

south dakota

STARS

Student Teacher Accountability and Reporting System

connections

Districts Learning What SD-STARS Has To Offer

During April and May, many districts participated in training sessions led by their ESA. The trainings focused on giving district STARS Account Managers and Data STARS the tools and information needed to navigate and use all areas of SD-STARS.

Key to these professional development sessions was instruction on the reports and dashboards that SD-STARS offers educators. In addition, it was a chance for districts to give feedback on the system.

"I'm glad that the state is switching to a one-stop longitudinal system for accessing important student information and data. I think this will be very effective for teachers, administrators, and state officials as a whole." said Steven Schiltz, Fredrick Area.

"The potential for growth with regards to reports are endless," wrote Nancy Spoolman from Douglas. "I can already visualize reports to show the graduation rate, Fall Enrollment count day statistics, and many more reports specific to a district."

Training on SD-STARS will continue in the upcoming months. If you have not received training on SD-STARS yet, contact your ESA Data STAR.

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Accountability Reports Accessed Through SD-STARS

Although many students are on their summer vacation, SDDOE staff members are busy determining how well students performed for the 2012-13 school year. These determinations are shared with districts, schools, parents, and the public through accountability reports.

SD-STARS is a data warehouse, where data are housed. Data are then analyzed to determine school performance. SD-STARS also provides a secure website, which will be used by key district personnel to view the accountability reports.

One benefit to using SD-STARS is the additional time districts have to review the data. Judy Merriman, administrator of the Office of Data Management said, "By using SD-STARS, districts will be able to preview the accountability results earlier than in prior years. This second set of eyes early on in the process will help districts feel comfortable that the results are accurate." For this year, the preview period is currently scheduled for July 1-12.

Another benefit to using SD-STARS is the ability for districts to interact with the report like a website. In the past, accountability reports were available in Excel or PDF. By using SD-STARS, the reports will offer features such as hyperlinks, colored graphics, hover over, and drill through features.

SDDOE will be presenting at conferences throughout the summer, showing administrators how to navigate the reports. Documentation, and possibly videos,

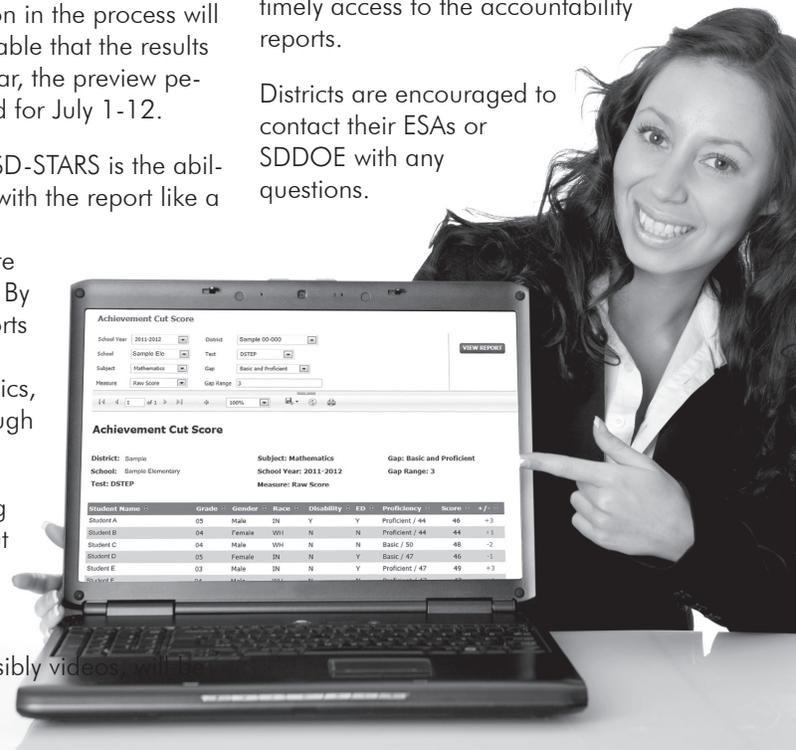
produced to aid districts.

