

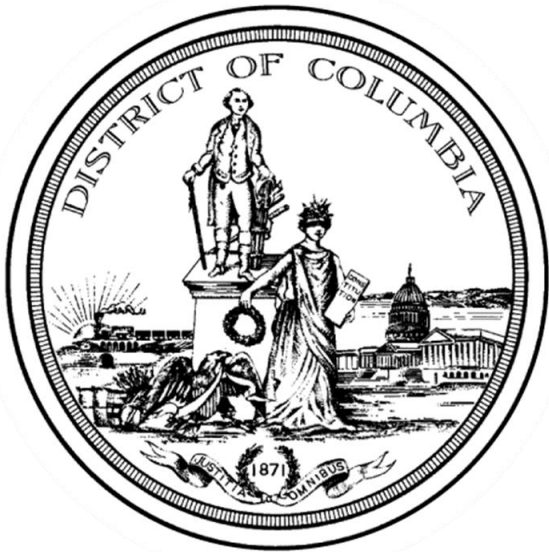
A hand holding a blue pen is the central focus of the image. The background is a blurred classroom with a whiteboard and a person in the distance. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Measuring What Matters: **More and Better Data Needed to Improve DC Public Schools**

A Briefing on the Report by Data Ethics LLC
for the Office of the D.C. Auditor

March 10, 2021

Photo credit: Johannes Arlt/laif/Redux



The Office of the District of Columbia Auditor's (ODCA) mission is to support the Council of the District of Columbia by making sound recommendations that improve the economy, efficiency, and accountability of the District government.



The Data Ethics Team includes a dynamic group of professionals with subject matter expertise in content development, data analytics and governance, data mining, data visualization, defense contract organizational and analytic solutions, educational accountability, educational law, economics, Lean Six Sigma, media-based instruction, and privacy.

On today's call...

- All lines are muted
- Our session is being recorded and link will be available immediately following the webinar
- Please use the 'Q&A' button to ask your question(s)
- Copies of the report have been emailed to all registrants

SPEAKERS

- Kathleen Patterson, DC Auditor
- Hon. Mary M. Cheh, Councilmember, Ward 3
- Erin Roth, Director of Education Research, ODCA
- Brandan Keaveny, Ed.D., Founder and Principal, Data Ethics LLC
- Dorothyjean Cratty, Principal Investigator, Data Ethics LLC
- Hon. Robert C. White, Jr., Councilmember, At-Large

A hand holding a blue pen is the central focus of the image. The hand is raised, and the pen is held between the thumb and index finger. The background is a blurred office or meeting room with people and desks.

WELCOME

Kathleen Patterson
DC Auditor

About the Audit

- **2015** – Publication of the National Research Council report, An Evaluation of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia recommending comprehensive, usable, accessible education data.
- **December 2018** – Council enacts The District of Columbia Education Research Practice Partnership Establishment and Audit Act of 2018 with requirement for education data audit.
- In **March 2019**, the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) signed a contract with Data Ethics LLC to conduct an audit of public education data as recommended in the 2015 National Research Council report and as required by the RPP Act.



REMARKS

Hon. Mary M. Cheh
Councilmember, Ward 3

"... as was suspected, the Auditor's report has uncovered that the District is not following the established best practices around data quality. We cannot provide appropriate services and supports for our students until we address this data problem—and the need is more urgent than ever."

Hon. Mary M. Cheh, Councilmember, Ward 3

Sponsor, D.C. Education Research Practice Partnership Establishment and Audit Act of 2018

REMARKS

Kathleen Patterson

DC Auditor

Topline Findings

- The District of Columbia does not have a Statewide Longitudinal Data System despite \$10M federal and \$25M District funding.

The US Department of Education defines such a system as one that *“collects and maintains detailed, high quality, student and staff-level data that are linked across entities and over time, providing a complete academic and performance history for each student.”*

Topline Findings

- Limited ability to effectively assess and address learning loss post-COVID.
- Limited ability to accurately assess and address racial equity issues across public schools.
- Ongoing concern with validity of data in publications including school report cards.
- Risk of compliance challenges with federal data submissions.

