

Protecting Students While Public Education is Under Attack

Threat: Disappearing Data

The U.S. Department of Education provides funding and technical assistance that helps states build and maintain statewide longitudinal data systems and strengthens the capacity of state and local data leaders to collect and report accurate information. These supports help state leaders track key measures—like school spending, access to counselors and other support staff, and graduation rates —without duplicating effort or reinventing systems from scratch.

Federal data collection and reporting requirements — including disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, disability status, and other student identities — shine a light on inequities and help identify promising practices that can be replicated. This data is essential for leaders to target resources to the students and schools with the greatest needs and ensure all students have access to high-quality learning opportunities. The administration's efforts to dismantle ED — especially the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) — put the public's ability to understand school performance and hold systems accountable at serious risk. Without the expertise and capacity of these offices, it may become difficult to continue collecting, validating, and reporting the data that helps communities identify inequities and determine where additional support is needed.

This includes:

- **NAEP (“the Nation’s Report Card”)**, the only assessment that enables state-by-state comparisons and provides a benchmark for the rigor of state assessments. Reports indicate the office administering NAEP has been reduced to only a handful of staff.
- **The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)**, which tracks critical measures of educational opportunity — such as access to advanced coursework, educator and support staff availability, and discipline and school climate—disaggregated for students of different racial backgrounds, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners.
- **State report card support and oversight**, including technical assistance and monitoring tied to ESEA requirements. Many states already struggle to present report card information in accessible ways; mass layoffs of ED employees could leave states with little guidance on best practices or compliance expectations.

How State Advocates Can Drive Change

- **Urge state leaders to continue collecting and reporting required data.** This includes data on student enrollment, participation in federal programs, and student outcomes. The dismantling of the Department of Education does not eliminate federal education laws, and states remain responsible for meeting reporting obligations under ESSA and IDEA — including public school and district report cards.
- **Push state leaders to strengthen transparency.** They should strategically supplement state reporting with critical data the federal government may no longer collect or publish and integrate that data into existing state report card and dashboard systems so families and communities can easily access them. State leaders should work with districts to preserve the capacity to collect and report key indicators of opportunity historically captured through the CRDC, including access to advanced coursework, discipline, attendance, graduation, and staffing supports.
- **Encourage state leaders to invest in and improve statewide longitudinal data systems.** That way, they can better understand student experiences over time and align resources accordingly.
 - *Example: [Kentucky's Center for Statistics \(KYSTATS\)](#) supports a statewide data system that helps the state evaluate education and workforce outcomes for specific student groups, including young people who experienced foster care.*

In just one year, the Trump administration has [upended decades of carefully built infrastructure](#) aimed at understanding, tracking, and improving the conditions in which children in the U.S. learn and thrive. Now, more than ever, is the time for state leaders to advance education research and development (R&D). Advocates can use the [Alliance for Learning Innovation's State Education R&D Framework to learn more](#). Education R&D must always center the needs of underserved students and reflect a vision for education that prioritizes equity.