MLDS Center
Maryland Longitudinal Data System

Monthly Report for April 2014
Submitted May 2, 2014

Meetings

Frederick County Board of Education

Ross Goldstein attended the Frederick County Board of Education meeting on March 26th to provide an overview of the MLDS Center. The overview included the legal framework for the establishment of the Center, the governance of the system, the types of data to be included, how the longitudinal data research and analysis can help inform policy decision making and be a benefit to a local education agency, and an in-depth discussion on security and privacy of the data.   The primary focus of the questions was related to data security and privacy.

Conference

Ross Goldstein, Mike Woolley, and Terry Shaw attended a conference in Philadelphia on *Integrating Education, Social Services, and Workforce Data*.   The conference was hosted by the Jacob France Institute, the Privacy and Technical Assistance Center, and Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. The conference presented a lot of good information on FERPA compliance, strategies for creating and maintaining integrated data systems, and information on different applications and research being conducted using integrated data.

Research Agenda Workgroup

At the last meeting, the Governing Board requested the formation of a working group to review the research agenda to ensure that each of the planned research questions are longitudinal and not a question that could be addressed by one of the partnering agencies.

The workgroup met last week (April 24). The group determined that there was a need for an overarching policy statement about the research agenda and a specific acknowledgement by the Center committing to ensuring that all research is longitudinal.   Further the group recommended organizing the questions into major topic areas.

While the working group does not plan to have any further meetings, it was decided that the monthly Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) would be the appropriate venue to review the revised agenda and also provide a forum to discuss any recommended changes to specific question or continue the process of proposing new questions.   The revised agenda will be presented to the Governing Board at the June meeting.

StudentStat

Members of the leadership team attended the StudentStat meeting on March 28. Although Center staff were not requested to participate in the discussion, the meeting nevertheless addressed items of interest to the Center, including the Governor's expectations about making data tools available to the public and details about dual enrollment.

Data Governance Advisory Board (Data GAB)

The Data GAB had its second meeting on April 2nd. Following topics were discussed:
1. The *Data Inventory* that was approved during the March meeting and the additional data elements to be added in June;
2. The move away from aligning the Data Inventory with the Common Education Data Standards

(CEDS) - except where continued alignment is practical;

3. The intention of the Center to use existing data file formats rather than defining new formats that have to be programmed;

4. The need for the Center to create suppression rules to ensure that small sets of data that can potentially be identifiable are not released;

5. The need for MSDE staff to assist the Center staff with creating aggregation and business rules for the education data; and

6. Whether the Center should obtain State Assessment data. On this issue, it was noted by Janice Johnson that the Assessment Data is a complex data set and it may not be worth the Center's effort to establish the formatting and business rules to accommodate it -especially in light of the fact that the State Assessment is being phased out. However, Mike Woolley felt that some set of that data was important and should be provided.

Staffing

Interviews have conducted for several positions.

1. Network Engineer - Interviews are complete and an offer will be made next week.

2. Applications Manager - Interviews have begun and are scheduled through next week. There appear to be qualified applicants for this round of interviews.

3. Database Manager and Supervisor - Interviews have also begun and are scheduled through next week. There appear to be qualified applicants for this round of interviews.

Policy and Information Services Branch

As indicated in earlier reports, a candidate for the Senior Web Designer/Project Manager position was identified in February. However, the hiring process was delayed several weeks because of procurement delays at MSDE and, to a lesser extent, DoIT. The individual will begin work on May 12. Despite the delay, staff are working to ensure that the developer's time is used efficiently to ensure she can deliver as much functionality as possible. The top priority is the redesign of the website, followed by the creation of additional dashboards. In anticipation of this focus, the branch's recent efforts have been focused on identifying issues in site design, including page layout, navigation, and strategies for organizing information, and developing directions and preliminary solutions.

Systems Management Branch

The implementation of the Master Data Management (MDM) system is completed and testing of organization and person data provided by MHEC, DLLR and MSDE was a primary activity over the past month. The implementation of the Operational Data Store (ODS) which will hold the transactional data without the PII data and will be accessible to the research staff is the next major development piece of the system. The implementation of the ODS will be completed over the next several weeks.

The MDM and developing ODS systems are currently in the development environment and we are working with MSDE to procure the necessary hardware, software and backup for the test and production environments. Our timeline has slipped about a month due to the procurement process; however we are working very closely with MSDE and DPSCS to coordinate installation and implementation to mitigate the delay as much as possible.

We continue to work with data stewards to adjust business rules and to ensure the quality of data. We have expanded our data collection over the past month to include Person (Staff) and Organization information from Early Childhood and Private Career Schools.

Research Services Branch

For the April Research Series, Dr. Terry Shaw presented his work on the LINKS Project. LINKS is another Maryland integrated data system, which is housed at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. The presentation was well attended and well received and members of the MLDS Center team felt the experiences of the LINKS Research Team were instructive with regard to our work building the Center. With regard to the Research Series, the May 2nd panel discussion will be on early education and childcare, which will include four accomplished scholars from within the University of Maryland representing work across the continuum from basic research, to practice, programming and policy at the state and national levels.

The Research team also continued its collaborative efforts with the Systems Management team members in designing and building the data system. This included participating in planning meetings focused on the early child care data and the Private Career School (PCS) data, as well as coding the available PCS data elements as to which data elements we saw research uses for and which research questions they were applicable to. We also continued work on literature reviews that will be used on future reports on analyses responding to the Center research questions.