy can help agency staff communicate their own stories using data and then deliver those stories to the public, media, and legislatures. Unique approaches, such as recorded statistics that play when telephone callers are placed on hold, can be an effective method to increase education stakeholders' data literacy.
- Data literacy is an increasingly needed skill among teachers. Potential strategies for improving teachers' skills include having data-literate educators communicate the importance of data literacy to other teachers, requiring data literacy for recertification, allocating professional development time for data literacy training, and emphasizing that data literacy is not novel but instead is a core part of a teacher's work.

Monday, August 7, 2023
Afternoon Session

Joint Session Followup: Cybersecurity

Cheryl and Adrian facilitated a discussion following the cybersecurity presentation by Steven Hernandez, U.S. Department of Education (ED). Members appreciated Steven's aim to prepare

members to counter cybersecurity threats and shared the following key takeaways that they will bring back to their agencies:

- Free cybersecurity tools, training, and services—such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA's) voluntary no-cost assessments (https://www.cisa.gov/cyber-resource-hub)—are valuable resources.
- Involving leadership in cybersecurity training is essential and can motivate changes in agency culture and mindset around cybersecurity.
- While including cybersecurity standards in requests for proposals (RFPs), contracts, and data-sharing agreements is best practice, they can be difficult to enforce.
- Information technology (IT) staff require skill in what can be shared and how, as well as an approach that balances IT operations with agency needs.
- Financial, human resources (HR), and student information systems (SISs) are most at risk of data breaches.
- Review and revise governance policies, particularly around data retention, to minimize cybersecurity risks.
- Local systems need to be modernized and matured. Centralized data warehouses and cloud-based systems that back up data in separate places offsite can help in this effort.
- Using the right terminology can motivate action, such as referring to the "unauthorized access of personally identifiable information (PII)" as a "data breach."
- Grants and funding to strengthen SEA and LEA cybersecurity are needed.
- Tabletop exercises that walk through a scenario and the courses of action an agency or organization will need to take before, during, and after an emergency or incident to lessen the impact are not only applicable for cybersecurity incidents but they also can be used for school safety.

Educator Workforce Data Discussion

Cheryl and Adrian facilitated a discussion about educator workforce data.

- Most members have teacher vacancies in their state or district.
- More educational program providers (EPPs), increased EPP enrollment, and robust EPP data could help address teacher shortages. Funding, such as the former Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program, also is needed.
- Many states recruit teachers from EPPs within the state and help EPPs recruit high school students. Recruitment from outside the state occurs but can be hampered by qualification validation, accreditation issues, transfer equivalency requirements, and variations in course and degree names.
- Educator workforce data are particularly helpful for setting up teacher-student-course data linkages and ensuring that teachers meet in-field and certification requirements. Delaware and Virginia use School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) codes to map teacher certifications to courses.
- SEAs and LEAs have faced challenges in collecting and reporting crucial data such as teacher attendance, more current and granular race and ethnicity data, and out-of-field teaching. Part of the challenge stems from differences between HR systems and other SEA and LEA data systems. Additionally, small schools and LEAs may need to suppress teacher data on report cards due to small N size.

- State legislatures have worked to address workforce issues by, for example, increasing salaries and compensation or making all teachers state employees.
- States take different approaches to monitoring teacher vacancies. While some have statewide teacher vacancy and employment systems or dashboards, others must conduct surveys, estimate vacancies, or work with research groups to identify vacancies. Examining turnover and retention is key.

Preschool and Prekindergarten Data Discussion

Laura Boudreaux, Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), led a discussion about preschool and prekindergarten data. After seeing indications of student under preparedness in the early elementary school years, Louisiana passed legislation in 2012 to unify state early childhood education (ECE) systems, moving all early childhood programs under the governance of LDOE. In 2015-2016, LDOE implemented the new unified quality rating system statewide. Louisiana achieved full statewide implementation of the unified quality rating system in 2016, began publishing annual Performance Profiles for every site online, and attached incentives and consequences to those ratings. These changes have had a positive impact on student preparedness and ECE program quality, while also helping to change ECE in Louisiana from a daycare model to an educational model.

Members engaged Laura in a discussion about the timeline for transitioning to qualified ECE staffing, longitudinal data analysis possibilities and limitations, state and federal data collection requirements and burdens, certification offered by LDOE, and changes in ECE staffing at LDOE. Some members shared that their SEAs also have, or are in the process of, establishing standards for ECE.

Tuesday, August 8, 2023
Morning Session

Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) Data

Cheryl and Adrian facilitated a discussion about personalized learning and PLP data.

