



Monthly Report for February 2015

Submitted March 6, 2015

Meetings

Baltimore's Promise

Ross Goldstein and Angela Henneberger have been asked to serve as members of the Data Analysis work group for Baltimore's Promise. Baltimore's Promise is a citywide partnership of government, business, higher education, nonprofit and philanthropic leaders that seeks to organize efforts and resources around a shared community vision that, "*all Baltimore City youth will travel a safe, healthy, and successful educational path from cradle to career.*" The organizers of Baltimore's Promise are interested in partnering with MLDS Center to analyze outcomes and effectiveness of certain programs and initiatives.

Budget Hearings

MLDS Center budget was reviewed as part of the MSDE budget as well as a topic during the Higher Education Budget Briefing. While no budget cuts were recommended by the General Assembly fiscal analysts, questions were raised in the budget analyses regarding the status of the Center's website and when new content can be expected. The following written response was provided:

The progress on the MLDS has effectively moved Maryland from among the poorest performers in the nation to one of its top performers in the development of these critical educational data systems in only a few years. This change has been driven by three critical elements: support of the MGA and Governor for the MLDS, multi-segmental cooperation, and the careful stepwise creation of a robust and powerful data system. The creation of the technological infrastructure is complete, the system is being loaded with data, and that data is being linked together. These tasks are enormous and very challenging, particularly while maintaining the highest levels of safeguards for privacy and security. The next step is to ensure that any reporting originating from the MLDS is of the highest possible standard and provides the MGA and other audiences with information that can help guide policy decisions and operational actions. This requires addressing issues of data quality. The quality of the MLDS data is dependent on the sources that initially collected the data. Data entry errors or failure to enter critical data fields result in data quality issues that can affect the accuracy of the reporting done by the Center. Further, because the data that MLDS receives were collected by the agencies from sources for purposes other than longitudinal data reporting, in certain instances it does not include all the data values necessary to support matching across sectors or certain types of reporting.

To address these data quality issues, the MLDS Governing Board instructed the MLDS Center staff to develop standards to ensure accuracy of information reported by the Center. The MLDS Center staff, in consultation with the inter-agency Research and Policy Group, has developed appropriate standards for use within the last two weeks. The MLDS Governing Board will review the standards at their March meeting and this will allow the rapid development of reports in numerous areas over the next year. It is planned that the first original content may be available before the 2015 Legislative session is complete.

Staffing

To fill the vacancy created by the unexpected resignation of the ETL Developer Michael Chen, the Center has contracted for the services of an ETL Developer through the University of Maryland, Baltimore. The contractor is Rahul Cheriya who had worked at MSDE during the early development stages of the MLDS. Accordingly, Mr. Cheriya has a lot of familiarity with the system and the ETL processes that need to be completed. A permanent employee is still being sought.

Budget

As mentioned last month, in addition to the across the board two percent budget reduction, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has proposed an additional \$300,000 targeted cut to the MLDS budget. That amount represents the anticipated savings from staff vacancies. However, the Center plans to spend those savings on hiring contractors to do the work while permanent staff are recruited.

While restoring some of those funds may be possible, the Center has also been working with MSDE to determine whether federal SLDS grant funds can be used by MLDS to address any losses due to budget cuts. It appears that funds are available and MSDE and MLDS are close to finalizing an MOU for the transfer of SLDS funds to MLDS consistent with requirements of the grant.

Legislative Audit

The Legislative Auditor has formally begun its audit of the MLDS Center. The audit will include both a fiscal compliance audit as well as an information technology audit. The audit period is July 1, 2013 through December 31, 2014.

Data Center

The data center installation at MSDE continues to progress, including the following activities:

- Installation of antivirus and other necessary software on the MLDS servers;
- Creation of additional Virtual Machine templates on the MLDS servers;
- Continued work on building Active Directories in order to establish user groups and users;
- Updates to the network diagram to provide detailed information on how the Center data will flow through development, test and production environments;
- Installation of major Oracle components including Oracle 12c Enterprise Manager, WebCenter, and OBIEE on Development and Test environments;
- Evaluation of costs for Oracle Licenses, maintenance of those licenses, and procurement of firewall and switches; and
- Development of plans for storage upgrade as well as moving data from DPSCS to MSDE/MLDS data center.

Data

The new ETL developer has been working a little over a week. He is actively working on loading Wage data, including the recently received 2014 Wage data file. All identity data from the Wage data file has been loaded in the staging area.

The Center has received GED Data and National Student Clearinghouse data. The Clearinghouse data was loaded in the Operational Data Store and has been utilized to support data matching for the Charter School Reports.

Center staff plans to analyze the data from MHEC's High School Graduation System (HGS) Report and Early Childhood data from MSDE. Staff has also met with MSDE staff to discuss the Assessment data.

The Center continues to work with data providers to improve the accuracy of the data already loaded into the System.

Website

The MLDS Center website is being updated on regular basis. MLDS Governing Board information has been posted and all board meetings, agendas, and meeting minutes are available online. Also Research Team information has been updated and all upcoming *Research Series* details are posted. Data Inventory is available online and the Research Agenda has been added. WebCenter is integrated with data to allow for the presentation of dynamic data dashboards.

Research Team

February was a busy month for the Research Team. The team is completing development of a “Consumer Guide to the MLDS” that will provide users of website dashboards or readers of Center reports a set of criteria and concepts within which to interpret and utilize that information. The Research Team also worked with the whole Center Team to develop the Data Quality Standards and then apply them to the Charter School Data. Other members of the Research Team ran analyses looking at the patterns of missingness in our matching variables and discussed future analyses to assess data quality of the Center data. Relatedly the Research Team worked closely with the rest of the Center staff on how to present the Charter School data currently available and proposed a strategy for a charter school/public school comparison when the data needed for such a comparison will be available. The Research Team also began a literature search and review of the available research in Charter School efficacy and the analytic methods used to evaluate charter school efficacy. The team continued its ongoing efforts in coordination with the data team to access the system and get to know the data structure and run queries to understand data linkages.

Unfortunately, due to the weather, this month’s Research Series was cancelled.