

south dakota  
**STARS**  
 Student Teacher Accountability and Reporting System  
*connections*

**New federal guidance on data transparency best practices**

Student data are needed to improve educational programs, teaching strategies and student achievement. What data are being collected and how data are used is sometimes confusing to parents and the general public.

The U.S. Department of Education recently released new guidance through its Privacy Technical Assistance Center, urging districts and schools to be proactive in how they communicate with parents and families about the use of student data. It recommends districts provide parents information about what data are collected, what third parties have access to student data and how the data are protected. The guidance also encourages parents to contact the school with any questions or concerns they may have. The document can be found at: <http://ptac.ed.gov/sites/default/files/LEATransparencyBestPracticesfinal.pdf>

The South Dakota Department of Education is also working to address concerns from stakeholders and improve transparency at the state level.

**SD-STARS focuses on building data use**

Think back to when you first learned to drive a car. Did you read about driving laws and regulations? Did you watch a movie about the dangers of driving while intoxicated? Did someone demonstrate how to drive? Chances are you built your knowledge, skills and behaviors before you got behind the wheel.

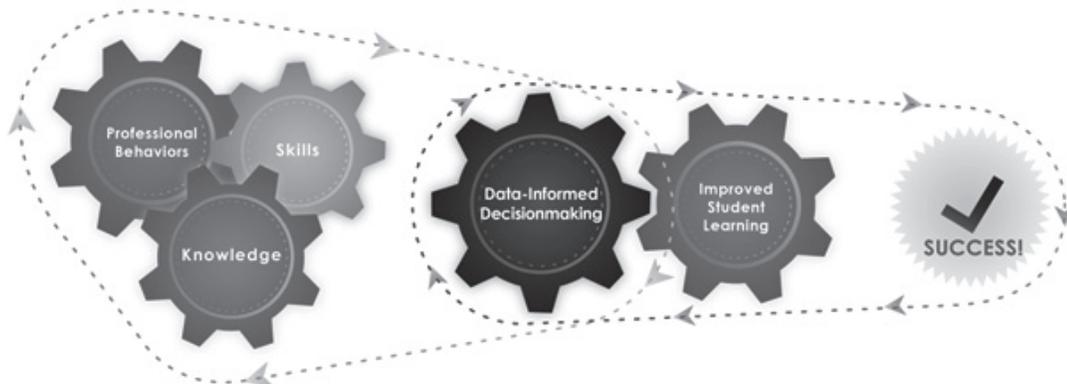
SD-STARS is a system that gives data back to educators in order to “aid in informing instruction and decision-making.” The assumption is that, once educators get the data, they will be able to interpret and act for the benefit of their schools or classrooms. But this will not happen without the necessary knowledge and skills. So, the question becomes, “What do educators need to know and be able to do in order to use data?”

To answer this question, the South Dakota and Hawaii departments of education led a national workgroup of 28 members from 13 states with the purpose of identifying the essential knowledge, skills and professional behaviors educators need to effectively use data. After months of work and consultation

of resources, the workgroup published a first draft of the framework this summer. An online version can be found here: <https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/5204>.

So, what does this mean for South Dakota educators? The department will seek feedback from districts, higher education and the South Dakota Education Data Governance Group. This effort will improve the framework and build an understanding of how it could be useful for different educational purposes. Look for opportunities to provide feedback in the coming year.

The department is also considering incorporating the framework into professional development related to data use. “Embedding concepts found in the data use framework will only strengthen professional development and other department trainings,” said Becky Nelson, director of the department’s Division of Learning and Instruction. “It also helps improve everyone’s understanding, classroom practices and routines that ultimately impact student learning.”



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## 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 [marcus.bevier@state.sd.us](mailto:marcus.bevier@state.sd.us) or [sara.kock@state.sd.us](mailto:sara.kock@state.sd.us).

## Contact Us:



South Dakota  
Department of Education  
800 Governors Drive  
Pierre, SD 57501

Project Managers:  
Marcus Bevier,  
[Marcus.Bevier@state.sd.us](mailto:Marcus.Bevier@state.sd.us)  
(605) 773-8062

Sara Kock,  
[Sara.Kock@state.sd.us](mailto:Sara.Kock@state.sd.us)  
(605) 773-6158

[doe.sd.gov/ofm/lds.aspx](http://doe.sd.gov/ofm/lds.aspx)

# Watch for new STARS reports

The Department of Education is working on 23 new STARS reports requested by state, regional and local educators. Let's highlight a few.

**Student Longitudinal Achievement** – Most reports in SD-STARS look at one year a time, but this report will show student assessment results for multiple years. This report will help educators identify trends in performance and opportunities for re-teaching prior standards to help students grasp current concepts.