Figure 1.7: Current District SLDS Standard Data Element Collections and System Capabilities

Topline Findings

- The District's State Education Agency – the Office of the State Superintendent of Education – has not fulfilled its mandate as a STATE education agency by choosing not to collect critical data from all our schools in order to fulfill the requirements of an SLDS.

SLDS Standard Data Element Groups	Data Collection	Elements Required	Consistent Definition	Complete Coverage	Longitudinal ID	Quality Assurance	Access and Analysis
Student demographics	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	P
Student special programs (IEP, ELL, etc.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P
Student assessments (PARCC, SAT, etc.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P
Student enrollment: school (entry and exit)	Y	N	Y	P	Y	P	P
Student enrollment: school program type	P	P	N	P	P	P	P
Student attendance	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	P
Student discipline	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	P
Student supports (i.e., school climate surveys)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Student courses	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Student-Teacher links	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Teacher/Staff FTE, role, school	Y	N	N	N	P	N	P
Teacher demographics	Y	N	P	N	N	N	P
Teacher qualifications	Y	N	N	N	N	N	P
Teacher personnel (mobility, salary, etc.)	P	N	P	N	N	N	P
Data beyond enrollment for PreK, CTE, Adult Ed.	P	P	Y	P	P	P	P
Postsecondary data	P	P	Y	N	P	P	P
Workforce data	P	P	Y	N	P	P	P
Other sector data (direct certifications etc.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P



RESEARCHER'S REMARKS

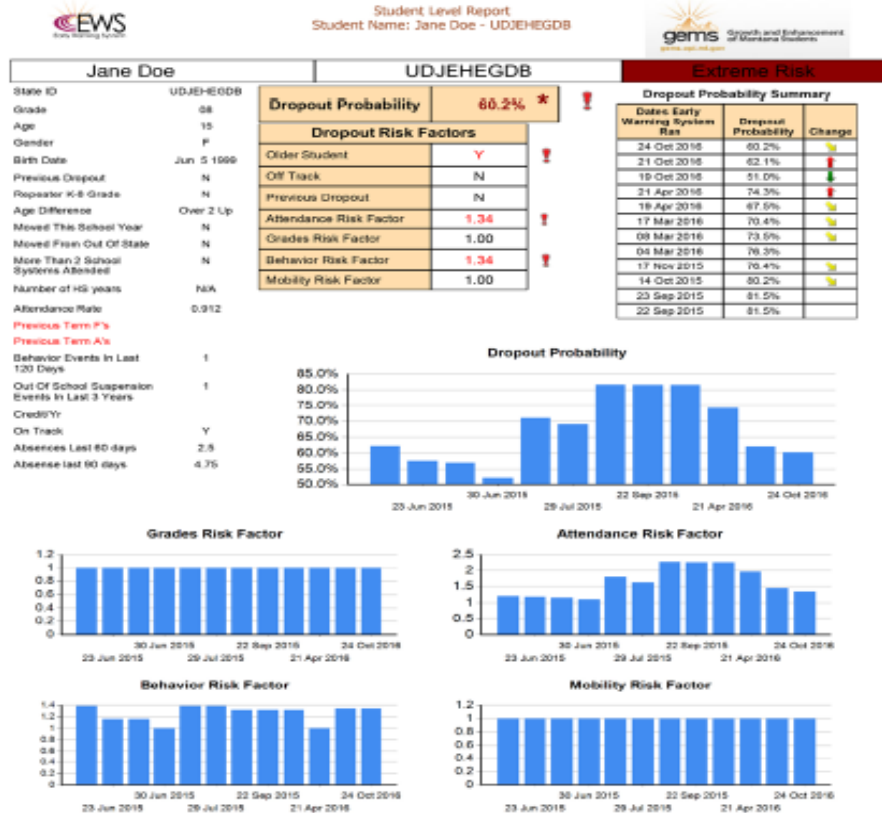
Erin Roth

Director of Education Research, ODCA

Why It Matters

How do other states with robust statewide longitudinal data systems currently use and share data?