- In some states, personalized learning was well established before the pandemic, while in other states, personalized learning still is an emerging concept.
- PLPs take many forms. SEAs and LEAs use approaches such as
    - creating individualized PLPs for students and teachers;
    - requiring comprehensive academic plans for accreditation;
    - personalizing curriculum to meet a student's best interests;
    - establishing tiered instruction based on students' PLPs; and
    - developing Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAPs).
- SEAs and LEAs face many challenges in collecting and using PLP data. Applicable data schema and systems that can transform PLP data into actionable information are needed. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools could help process personalized learning data and tailor curriculum to meet students' personalized learning needs.

AI and Education

Cheryl and Adrian facilitated a discussion about AI and its impact and influence on education.

- Generative AI can generate text, images, or other media, using generative models that learn the patterns and structure of their input training data and then generate new data that has similar characteristics. Generative AI outputs reflect the information, biases, and fallacies of their training data, which commonly are sourced from public websites.
- There are risks associated with using AI, as it can generate answers on its own that are not factual. People who use AI need higher-order thinking, subject-matter expertise, and editorial skills to put the outputs of AI to effective use.
- AI will have a profound impact on society, akin to the Internet. However, few regulatory bodies, laws, or precedents currently govern AI.
- SEAs and LEAs have or are considering using AI to enhance the accuracy of early warning systems (EWSs), develop assessments and program plans, supply a basis for writing assignments, and complete organizational and administrative tasks.
- AI will have an impact on employment. SEA and LEA staff, teachers, and students who learn how to use AI ethically and effectively will be prepared for the future labor market. However, this calls for changing from a fear of AI to a recognition of its potential.

Following the discussion, a member reported that they were able to use what they learned from the committee during a virtual meeting with postsecondary leaders in their state on AI. As an outcome of this discussion, the member's district will receive $1.5 million to invest in professional development to help the LEA learn how to harness AI for good.

Post-Pandemic Lessons Learned

Cheryl and Adrian facilitated a discussion about lessons that states and districts learned from their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learning Loss and Recovery: Agencies always are measuring changes in student learning and providing interventions to students—this is not unique to the pandemic. There have been conflicts in what agencies measure and what leaders and decision-makers request. Techniques for measuring and monitoring learning include EWSs and dashboards. Having a positive mindset can be beneficial, as predicting how well a student may do can affect student performance.

Student Attendance, Performance, Engagement, and Mobility: LEAs with existing virtual schools were better prepared to adapt when pandemic school closures began in spring 2020. Student mobility was low during the height of the pandemic and now is higher. Several agencies have changed their approach permanently in the wake of the pandemic; for example, one state has adjusted how excused absences are counted in accountability requirements, while another state does not count expulsions in chronic absenteeism. Consistent data definitions and reporting, both within an LEA and across LEAs within a state, are essential.

Digital Equity: Many agencies created or built upon existing 1:1 device programs during the pandemic and now are preparing for the future when emergency funding expires and devices become obsolete. Collaboration between public, nonprofit, and private partners has helped narrow the digital equity gap, but challenges persist. For example, while many households facing economic barriers have been able to obtain affordable broadband internet service as part of federal programs, some do not live in areas where broadband is available or have chosen to not have internet access in their homes.

SCED Finder

Susan Williams, Virginia Department of Education, delivered a presentation on SCED, with a focus on the SCED Finder tool. SCED is a voluntary, common classification system for school courses from preschool to high school. Susan reviewed the elements that make up the 12-character SCED Identifier, discussed how the Forum maintains and updates SCED, and provided an overview of SCED resources. The Forum's SCED Working Group releases a new version each year and recently moved up the timeline for releases to better align with SEA and LEA needs. Each new SCED release is included in the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS).

She then navigated to https://nces.ed.gov/scedfinder and demonstrated how SEAs and LEAs can use the SCED Finder, an interactive online tool designed to help users search and browse SCED codes, assign elements to course codes, and save course lists. Other SCED resources include

- a downloadable, sortable file of current SCED codes, as well as files with previous versions;
- the SCED Master List, which is a downloadable file of every SCED code published in every version;
- an FAQ document;
- case studies that highlight effective SCED uses; and
- a training suite with guides and videos.

All SCED resources are available on the Forum's SCED webpage at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/sced.asp. In addition to helping staff who are responsible for course coding to understand SCED, these resources are useful for helping to explain the benefits of SCED to agency leaders.

