

south dakota

STARS

Student Teacher Accountability and Reporting System

connections

## US Ed annual notice to LEAs

The U.S. Department of Education Family Privacy Compliance Office has released its Annual Notification to Local Education Agencies regarding their responsibilities under both the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment. It is available at [www.ed.gov/fpco](http://www.ed.gov/fpco).

This notification explains that LEAs must annually inform parents and students age 18 and older of their rights under FERPA. A model FERPA notification for LEAs is available on FPCO's website.

Another annual requirement of LEAs is to inform parents and students age 18 and older of the directory information policy. A model directory information notice is also available on the FPCO website.

FPCO invites districts to review these documents and other helpful resources on their website. You can subscribe to the email listserv of the FPCO by going to <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/subscriber/new> and selecting "FPCO/LEA and SEA".

## Best practices and ideas for using SD-STARS

Assessments, grades, attendance, behavior... Educators analyze many types of data to inform their practices. SD-STARS can help. Below, we highlight a few best practices and ideas for using data within SD-STARS.

Every day, students come and go from districts. It is urgent that educators get the information they need to best serve these students. In SD-STARS, the data are updated nightly and follow the student. Because of this, educators need not experience delays in retrieving student information.

Educators have many demands on their time. They need data in easy-to-access, easy-to-read reports. The user-friendly reports in SD-STARS provide detailed longitudinal information on student achievement, attendance and enrollment. For example, the **Achievement Cut Score** report helps teachers identify students who were one or two correct answers away from being proficient on the state assessment. The **Student Longitudinal Achievement** report allows the user to see multiple years of state assessment data for a student, to help spot trends. The data help educators identify struggling students as quickly as possible, so those students can receive targeted supports. With the inclusion of DIBELS and aimsweb next year, SD-STARS will provide even more timely assessment information.

Each student has unique skills and needs. To help educators focus on a particular student, SD-STARS has the **Student Profile Report**. This report allows a teacher to look at a student's "big picture." Users can compare the student's annual state assessment scores to absentee rate. Educators can also look at enrollment history to spot highly mobile students and see what impact mobility has had on their performance or attendance. Having all this information together in one place saves teachers time. The Student Profile Report is a great report to share at parent-teacher conferences.

With so much data available, it might seem difficult to figure out where to begin. Educators can start small by visiting SD-STARS frequently, spending short amounts of time looking at the data. This can help break down a big task into more manageable chunks. For example, a teacher could take five minutes a day to review the **Student Profile Report** for one of their students.

SD-STARS is here to serve the needs of districts. **Report Data Interpretation Guides** (DIGs) provide breakdowns of the data found within reports. A series of video tutorials takes users through the Accountability Report Card found in SD-STARS. SD-STARS also works with districts to create new reports. In fact, some reports designed by districts are available now. Others should be available in coming months.





## About Us:

South Dakota STARS Connections is a bi-monthly publication for South Dakota administrators and teachers, produced by the South Dakota Department of Education. This publication is intended to communicate news and events regarding the South Dakota Student Teacher Accountability and Reporting System (SD-STARS), our Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

To view an online edition of this newsletter, go to [doe.sd.gov/publications.aspx](http://doe.sd.gov/publications.aspx).

Email story ideas or questions to [sara.kock@state.sd.us](mailto:sara.kock@state.sd.us).

## Chamberlain leadership team uses SD-STARS to identify needs

The Chamberlain School District has long been a leader in the state of South Dakota in creating an active Professional Learning Community and using that collaborative structure to empower staff in making data-based decisions.

With nearly 80 teachers on staff, the district relies on a leadership team to guide data analysis and strategic planning. That team leads the processes of sharing information and collaboratively planning with building level staff, parents and other stakeholders. The team uses data to set school goals, update school improvement plans, determine professional development needs and evaluate programs.

SD-STARS has helped the Chamberlain leadership team more easily evaluate district trends. Data in enrollment and attendance reports in particular help the

team share the “big picture” with staff, school board members and parents. Team members say the Student Profile Report is becoming more valuable when planning for individual student needs, and the team is looking forward to having more assessment data available in SD-STARS. The team also uses the Accountability Report Card available in SD-STARS.

In addition to the leadership team, Chamberlain’s data retreat teams and some teachers have also been trained in SD-STARS. The plan is to continue training more staff, focusing on teachers in core content areas. Training typically begins with using the reports.

Chamberlain has embraced SD-STARS and eagerly anticipates the continued growth of this tool.

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## Herreid School Board sees the potential for SD-STARS

The Herreid School Board recently closed their monthly meeting with a stop in SD-STARS, South Dakota’s longitudinal data system. They were given a brief tour of the homepage as well as a description of the contents in each tab. The board liked that SD-STARS provides educators with comprehensive information. “It is nice for teachers to be able to use this site for such varying information,” said one board member. Board members were also impressed with the system’s ability to generate current and almost immediate student reports.

Reports discussed included the D-STEP Strand Report, the Achievement Cut Score Report and the ACT Stoplight Report. The school board felt the data shown in the ACT report in particular, would help teachers see how prepared their students are for this test and what they might be able to do to improve student scores. One board member said, “The results of the ACT test could provide a segue for teachers and guidance counselors to discuss appropriate post-grad plans for students.”



