Integrating a College Going Measure into District Data Overviews

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Introduction

I joined the Delaware Department of Education's (DDOE) Race to the Top Delivery Unit in December, 2010. Since then I have worked on developing a data overview that tracks progress on state and local education agency (LEA) Race to the Top measures and that complements DDOE's district-performance management routines. The data overviews have become central to those routines. The data overviews are the basis for evaluating district performance on a range of student achievement measures, with emphasis on student achievement on the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) tests taken by students statewide in grades 3-10. The data overviews were originally conceived of as web-based; however, the final product is excel-based, and thus able to be managed and generated by one member of the three-person DDOE Delivery Unit team. In addition, the Delivery Unit has changed its terminology for the data overviews – originally called "dashboards" – and recently switched to the term "data overview" in response to remarks that the term "dashboard" is overused and conflicts with DDOE's longitudinal data system project – the Education Insight Portals – currently in development. As the development of the Education Insight Portals has progressed, the Delivery Unit has aligned its metrics with those being used in the portals to benchmark student performance against district- and school-level performance.

As part of Race to the Top, DDOE set ambitious targets for key performance measures, and asked LEAs to set their own targets for those measures known as Common Measures. The measures and targets were to be used for the internal assessment of performance only, and as such were distinct from the ESEA flexibility plan, which deals with statewide accountability. There were several issues that required resolution related to Race to the Top measures:

1) Several key measures were not included in DDOE's original Race to the Top student achievement measures (e.g. science proficiency);

2) Some measures had unclear calculations (e.g. the methodology for measuring achievement gaps);

3) Some measures lacked targets (e.g. interim NAEP goals);

4) There was no guidance regarding how state targets should translate into LEA targets, but there was consensus that performance management would not be effective if each LEA's Race to the Top performance were to be measured against the statewide targets alone.

The Delaware Secretary of Education convened a workgroup to provide concrete recommendations related to each of these four items.

The first and third issues, (i.e. key measures not specifically linked to Race to the Top and achievement gaps) were addressed by adding them to round out the original core of Race to the Top measures written into Delaware's federal grant application. These additions included science proficiency, social studies proficiency, and advanced-level proficiency in reading and math (as a proxy for NAEP). The workgroup decided that subgroup achievement gaps would be measured by looking at subgroup proficiency by subject and grade band representing elementary, middle and high school, grades 3-5, grades 6-8 and grades 9-10, respectively. Addressing the second issue, creating clearer calculations, the workgroup decided the performance expectation would be that all key measures mirror the statewide goal of reducing the percentage of students who are not proficient on DCAS by 50% by 2014-15 across subjects, grade bands, and subgroups. Each LEA received DDOE calculations for their targets in early 2012 based on the 50% reduction goal, although targets may be calculated by the district immediately. This facilitated more realistic targets than those previously submitted by LEAs which were based on

100% proficiency by 2014. The Delivery Unit assessed progress toward the targets as part of

LEA Performance Evaluations conducted at mid-year and the end of the 2011-12 school year.

The Performance Evaluation Data Overviews took shape around the resolution of these key

issues and 59 clear student achievement measures and corresponding targets. Additional student

advancement and district-specific measures were incorporated as they emerged.

Performance Evaluation Data Overviews

The data overviews were the primary focus of the district performance evaluations

conducted by the DDOE Delivery Unit. The data overviews provide a picture of districts'

performance against their Race to the Top goals, key state performance measures, and district-

specific performance measures. Fifty nine of the measures used on the data overviews

represented student achievement on the DCAS at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

The mid-year version of the data overviews included "Advancement" measures, (e.g. high school

graduation and college enrollment and retention measures), and "Additional" measures (e.g.

college and career readiness measures and measures concerning the lowest and highest DCAS

proficiency levels). Specifically, "Advancement" and "Additional" measures included the

following:

- High school graduation rate for the class of 2011
- Statewide high school dropout rate for 2011
- Percent of graduates who entered higher education within one year of graduation from high school
- Percent of those who entered higher education who re-enrolled one year from their initial year of enrollment
- Percent of 10th graders who met or exceeded the PSAT college readiness benchmark (2011-2012 school year)
- Percent of 11th graders who met or exceeded the SAT college readiness benchmark (2010-2011 school year)