Members discussed how SCED is customizable to SEA and LEA needs. While some SEAs that use SCED use the complete 12-character SCED Identifier, others use only the 5-digit SCED code. SCED aims to reflect courses that are offered currently in SEAs and LEAs, and Susan encouraged members to send recommendations for new or updated courses to the working group. Agencies do not need to use the latest SCED release if an earlier version meets the agency's needs. Susan provided an example of how SCED benefits state reporting by sharing Virginia's use of SCED to create reports on teacher supply and demand. More information is available at https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/teaching-in-virginia/education-workforce-data-reports.

Tuesday, August 8, 2023
Afternoon Session

Joint Session Followup: The Anatomy of a Hack

Cheryl and Adrian facilitated a discussion following the presentation by the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). Members shared the following key takeaways that they will bring back to their agencies:

- Everyone is responsible for data privacy and security.
- Small LEAs and teachers are particularly vulnerable to attacks.

- Use secure passwords and routinely change them, in keeping with established security protocols.
- Strong management of system access is essential, as is protecting the privacy of all account log-ins.
- Data privacy and security need to be balanced with the practicalities of teaching students.
- Proactively funding data privacy and security measures can be more cost-effective than paying for ransomware attacks.
- PTAC is available to provide online or on-site technical assistance and presentations on privacy-related topics free of charge to requesting organizations. More information about requesting training and technical assistance is available at https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/request-ptac-training-or-technical-assistance.

Student Support Breakout Discussions

Members split into two groups to discuss student support topics of interest.

Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Tracking Referrals and Interventions

- MTSS is the process of identifying students who need additional support; referring students to support services; providing them with multiple layers of support; and tracking the frequency, duration, and outcomes of that support. MTSS, response to intervention (RTI), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are distinct but related.
- LEAs may implement supports and interventions at the student level, while SEAs may focus on the school or district level. Agencies need training to implement interventions, whether they be academic or behavioral (for students) or organizational (for schools and districts).
- Tracking is necessary for monitoring academic progress, identifying behavioral issues, ensuring equity, allocating funding, being alert to sudden changes that occur, and prioritizing services.
- Intervention selection often depends on the type and severity of the intervention. A typical LEA approach may be for a school MTSS Team to meet, review data, and develop an intervention plan. For SEAs, they may work with LEAs to implement state-provided interventions as part of a school improvement plan.
- Improved services can be actualized through consistency in approach, standards adoption, systems integration, implementation integrity and fidelity, longitudinal analyses, program evaluation, and evidence-based funding decisions.

Supporting Growing Populations of English Learners (ELs) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

- LEAs use programs to set benchmarks, monitor progress, and implement interventions to accelerate the growth of EL students, as well as surveys to identify written, oral, and spoken languages at home. SEAs use EL proficiency assessment results to allocate funding to LEAs and help in completing grant applications for EL funding.
- As with most student data, EL data are reported and collected continuously for both short- and long-term decision-making. Important data specific to EL students include EL proficiency assessment results and spoken languages. Agencies typically disaggregate EL data from aggregate student data to enable a better understanding of EL student needs.

- PLCs can best help SEAs and LEAs by encouraging a student-centered mindset. Best practices for using data in PLCs include using consistent data-informed frameworks, facilitating discussions with guided prompts, data literacy training, building a culture of data-informed decision-making, and using What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) educator practice guides (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Search/Products?productType=1).

NESAC Election

Adrian L. Peoples, Delaware Department of Education, was nominated as the 2023-24 NESAC Chair and Will Goodman, Boise School District (ID), was nominated as the 2023-24 NESAC Vice Chair.

Wednesday, August 9, 2023
Morning Session

Financial Data

School-Level Finance Survey Presentation

Stephen Cornman, National Center for Education Statistics, and Stephen Wheeler, U.S. Census Bureau, delivered a presentation on the School-Level Finance Survey (SLFS). The SLFS initially was a collaborative research and development effort with 15 states to determine the feasibility of collecting and reporting expenditure data at the school level. Since 2014, the SLFS has collected expenditures at the school level by functions and objects of interest such as instruction, support services, salaries, and various technology costs. The SLFS can be used to evaluate differences in resource allocation (as measured by school-level expenditures) across schools, school districts, and states. Analysis of SLFS expenditure data is possible across a variety of school-level factors, including geographic locale, charter status, multiple poverty indicators, and pupil/teacher ratio. Beginning with the fiscal year 2022 collection, there is a new mandatory obligation for states to submit school-level finance data. NCES has been meeting actively with states to discuss states' progress in reporting SLFS data and develop incremental action plans to support each state in completing the entire survey.