## Bennett County saves time using SD-STARS

Bennett County School District has been utilizing SD-STARS since 2012 when it signed on as a pilot site for the initiative. In doing so, the district hoped to achieve several goals:

- Streamline data gathering
- Train staff in data use
- Achieve more frequent data use among classroom teachers
- Reduce the number of hard copy data reports

Data sources frequently used by the district include DIBELS, aimsweb, Dakota STEP and other assessment results; attendance reports; parent, staff and student surveys. While staff members didn't have much difficulty

running reports prior to SD-STARS, compiling the various reports and preparing for data retreats was a significant challenge. With SD-STARS, the district enjoys having more data in one place, without the need for so many paper reports and subsequent shredding.

The district participated in both online and face-to-face training on the use of the SD-STARS system. Currently, the district utilizes the system in a variety of ways, centered around data review and retrieval. As in many other districts, Bennett County staff looks forward to having more local data in the system. This

will make the system more useful to classroom teachers.

"When more of the local data are added to the portal, we will no longer have to make paper copies or use a SmartBoard to view multiple pieces of data," says an administrator. "Teachers will be able to meet and discuss student needs by pulling up the SD-STARS portal to review that student's relevant data over the years. Data retreats will become the norm for all staff members, as it will be more of an ongoing process, not just three times a year when benchmark data are reviewed."

## Belle Fourche wants SD-STARS to become a one-stop shop for data

Like many school districts, Belle Fourche conducts a data retreat prior to the start of the school year to review student achievement data, looking for trends and setting school improvement goals. In 2012-13, led by Superintendent Dr. Steve Willard and his administrative team, the district agreed to serve as a pilot site for the roll-out of the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (SD-STARS). At that time, not much data were contained in the new system, but district staff began to explore reporting capabilities within the portal.

As more data become available, Belle Fourche is seeing the portal more as a one-stop shop for student information. Previously, district staff might have pulled data from five or more separate reports, websites or other sources to set realistic and rigorous goals for student achievement during a data retreat. Now, instead of spending hours or days to collect and distribute data from multiple sources, SD-STARS can provide the information that guides school improvement processes.

Administrators believe the use of SD-STARS will increase, especially with the inclusion of local assessments like DIBELS. In the future, they also hope to use SD-STARS to identify gap and non-gap student achievement; analyze attendance information; create building and district level reports to analyze student performance; and gather multiple sources of data in one place.



# National STARS: Georgia

Administrators and teachers in Georgia understand the importance of collecting and using quality data to transform their education system and improve every student's achievement. Key in this effort is Georgia's Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

Administrators like having data in one location. In the past, administrators often had to go back to a student's permanent paper record to look at test scores and attendance history or visit multiple online portals to gather the data and see

the full picture. Often they would find reports were incomplete for students who transferred into the district. Now, all of the data are housed in the SLDS.

Teachers benefit from looking at trends in their own classroom. One teacher states, "As teachers, we think we do a great job teaching everything, but there may be some things we don't do such a great job on." Using the SLDS, teachers can see class trends. It helps them make informed decisions on student instruction and goal setting.

When special education teachers look at a student's eligibility for services, they are required to gather a great deal of data for Response to Intervention to prove the student qualifies. One teacher commented, "With the SLDS, I can go in and print out reports and just attach it to their eligibility report. And I can also add that information into the IEP." This same teacher also finds the SLDS helpful with transfer students. "I no longer have to wait on the record. I can go ahead and get the data needed so I can begin the services for those students."

## How safe are your data? Jennifer Tschetter, ESA 6

You don't have to look far to find examples of data breaches. Data breaches affect billion-dollar companies, non-profits and government entities. It seems that spending millions of dollars to protect data can still leave the system vulnerable. This begs the question: What are you doing to ensure the safety of your district's student information?

One way to keep your data secure is to control who has access to data. As a part of the SD-STARS grant work over the past 2 1/2 years, many resources have been made available to districts to learn more about what student information can be made available to outside entities and, more importantly, what should not. There are various federal, state and local policies governing data sharing. One important law is FERPA, or the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. This law explicitly describes what student data can be shared and for what purposes.

It is important that districts understand and follow FERPA and other policies when it comes to data confidentiality. These policies can help you answer important questions, like these: Are personal notes from teachers or administrators part of a student's educational record? Are disciplinary reports created by the district security officers a part of a student's educational record? If a student turns 18 while they are still enrolled in high school, do these records transfer to him or her, solely, or can his or her parents or guardians still access these records? If a military recruiter calls and wants the name, address and phone number of each senior student, should the school provide that?

Another way to keep your data secure is to minimize vulnerabilities. Now more than ever, it is essential that districts have a technical security plan for dealing with breaches and protocols in place

for administration, staff and students. Districts often take the time to teach their students what type of personal information they should or should not share online, but it is just as vital that the staff in your district have the same working knowledge about things they need to do to prevent breaches and keep student data confidential.

As you wrap up the final year of ESA support for SD-STARS, take some time to visit the South Dakota Department of Education website ([doe.sd.gov](http://doe.sd.gov)) and talk with your SD-STARS trainers from the ESAs to learn the answers to these and other security questions. Archives of webinars and other resources regarding data security are available on the DOE website and within SD-STARS. After all, preventing a data breach will save your students, their parents and your district much frustration and worry. Just ask Target or Sony!

### ESA DATA STARS

Every ESA has representatives who have been trained in SD-STARS. They are ready and willing to answer your questions. If you don't know your ESA assignment, see <http://doe.sd.gov/octe/sdesa.aspx>.

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