**Attendance Tracker** – Instead of looking at a full school year, this report allows the user to look at a student's attendance over a particular period of time.

**Student Assessment and Course Grades** – This report displays student progress over the course of their high school career, providing users a look at course grades, state assessment results and ACT scores.

**Student Profile Enhancements** – Currently, SD-STARS has a Student Profile Report, which provides basic information on a student. To make this report more useful, the Assessment Trend Spotter will be added. This report will compare student's assessment results at the school, district or state levels.

**Special Education Trend** – This report allows administrators to look at Special Education participation over multiple years. Users can break down participation into Special Education indicators, such as primary disability, and by student demographics.

**Assessment Feedback** – This report allows educators to look at the performance of past classes in order to adjust instruction, identify gaps in curriculum and spot trends in performance.

The reports listed above were requested by districts. When a new report is released, the department will notify districts through their ESAs, the STARS Account Manager Listserv and this newsletter.

## Resources for supporting data use

Looking for some resources to help you understand effective data use? This month we highlight a few websites:

### DATA FOR DECISIONS

Data for Decisions is developed by WestEd and includes a Tool & Resources library. Download worksheets detailing how to analyze tables and graphs to create statements about the results. Self-assessments for teachers are also available, including one on instructional practices that help students use their own data. The website also contains glossaries, FAQs and other great items to help you use data effectively. Check out <http://datafordecisions.wested.org/>.

### DATA WISE

Data Wise's website promotes a particular process for classroom and school improvement, but many of the resources can be useful for schools when engaging in conversations on data. One highlight is the

software tutorials that explain how to create different types of charts in Microsoft Excel. Data Wise also offers online courses, at a cost, for the serious data consumer. The site has some nice features for educators and data teams to use when building a plan for data analysis and action. Learn more at <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=datawise>.

### ATTENDANCE WORKS

Attendance Works is a nonprofit organization focused on curbing problems with student attendance. The organization raises awareness about the challenges created by chronic and extended absences. Research articles found on the website explain the impacts of chronic absenteeism on student outcomes. Worksheets for calculating chronic absence, messaging and public relations toolkits, presentations, and parent handouts are available for free. The organization also offers technical assistance to education stakeholders. Find out more at <http://www.attendanceworks.org>



# Ask the Experts

## **I thought SD-STARS was just a data system. Why is it getting involved in data use?**

In order to effectively use data, educators need access to high-quality data and the skills to use it. SD-STARS is meant to provide the former, but the larger project hopes to accomplish both.

South Dakota is not alone in discussing data use. Forty-seven states modified or built their own statewide longitudinal data system like SD-STARS over the last decade, but many are just now becoming aware of the importance of data use. South Dakota has been involved in the national conversation to identify the knowledge, skills and professional behaviors needed to use data. By identifying these competencies, South Dakota can inform teacher preparation programs and develop training opportunities for current teachers.

## **Which test administrations are included in the ACT spotlight report?**

The ACT Spotlight report in SD-STARS contains all test administrations given during the current academic year. Prior to 2014, the department received two test files. The first included all administrations between August and January and the second contained all administrations

between February and July. Starting in 2014, the department will receive a file once every other month, allowing us to provide districts with more timely information.

## **I noticed that reports now have a code attached to the title. What does this mean?**

In SD-STARS, reports have both a code (ex: AS.001.00-A) and a name (ex: Achievement Cut Score). The inclusion of a code serves two purposes.

As SD-STARS grows to include more reports, names will start to sound similar. For example, there may be a report called Student Achievement Roster and another report called Student Longitudinal Achievement. By attaching a code, the department can point users to the exact report they need.

In addition, the codes help the department track characteristics and versions of the same report. The first two letters of the code identify category. For example, AC means Accountability, and AS means Assessment. The following three characters are the report number. The remaining parts of the code identify version number and whether the report contains things like student names or aggregate counts.

## **Spotlight on: Mobility report**

When students move in and out of school districts during the school year, it may impact the students ability to learn and succeed in the classroom.

To help districts, the South Dakota Department of Education is developing a mobility report so districts can see which students are mobile.

The report will detail student mobility rate and mobility incident rate. The data will be structured to look at mobility over time. The hope is that the report will help identify students that may need additional supports.

## **Spotlight on: ACT Spotlight report**

One of the most popular reports in SD-STARS is the ACT Spotlight Report. The department receives this data directly from ACT for test takers who (1) indicate they will or have graduated from a South Dakota district and (2) give permission to release results to the department.

Starting in 2014, ACT results will come to the department every other month.

The purpose of this report is to provide users information on students who took the ACT. The report provides aggregate level information as well as a student list. The report answers many questions related to ACT scores:

- What percent of students met or exceeded the Board of Regents benchmarks for a given subject?

