



Establish District-Wide Data Systems to Monitor Students' Academic Progress

THE ISSUE

In California, not all high schools offer the full a-g course sequence in every subject area.¹ Low-income students, underrepresented students of color, and English learner students are less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory courses.² Schools that serve these groups of students have, on average, more than 10 percent fewer a-g approved English courses than affluent high schools. Even when they do offer the fifteen-course sequence, numerous districts and schools lack a streamlined process to monitor students' academic progress.

AN APPROACH

In an effort to monitor students' a-g progress and ensure they receive the right supports, many districts create data and early warning systems that update information in real-time. Districts then use these data to make strategic decisions about policies, practices, and resource allocation to meet the needs of their most vulnerable student populations. By having access to data that is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and English language designation, school and district leaders are able to ensure every student is on track to graduate college and career ready.

HOW & WHERE IT'S HAPPENING

In order to support student interventions and success, **Whittier Union High School District** (WUHSD) has learned how to harness the power of data through a fluid in-house data system. Using their simple, but effective in-house data system, WUHSD faculty and staff can answer questions about the degree to which students are succeeding academically and quickly act on those findings. The "kitchen sink," as the district refers to it, allows users to pivot the data in various ways to access information about specific students and answer a variety of questions. For example, users could understand all English learner students' achievement levels in a particular classroom, or uncover who is enrolled in a-g or AP courses and gather those data at-a-glance by student subgroup. Faculty and staff could then use these data to engage in meaningful conversations about what the data show.

Craig Campbell, Principal at **Santa Fe High School** explained how tools like this one bring a laser-like focus on results: "It's easy to have conversations with staff when you have numbers on paper." The fact that data are disaggregated by, as Mr. Campbell described, "anything you can think of that you might need," helps facilitate targeted conversations about specific student needs. Mr. Campbell continued, "Whether it's the socioeconomically disadvantaged or whether it's our English Learners, whatever population of kids we're trying to get to, we can get to."

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– Craig Campbell, Santa Fe High School Principal

These analyses are made possible by a data lead at each school site, a classroom teacher who also acts as the data guru and monitors the school's data system. Data leads are compensated hourly for the additional work they do to fulfill data requests and monitor the school's data system. Administrators can call their data leads to make a request and, within a day or two, the data leads return with the requested information.



Faculty and staff use this data system to make critical program decisions. For example, they are tracking students' progress in bilingual and English Language Development (ELD) programs to determine which programs best meet students' needs. These data will help answer questions such as, "Why do you think that happened?" and inform decisions moving forward about course offerings and master schedules. Most importantly, their robust data system allows them to quickly identify issues of access and success in college preparatory courses. By doing so, schools build student-centered master schedules and ensure that ninth grade students receive high-quality instruction.

¹ Niu Gao, and Hans Johnson. "Improving College Pathways in California." Public Policy Institute of California, November 2017, https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/r_1117ngr.pdf

² "The Majority Report: Supporting the Educational Success of Latino Students in California." (Oakland, Calif.: The Education Trust West, 2017). https://29v0kg31gs803wndhe1sj1hd-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/11/ETW_TMR_FINAL.pdf and David Silver, Elisabeth Hensley, Yihua Hong, Peter Siegel, and Denise Bradby. "University Eligibility Study for the Public High School Class of 2015." RTI International, July 2017, http://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/RTL_Eligibility_Report_071417_FINALtoOPR.pdf

Guiding Questions for Advocacy

- 1** Does your district/school have a data system that helps you monitor students' progress toward a-g completion? If so, how do you analyze those data to support student success?
- 2** Does your district/school disaggregate data by race/ethnicity, gender, income, English language designation? If so, how do you use those data to make strategic decisions?
- 3** What supports does your district/school offer students and their families in their efforts to monitor their progress toward graduating eligible for California's public university systems?



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