Examples of Pilot Data Use

Stakeholders in the three states used pilot data in a variety of ways to change policy, practice, and perceptions related to college going and success. Selected examples are highlighted below.

Correcting misconceptions. In many cases, pilot reports provided staff with hard data on the postsecondary outcomes of their students that helped to correct some misconceptions. Staff found that student plans and anecdotes did not always translate into actual enrollment and persistence.

Myth busting. In Citrus County (Florida), custom tables built by district staff using the Advance web tool showed that, while postsecondary enrollment rates for students with disabilities were somewhat lower than rates for students without disabilities, students with disabilities persisted into the second year of college at similar rates. This positive persistence finding spurred district staff to double efforts to encourage students with disabilities to enroll in postsecondary education.

Changing district focus. For some years, San Antonio Independent School District (ISD) (Texas) focused on getting students to “stand on the X,” which is where they receive their diploma at high school graduation. After obtaining pilot data, however, the district now focuses on getting students to “X, Y and Z,” which includes high school graduation (X), college enrollment (Y), and college graduation (Z). Postsecondary success goals are now aligned with district initiatives and embedded in the district’s internal accountability framework.

Root cause analysis. The Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) used pilot data as part of its Data Utilization Project (DUP) to help 10 district teams keep students on track for college and career readiness. Teams examined patterns in their postsecondary outcomes across a number of years; identified a postsecondary goal; conducted a root cause analysis related to their goal; brainstormed initiatives and best practices to address the root causes; and developed interventions and instructional strategies to meet their goal.

Developing interventions focused on the college transition. Among participating Texas districts, pilot results prompted the development of a number interventions targeted to improve college going and persistence. As one example, high schools with the lowest postsecondary enrollment rates were selected to provide organized college visits for their students, mostly low-income and first-generation college-going students. Various, students participated in campus and housing tours and admissions presentations, attended
classes, and shadowed college students. Grant funds provided for transportation, lodging and meals.

**Focusing on contributing factors during high school.** Some pilot reports displayed postsecondary enrollment rates grouped by students’ 9th-grade attendance rates. Typically, results indicated that students with better attendance rates enroll in college at higher rates, and this relationship tends to hold even when taking other factors into account (such as 8th-grade achievement levels and economic disadvantage status). One district team planned to share the results with their 9th-grade students, as well as with fellow teachers and counselors, to emphasize the importance of good attendance and to help students make plans to improve their own attendance rates in service of their future goals.

**Engaging middle schools.** Some pilot reports linked student performance on 8th grade assessments to postsecondary outcomes. Several districts used these reports to begin conversations with their middle school teachers and administrators, most of whom had never seen or considered postsecondary data before, to facilitate better vertical alignment within districts. In San Antonio ISD, middle schools as well as high schools are now expected to review data on the postsecondary outcomes of their students, and middle school campuses have specific annual goals and objectives regarding college readiness.

**Underscoring the importance of alignment.** Attaining proficiency on state tests does not always ensure that students are ready for credit-bearing coursework in college. In some pilot cases, high proportions of students who attained proficiency on state tests took remedial coursework in the tested subject when they transitioned to college. This disconnect underscored the need for greater alignment of state tests with skills needed in college.¹

**Promoting K–12 and postsecondary conversations.** Pilot results sometimes prompted conversations between district staff and local college faculty. Faced with high math remediation rates for their students, math teachers in one district determined to meet with math faculty at the local community college to identify what it was that their students were lacking.

**Creating actionable reports.** The Austin Independent School District (Texas) and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board have incorporated design elements from the pilot reports into their standard reporting. In particular, these reports incorporate engaging graphics, important disaggregations, and key definitions or findings.

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¹ National assessment efforts—including PARCC and Smarter Balanced—are also addressing this need.