To prepare for accessing accountability reports via SD-STARS, districts need to identify their accountability team, or those individuals who should be able to review the secure reports.

Districts should share these names with the district's STARS Account Manager. The STARS Account Manager will make sure that all members of the accountability team have approved accounts in SD-STARS and are manually assigned the accountability role. Once the reports are ready on July 1, the users with the accountability role will be the only one with access to the accountability reports.

For districts that are not in SD-STARS, the Department will work with them to ensure timely access to the accountability reports.

Districts are encouraged to contact their ESAs or SDDOE with any questions.





About Us:

South Dakota STARS Connections is a bi-monthly publication for South Dakota administrators and teachers and 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.

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Data Courses For Administrators And Teachers

The University of South Dakota (USD) and the South Dakota Department of Education are collaborating on the pilot of a new series of courses for educators. These courses are part of an initiative of SDDOE to educate administrators and teachers on how to use and understand data.

In June, approximately 30 school administrators and counselors will be taking part in the pilot course titled "Using Data to Guide School Improvement."

Kelly Duncan, one of the course designers and a professor at USD stated, "Pilot participants will be required to complete some online preparation, attend a face-to-face training on June 20 in Mitchell, and complete an independent project. Pilot participants will also give feedback on the course to see if it achieved the stated objectives and to help identify strengths and

weaknesses of the course for continual improvement."

The course offers one continuing education credit.

In addition, a pilot course for teachers will be offered in August with the face-to-face meeting on August 8 at Southeast Tech. Titled "Using Data to Guide Instruction," teachers can learn how to use and analyze data for their classroom.

Duncan remarks, "If successful, we hope these courses could be provided throughout the state next year."

To see if there are still available slots for the pilot administrator course, check out <https://aceware.usd.edu/CourseStatus.awp?&course=85840>. If you are interested in the pilot teacher course, keep your eyes open for information to come.

ESA DATA STARS

Representatives from each ESA have been trained in SD-STARS. They are ready and willing to answer your questions. If you don't know your ESA assignment, go to sdesa.k12.sd.us.

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Ask the Experts

The STARS implementation documents note that districts may need a confidentiality policy regarding student data. Is this a requirement by the Department?

When implementing SD-STARS, SDDOE recommends that districts review and communicate their policies on the confidentiality of student data. It is best practice to make sure that your district has a policy, the policy follows both state and federal laws, and staff members have been informed about this policy.

How does SD-STARS use free/reduced lunch status?

To aid in analysis, many reports in SD-STARS provide demographic information for users, including Free/Reduced Lunch Status. In SD-STARS, this is called “economically disadvantaged.” SD-STARS maintains FERPA compliance and meets the requirements laid out in USDA policies. SDDOE understands some districts have policies preventing teachers or other staff from seeing this information. SDDOE is working on a technology solution within SD-STARS that will provide districts the flexibility to determine if this information appears for particular group of users. The timeline for when this solution will be functional is still to be determined.

Will SD-STARS contain behavioral data and how will that be used?

SD-STARS will have behavioral data if housed within Infinite Campus – District Edition. If you have a separate system (ex: SWIS) that stores behavioral data, this information will not be loaded into the SD-STARS.

The primary purpose of having the data in SD-STARS is to deliver it back to districts through reports. For example, administrators or teachers may want to know if students with poor attendance also have behavior or academic concerns. This is so educators can take appropriate action to addressing their learning or social needs.

How is SD-STARS related to Common Core State Standards?

SD-STARS and Common Core State Standards are separate initiatives.

Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, South Dakota’s state assessment will measure student mastery of standards in English-language arts and math (also known as Common Core State Standards). The assessment data will be housed within SD-STARS.

What is SD-STARS used for?