Do educators in Montana have access to a dashboard showing which students are on track to graduate?



YES! Montana is one of many states that has an “early warning system” that monitors student attendance, grades, behavior, and mobility over time so educators can proactively intervene to provide resources and support for students to stay on track for high school graduation.

The image here is of Montana’s early warning system, but there are many more as these systems were part of most state’s applications for data system funding to the federal government, including in the District.

Do educators in D.C. have the same access to evidence on students' pathways to graduation across the District?



No.

In the District, we don't track and monitor students over time at the jurisdiction level as most states do. In addition, we do not yet collect the needed course and credit data to create an early warning system following best practice examples.

Can Arkansas track teacher diversity, experience, retention and licensure types for all teachers over time?

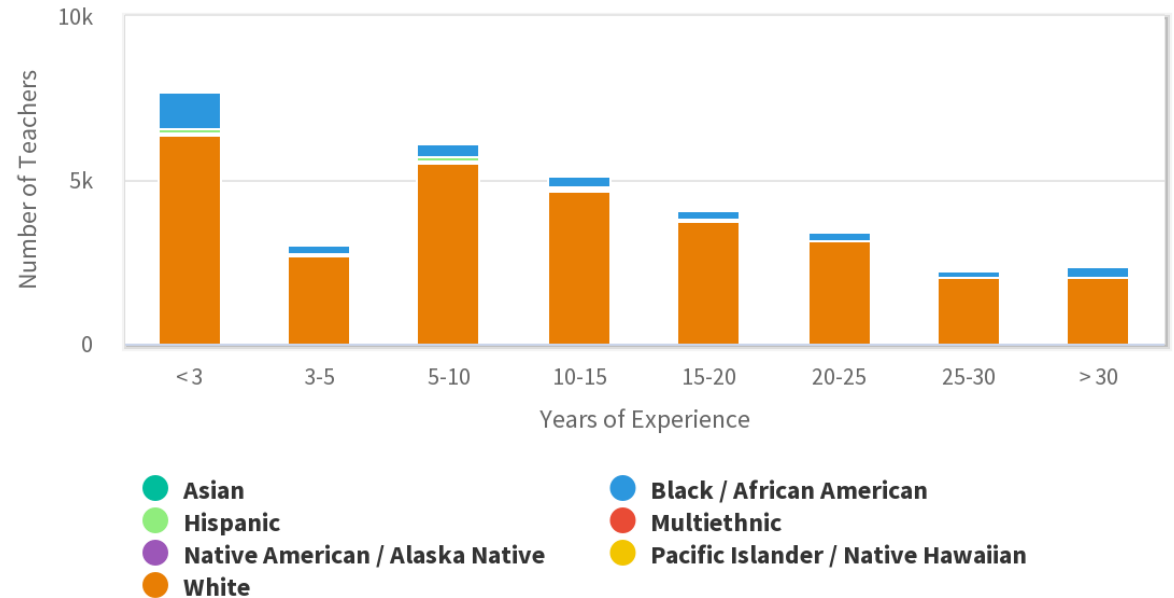


YES!

This image shows how Arkansas uses statewide data to examine teacher experience by race/ethnicity.

Arkansas can also track these metrics by school to assess the equitable distribution of teachers across schools.

Experience by Teacher Subpopulation - 2020



Source: Statewide Information System

Can school leaders, policymakers, and parents in Washington, D.C., track educator diversity, experience, retention and more across all schools?



No.

In D.C. we do not have a complete and publicly reported collection of teacher demographic information, experience, retention, and importantly we have no links between students and teachers across the whole District.

That's right, we don't know who's teaching who.