- What percent of students met or exceeded benchmarks in one or more subject?
- How does my school compare with the district and state?

Student lists in the report show every test administration for each student for the selected academic year and their results in all subjects. The report features a color code, with red indicating "below benchmark," green indicating "met or exceeded benchmark," and green with an "S" indicating eligibility for the Opportunity Scholarship.

Districts should note that this report is different from the ACT results reported in the Accountability Report Card or other state reporting. For more information about this report, check out the ACT Spotlight Report Data Interpretation Guide found in the Training Center within SD-STARS.



# National STARS: New York

## STARS Account Manager listserv available

The South Dakota Department of Education started a new email listserv for STARS Account Managers. This listserv will be used to communicate announcements about SD-STARS and to facilitate discussions with other STARS Account Managers as well as the department.

To subscribe, send an email to [ListManager@k12.sd.us](mailto:ListManager@k12.sd.us), leaving the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type "Subscribe StarsAccountManagers." You will receive a welcome message after joining and can unsubscribe at any time.

For more information, check out <http://www.k12.sd.us/MailingList/StarsAccountManagers>.

New York is leading the way in promoting data use and data-informed instruction through their newly improved website, EngageNY (<https://www.engageny.org/>). Originally launched in 2011, EngageNY's goal is to provide resources to educators that help prepare students for college, career and life.

One of the updated features on the EngageNY website is the EngageNY Portal, which functions to supply data to New York's educators, students and parents. This statewide longitudinal data system provides numerous tools and data to assist educators in improving instruction and student learning outcomes based on data-driven decisions. Some important additions include dashboard reports, an early warning system and electronic transcripts.

Also, the website contains different modules like Common Core, Teacher/Leader Effectiveness, Data Driven Instruction, Video Library, Professional Development Resources and Parents/Families. Each link contains a large number of resources that can be filtered and searched by grade or subject. For example, the Professional Development tab keeps educators updated on practices and trends in the field, and the Parents/Families tab provides ideas for engaging families in their children's education. In addition, there are many videos on how to link data-informed instruction with curriculum and student learning outcomes.

Finding the link between instructional practice, data use and student learning is important. New York is making these concepts concrete and easily applicable to classrooms.

## ESA Corner: Crystal Mengershausen, ESA 2

SD-STARS strives to help improve processes that impact decision making, classroom instruction and ultimately student outcomes. As a former teacher in Virginia, I saw first hand how the longitudinal data system helped me - files and folders were replaced by clicks of a mouse and deeper knowledge about my students. To ensure SD-STARS succeeds, the department works hard to match the needs of its users with what SD-STARS has to offer, especially new reports.

Over that last 6 months, the department and ESAs worked with districts to create a new suite of more than 20 reports, available soon. Many of the reports were developed by districts like you. For example, ESA 2 is partnering with Canton and Brandon Valley district special education directors to develop a Special Education Trend Report. This report will show the total number of special education students in each district over multiple years; sortable by grade, school and placement

categories. During the report request process, the department worked with the districts to develop a report mock-up. Region 2 special education directors provided feedback, and the South Dakota Education Data Governance Group approved the report for development. Currently, the report is being reviewed by the department.

The department encourages districts to request a report. In fact, Region 2 hopes to work with districts on a new report request that will focus on Title I information at the district and classroom levels. Submitting a report request does not guarantee the report will be available. The data governance group, which consists of district and department representatives, reviews the report request and determines whether to approve or deny report development.

Contact your ESA Data STAR for more information about reports being developed.

## 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>.

Region 1	Lisa Reinhiller	<a href="mailto:lisa.reinhiller@k12.sd.us">lisa.reinhiller@k12.sd.us</a>
Region 2	Crystal Mengershausen	<a href="mailto:cmengershausen@edec.org">cmengershausen@edec.org</a>
Region 2	Janeen Outka	<a href="mailto:joutka@edec.org">joutka@edec.org</a>
Region 3	Sara Fridley	<a href="mailto:sara.fridley@k12.sd.us">sara.fridley@k12.sd.us</a>
Region 5	Holly Schumacher	<a href="mailto:holly.schumacher@k12.sd.us">holly.schumacher@k12.sd.us</a>
Region 6	Jennifer Tschetter	<a href="mailto:jtschetter@tie.net">jtschetter@tie.net</a>
Region 6	Jeanne Cowan	<a href="mailto:jcowan@tie.net">jcowan@tie.net</a>
Region 7	John Swanson	<a href="mailto:jswanson@tie.net">jswanson@tie.net</a>
Region 7	Sherry Crofut	<a href="mailto:scrofut@tie.net">scrofut@tie.net</a>