SD-STARS is used by district and school leaders, as well as teachers, to inform decisions about their educational programs. SD-STARS houses important data related to students (eg., attendance, test scores), teachers (eg., certification, teaching assignments), and schools (eg., school calendar, school directory). With this information provided in a single location and with multiple years of data available, educators can see patterns taking shape and make adjustments designed to strengthen the educational experience for students.

The data housed in SD-STARS is used at the state level for holding schools accountable and to meet state and federal reporting requirements.

SD-STARS follows all state and federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Accessing and/or using the data for purposes other than those permitted in federal or state laws is strictly prohibited. Any information that comes from SD-STARS for public consumption (ex: public accountability reports) will be aggregated and meet minimum sample size to protect confidentiality. SD-STARS is not part of any federal database, nor will any information contained within the system be sold.



Power of SLDS: Accountability

There are many kinds of questions that could be answered using data in the South Dakota Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (SD-STARS).

These questions can be asked at multiple levels including: individual students; groups of students; teachers; schools; districts; and programs, policies, and strategies.

Focusing on accountability, some of the questions that, with time and accurate data, could be answered by using SD-STARS include:

- How are specific sub-groups of students in our district or school performing on the statewide assessment over time?
- Knowing how my current students did last year, what might my accountability results look like for this year (forecasting accountability)?
- Which students need additional support to improve student achievement?
- How does my school compare to other schools with similar populations of students?

National STARS: Kentucky

In 2011, ESEA waivers were made available to states who wished to replace federal accountability standards with state specific systems designed to meet state needs. Like South Dakota, Kentucky opted to “build” their own accountability system. This month we will offer some highlights on Kentucky’s accountability system, referred to as “Unbridled Learning” or “Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP).”

Similar to South Dakota, Kentucky unveiled an accountability system that looked at their K-12 landscape in a holistic manner. To do so, Kentucky implemented a new statewide assessment as well as an index for assessing school and district student achievement results. Unlike accountability in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the model in Kentucky considers growth, ACT scores, and other metrics to more fairly assess

how districts are performing. For South Dakota and likely for Kentucky, having a statewide longitudinal data system will be an important tool to accurately calculate these metrics. Anthony Orr, superintendent of Nelson County Board of Education said, “This is a better, more fair accountability system for schools.”

The new system does adhere to new and more rigorous content standards. Many districts have experienced drops in proficiency during the first year of K-PREP. This has not deterred school officials from rising to the challenge. Donna Hargens, Superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools, was quoted as saying, “We have a mountain to climb, but nobody is shying away from the challenge, and we have a plan to get there. You cannot lower expectations.” The hope for K-PREP is to better prepare their students for college and the workforce.

SD-STARS Response To User Needs

SDDOE developed SD-STARS originally as a department initiative to help with reporting needs. When the potential benefits for districts became evident, the project expanded to include district users.

SDDOE then developed an initial set of reports and dashboards for district users. From attendance to withdrawal information to DSTEP scores, these reports offer an initial look into what the system has to offer.

SDDOE knew we were heading in the right direction when, after exploring the initial reports and dashboards in SD-STARS, the pilot districts began to see the possibilities. As other districts joined, similar excitement was heard as districts imagined what SD-STARS could do for them. Districts believe SD-STARS will save them time and also give them the information to make data driven decisions for their classroom, school, or district.

With the potential realized, districts shared how current reports can be improved and ideas

for new reports to come. SDDOE is already taking action. Some changes that are coming include: documentation on how to interpret the ACT report, a more comprehensive student profile, user friendly layout for the DSTEP strand report, and the creation of a mobility report. This of course is in addition to developing the accountability reports, which will be accessed through SD-STARS.

To make sure the system continues to evolve to meet users’ needs, SDDOE and ESAs are working to develop a formal communication plan where feedback from districts can be communicated to the Department and changes to the system can be communicated to the districts.

Although SD-STARS is going to respond to user’s needs, patience will be needed. Just like with road construction, it takes long-term budgeting, lots of planning, and time to smooth over any bumps along the way. But SDDOE is glad districts are along for the ride and believes the destination will be worth the wait.