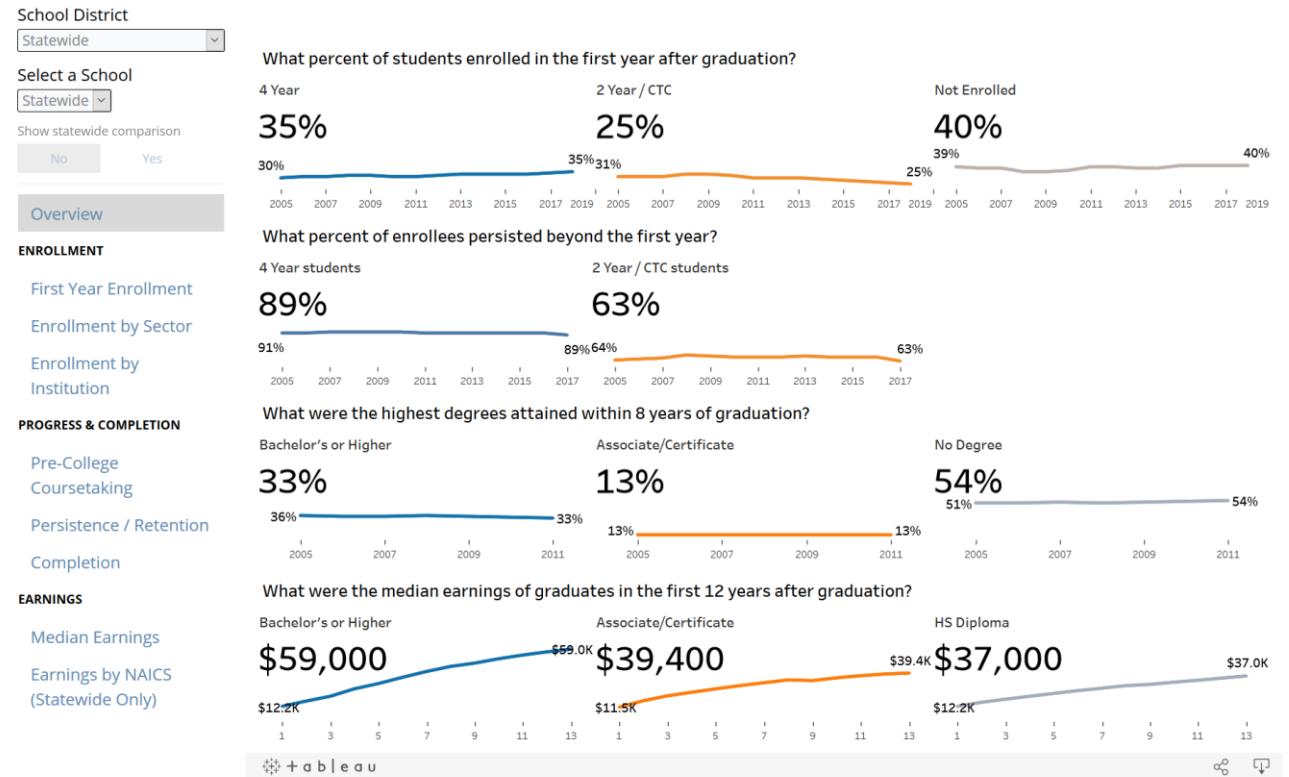
And we can't assess the equitable distribution of educators across wards, schools, students, or courses.

Can educators and policymakers in Washington state follow postsecondary and earnings outcomes for all high school graduates?



Yes.

Washington education stakeholders can see which students enrolled in college, how many stayed in college beyond the first year, what were the highest degrees the students attained, and their median earnings after graduation, by school or for the whole state.



Can educators and policymakers in Washington, D.C. follow postsecondary outcomes for all high school graduates?



No.

In the District, we don't link workforce outcomes or postsecondary persistence and graduation outcomes to all public high school graduates so we cannot look at trends and patterns in employment after high school.

Why It Matters

- Real life impacts for schools, teachers, and students with better data.
 - Schools and teachers have access to both future and past data to help guide and adjust instruction.
 - This real-life impact is because schools and teachers are empowered with the data they need, when they need it.