Forum members engaged the presenters in a discussion that addressed the following:

- The importance of incremental action plans that account for the time needed to automate and standardize data collection processes from schools to LEAs, SEAs, and ED.
- How American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding will affect SLFS reporting.
- The difference between per pupil counts and membership as it relates to current expenditures by pupil.

Members expressed interest in inviting Stephen and Stephen to do a webinar with the full Forum on the SLFS.

Financial Sustainability Post-COVID Emergency Funding Discussion

Members discussed how their agencies have been approaching ARP ESSER funding. ARP ESSER funds were provided to SEAs and LEAs to help address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on students and safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools. Agencies have used these funds for teaching and learning support (such as instructional coaches) and health

safety measures (such as COVID-19 testing and improved building ventilation). SEAs are working with LEAs to account for how these funds have been spent. Agencies are preparing for the "fiscal cliff" once these funding sources have been exhausted. The Census Bureau's Annual Survey of School System Finances (F-33) started collecting and will serve as the central source of COVID-19 funding data.

NESAC Committee Business

2023 Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Data Summit Report

Susan Williams, Virginia Department of Education, attended the PDE Data Summit on behalf of the Forum. She delivered two presentations: one on Forum resources and the other focusing on *Using Education Indicators: A Forum Guide for State and Local Education Agencies* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2022132.asp). Many of the sessions at the PDE Data Summit granted credit toward the ongoing professional education requirements that all Pennsylvania public school certified educators must obtain, which depressed turnout at the Forum presentations. Nonetheless, Susan noted that those who attended had a general interest in SCED. Furthermore, the keynote presentations were interesting and relevant to the Forum's work.

Steering Committee Business/Report

Cheryl reported that the Steering Committee discussed the joint sessions and meetings of the Forum's three standing committees. The Steering Committee approved a slate of nominated Forum and Committee officers, which will be voted upon by the full Forum during the Closing Session.

Disseminating Forum Resources Discussion

Cheryl and Adrian facilitated a discussion on ways the Forum and its members can improve the dissemination of Forum resources.

- Forum members have two basic responsibilities:
    - Share their perspectives and expertise with the Forum.
    - Share Forum resources with their colleagues and networks.
- Members use different strategies to disseminate Forum resources, including sharing resources or open webinar invitations via state and local email lists.
- Members discussed several supplementary resources that currently are available on the Forum website:
    - A Forum Resources slide deck with talking points is available on the Outreach Toolkit at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/ppt/Forum_Resources_Presentation_2022_508.pptx.
    - Most Forum publications have several supplemental resources posted to their publication pages, available through https://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp. For example, the *Forum Guide to Metadata* publication page (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2022132.asp) includes
        - a PDF of the guide;
        - supplementary files of the case studies, glossary, and infographic; and
        - presentation files, including a slide deck and a one-page overview.
- Members suggested several potential methods to improve the dissemination of Forum resources:

    - a one-page handout with case statements on all publications;
    - a one-page handout to help readers apply best practices in their agencies;
    - a one-page handout or webinar to introduce Forum members to the resources available on the Forum website;
    - short, 1-2 minute videos for each publication;
    - a more granular search function on the Forum publications page; and
    - online courses that can be used for training staff.

Meeting Review/Future Planning

Cheryl thanked members for their participation and led a review of the meeting and discussion of plans for future NESAC meetings. In turn, members shared their appreciation of Cheryl's and Adrian's meeting facilitation, which developed a culture of high engagement and camaraderie:

- Instead of sitting at the head table, Cheryl and Adrian walked throughout the room to connect with and engage members at each table.
- Cheryl encouraged members to move to a different table for each session, which allowed members to hold discussions with new people each day.
- Most of the agenda items were discussed first in small tabletop groups, with key points and takeaways from the tabletop discussions reported to the whole committee. This allowed every member the opportunity to share their perspective and engage in the discussion.
- Timekeeping was essential, especially the 2-minute time limit for each tabletop report to the whole committee. This helped members stay on task and ensured everyone had a chance to speak.
- Icebreakers such as the following at the start of each session were well received:
    - Get to know someone in the room wearing similar shoes.
    - What was the best part of your day yesterday?
    - Share one word to describe NESAC.

Members shared the following topics for future NESAC meetings, expressing interest in webinars and virtual meetings to continue their discussions:

- AI integration and operationalization in SEAs and LEAs
- Census block data analysis
- Data collection modernization
- Data science training (in EPPs and agencies) for teachers
- How federal standards may change in the years ahead
- Shifting from learning to read, then reading to learn in grades 3 and 4
- School and student engagement indicators
- Using SCED to identify and fill teacher shortages