- Percent of 11th and 12th graders who took an AP exam and scored a three or higher on an AP exam (2010-2011 school year)
- Percent of Career and Technical Education (CTE) concentrators who graduated in 2011 and the percent who entered post-secondary education or job placement
- Percent of teacher evaluations completed and percent of teachers on "improvement plans"

During the mid-year performance evaluations held in February 2012, all state assessment data was formative and marked progress toward LEA's Race to the Top goals, which DDOE began tracking in spring of 2012. The February performance evaluations were conducted with 12 of 19 Delaware districts; all 19 Delaware districts had performance evaluations in June. In preparation for each performance evaluation, data overviews were reviewed by a team of DDOE Delivery Unit employees and others with the objective of summarizing the data overviews into three or four Performance Strengths, three or four Opportunities to Strengthen Performance and up to four Additional Relevant Trends/Data Points. Districts were provided the information in advance of their conversations with DDOE about the data along with programmatic highlights from their Race to the Top plans.

The objective of the performance evaluation meetings with LEAs was to discuss the Delivery Unit's assessment of district data overviews and to highlight performance successes as well as identify opportunities for improvement. Their purpose was to agree on the opportunities to improve before final Race to the Top funding decisions were made in June. Performance evaluations were conducted with districts one or two times per year, depending on the size of their grant and their student achievement performance measures. The culmination of the performance evaluation was a conversational meeting between the U.S. Secretary of Education, U.S. Deputy Secretary, U.S. Chief Performance Officer, the DDOE District Liaison, and district staff, including the Chief School Officer, LEA Board of Education representative, teacher

representative, Race to the Top Manager and others as selected by the Chief School Officer. For the first year of performance evaluations, conversations focused on 1) initial thoughts for what is driving the district's strengths and challenges; 2) how the district would dig deeper to really understand what is going on, and 3) how the district would replicate strengths and address challenges. At the performance evaluation meetings DDOE learned that most districts had already begun to drill down into their data at the school and grade-level. Most districts had clear hypotheses for the drivers of their strengths. Across many districts, effective PLCs, Race to the Top-funded specialists, and extended-learning time programs were cited as drivers of district strengths. Most districts felt that further analysis was needed to understand the root causes of their challenges. "Initiative overload" was sometimes cited as a potential cause for district challenges.
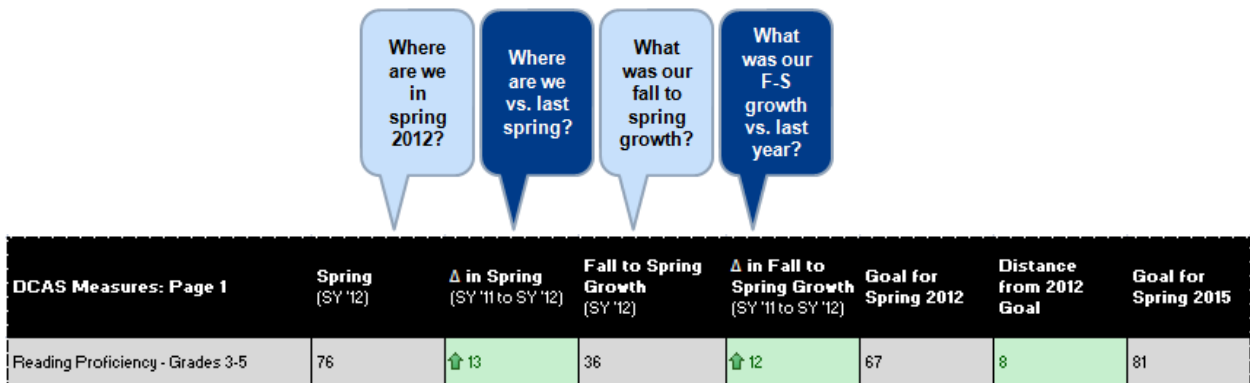
Figure 1: Guide to Understanding the Data Overviews and Their Use in District Performance Routines