Why It Matters

- Local education agencies and schools need more from their state education agency, they cannot do this work alone.
 - Only the state education agency has both the past and future data for all students needed to provide actionable data to schools, this is especially true for our most vulnerable, highly mobile students.
 - A strong early warning system cannot be created by local education agencies alone.

Why It Matters

- Having robust data is even more important in a time of crisis.
 - To meet the needs of returning students, the District needs data that is detailed, valid, longitudinal, and statewide. Teachers, administrators, and counselors need data on each student to plan supports. They need accurate data going back as many grades as possible—that is, they need complete and valid longitudinal data.
 - While better data and tools are needed, existing data collections have been disrupted. Other states are relying on coursework, credit, climate surveys, and predictive tools to help ensure students stay on track and schools are prepared to meet student need.

Why It Matters

Better data and data use that is being relied on heavily elsewhere right now, needs to be established in DC.

Even while the data is limited, to date, it could be invested in right away to stand up as much of this capacity as possible immediately while committing to creating a robust SLDS system going forward.



RESEARCHER'S REMARKS

Brandan Keaveny, Ed.D.

Founder and Principal, Data Ethics LLC

The Path Forward

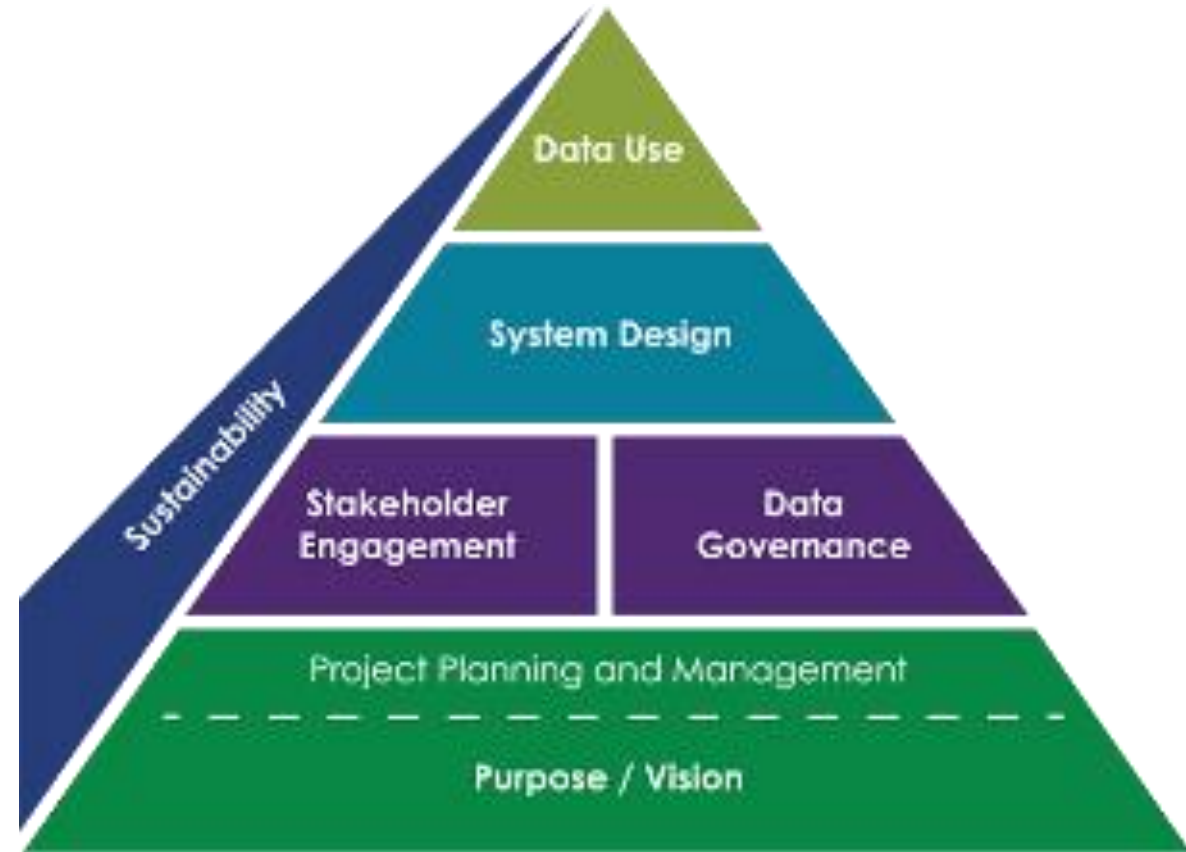
- The District needs a Statewide Student Information System.
 - Centralized collection mechanism.
 - Common definitions, protocols, and processes.

The Path Forward

- Need to meet federal requirements and best practices for data elements and system capacities.
 - Complete data.
 - Longitudinal, portable, interoperable.

The Path Forward

- Data governance and stakeholder engagement are key levers for improvement.



The Path Forward

- Public governance, or stakeholder engagement embedded in data governance is key.
- True engagement — listening and adjusting — enables a culture shift from data for compliance to data for evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.
- Engagement should be broad, diverse, transparent, and consistent to collaborate with school communities.

RESEARCHER'S REMARKS

Dorothyjean Cratty

Principal Investigator, Data Ethics LLC

Data Use

- About **four percent** of K-12 students experienced midyear transfers.
 - **65 percent** occur AFTER count day.
 - **28 percent** of these are cross-sector transfers from public charter schools to DCPS, while only four percent are transfers out of DCPS.
- Another **10 percent** of K-12 students experience transfers between school years.

Data Use

- Midyear transfers result in students being transferred to schools with substantially lower school neighborhood household income levels.
- All transfers disproportionately occur for Black students, students with disabilities or students considered at-risk.

Data Use

- Test scores are highly correlated with school neighborhood income measures.
- Conversely, student test score GROWTH is uncorrelated with school neighborhood income measures.
- These findings highlight the importance of studying test score GROWTH for students and schools, rather than simply inferring progress from test score levels.

Data Use

- When we study growth relative to the school transfers, we find on average, students' own test score growth is several points lower when they experience a midyear school transfer.

Each of these findings calls out for more, and deeper analysis to see why and how we should react with policy and practice.

Data Use

- High school students transferred out of public charter schools into DCPS high schools had higher instances of unexcused absences and out of school suspensions.
- Between 9th grade in 2013 and their four-year graduation in 2016, 29 percent of the public charter high school cohort were transferred to DCPS schools, and by 2018 this transfer percentage rose to 45% of the charter sector cohort.

Data Use

- High school graduation and college enrollment rates are much higher for students remaining in public charter high schools than those transferred out, highlighting the need to study these issues for achievement and equity implications.

Data Use

- What we learned above all in the data briefs is the need for more, better analysis with improved data collections and uses.
- Better analysis is only possible with robust data systems and governance. Limited data collections will always lead to limited data uses.
- Conversely, increased data use can be an important driver of better data collection.



CLOSING REMARKS

Hon. Robert C. White, Jr.
Councilmember, At-Large

“Without the data to measure student progress, it is impossible to fix the deep opportunity divide for our students...My hope is that this report spurs our collective action to collect that right data on students, and to respond to the data in front of us on schools. Without the right data, we are guessing our way forward. We can do better than that.”

The Hon. Robert C. White, Councilmember At-Large

Co-sponsor of the D.C. Education Research Practice Partnership
Establishment and Audit Act of 2018

Questions?

Please use the 'Q&A' button to ask your question

Thank you.

About ODCA

The mission of the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) is to support the Council of the District of Columbia by making sound recommendations that improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the District government.

To fulfill our mission, we conduct performance audits, non-audit reviews, and revenue certifications. The residents of the District of Columbia are one of our primary customers and we strive to keep the residents of the District of Columbia informed on how their government is operating and how their tax money is being spent.