Mid-Year Performance Evaluation Layout
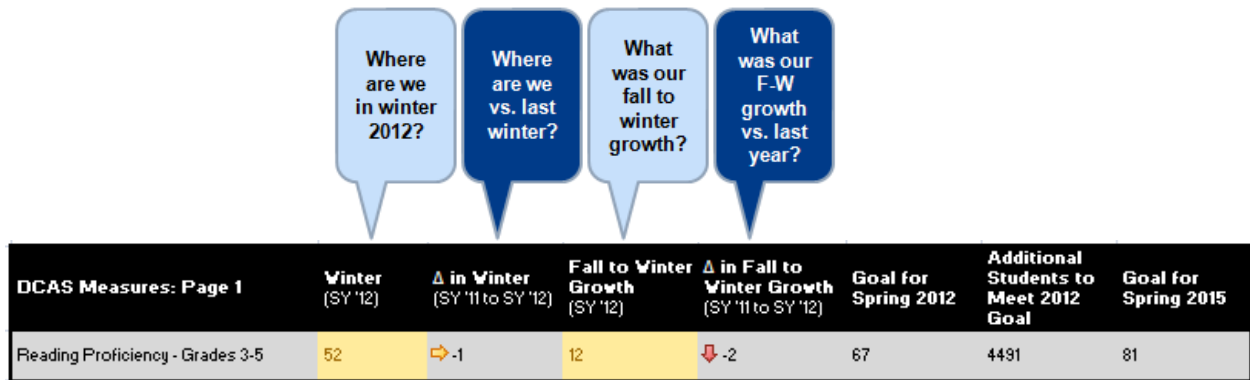
End of Year Performance Evaluation Layout

Each of the 12 districts with scheduled performance evaluations in February and all 19 districts in June received an overview with the following components:

- Plan highlights *(from the Race to the Top plan submitted in June, 2011)*
- Progress review strengths *(from on-site progress reviews conducted in Spring, 2012)*
- Performance strengths *(from the data overview generated in June, 2012)*
- Opportunities to strengthen performance *(from the data overview generated in June, 2012)*
- Additional relevant trends/data points *(from the data overview generated in February, 2012)*

Strategic Data Project Influence and Contributions

SDP's emphasis of the indicator "The High School Effect on College-Going" influenced me to become a strong advocate for including a college-going measure in the mid-year data overviews. The use of the indicator in the SDP Data Diagnostics and numerous topical presentations on the subject helped shape my thinking around the ways we could use the data we were already collecting to tell a better story on how student achievement was impacting opportunities for postsecondary education for graduates of Delaware's high schools. With the assistance of Delaware's SDP faculty advisor, Dr. Bruce Sacerdote, I was able to include a basic benchmark for college enrollment and retention in the mid-year performance overviews, but more importantly the groundwork has been laid for deeper analysis of this indicator for future iterations. Our first mid-year data overviews nearly didn't include a college-going indicator due to time constraints. The technician who owned the data warehouse resource that stored Delaware's National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) records left DDOE before the mid-year data overviews could be completed. This development left me on my own to analyze the data if I wanted to include it. Dr. Sacerdote, who has an interest in this area and has done much research on the topic, told me that STATA would be able to quickly roll up the Clearinghouse data the way I needed it and most importantly, felt confident that he could tutor me in time to include college enrollment and first-year retention rates on the data overviews. Over a period of several weeks, Dr. Sacerdote provided one-on-one tutoring for me over the phone until I was proficient enough to complete the task independently. The figures below illustrate how the data were used on the districts' mid-year data overviews.

Figure 2: College Enrollment Rate

Brandywine: Page 6	Class of 2009	Class of 2010	Δ from SY '09 to SY '10	Δ from SY '07 to SY '10	Goal for Class of 2011	Additional Students to Meet 2011 Goal*	Goal for Class of 2014
College Enrollment Rate – All Students	70%	67%	⬇ -2.3%	⬆ 3.4%	70%	23	80%

Figure 3: College Retention Rate

Brandywine: Page 7	Class of 2009	Class of 2010	Δ from '09 to '10	Δ from '07 to '10	Goal for Class of 2011	Additional Students to Meet 2011 Goal*	Goal for Class of 2014
College Retention Rate – All Students	82%						

        The data were impactful enough to devote a March 2011 Delaware district "Chiefs Meeting" to the topic of student advancement measures and statewide data on college enrollment rates. College retention rates were presented and framed around supporting data such as AP Course participation and the statewide SAT initiative. I look forward to continuing work in this area, including making stronger links between college enrollment and retention and high school factors (e.g. college and career readiness indicators) and student achievement data.