



# PlatteChat

AN ONGOING CONVERSATION ABOUT HOW TO BEST PRESERVE FREE ENTERPRISE,  
PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT IN NEBRASKA.



*Today, the Platte Institute is proud to be hosting Aimee Guidera, Executive Director of the Data Quality Campaign. Aimee will present her research on education data and its use to the State School Board and discuss how Nebraska can improve education through the building and implementation of a longitudinal data system to improve student achievement. The infrastructure, policies, and practices of such a system would help teachers, parents, administrators, and other stakeholders determine which policies best help students succeed.*

## Data is the Foundation for Reform by Aimee Guidera

Those who remember the View-Master from childhood will recall the dazzling images they cast before the user's eyes. While the image the View-Master presents is vivid and entertaining, it lacks the motion, sound, and character development of a movie. Movies progress over time, and deliver the viewer a complete picture of a series of events, rather than one image at a time. Therein lays the value of state data. District data, like the View-Master, provides a snapshot - and however useful that snapshot is, it is not the whole story. State and district data together however, along with the data quality, security, tools, and analytics, are best positioned to provide stakeholders with a rich picture of student achievement and system performance over time that empowers improved decisionmaking at every level.

Because districts are the agents that directly affect teaching and learning, states cannot succeed in the implementation of education priorities unless they actively engage their districts. This engagement requires state education agencies to evolve from their traditional role of primarily ensuring compliance with state and federal laws to a new role as service providers that meet the diverse needs of all districts in the state. Instead of simply collecting required data from districts, states can engage in a two-way partnership to collaborate with districts of all capacity levels and support local efforts to effectively use data. State data systems will not replace district systems, but enhance the data, tools and information currently available at the district level regardless of district capacity.

A collaborative, productive state-district relationship benefits every stakeholder by empowering them with the information they need to make decisions. And the benefits go beyond individual decisionmaking into system-wide benefits that include:

- Improved efficiency - when state and district systems work together, they ensure that data are not duplicated, and that processes, such as student records transfer,

are smoother.

- Increase transparency - access to more robust data from state and district systems provides policymakers, parents, and the public a better understanding of how districts, schools, and students perform.
- Improve system performance - with data, we work better. In no other industry are decisions made without understanding the implications, costs, and benefits of a decision by looking to data.
- Improve student achievement - when educators are empowered to use data to inform their professional judgment, student learning improves. State and district data provide the most robust picture of student success and challenges.

Collaborative relationships between states and districts to provide access to quality, robust data tailored to stakeholder needs is only the first step in ensuring effective data use to improve system performance and student achievement. When it comes to data, if you build it, they won't necessarily come. Education stakeholders at every level have increasing information demands as we continue to raise our expectations of individuals, institutions and systems. Empowering stakeholders to use data effectively to inform decisionmaking is a goal that everyone must now set their sights on in order to meet policy priorities, and improve system performance and student achievement. In order to do this, we must realign our existing conversations to place the end user's evolving and increasing data needs at the center of every discussion. Stakeholder data *use* is dependent on stakeholder *capacity to access and use data*. Therefore, leaders at every level must place an emphasis on not only continuing to invest in systems to meet user needs, but also on making investments in end user capacity to use data. In order to do so, state and district policymakers and practitioners will see a need to focus on capacity-building in three critical areas.

First, policymakers and decisionmakers at every level must continue to invest in data infrastructure and technology to ensure that this infrastructure is able to keep up with the increasing policy and practical demands for information and analysis. Second, they must rethink not only the roles and relationship between the state and districts, but also those among agencies across the pre-kindergarten to postsecondary to workforce (P-20/W) spectrum in order to ensure that information flows seamlessly, efficiently and effectively, and that the end users have the data they need, in the right format, when they need it. Third, they must focus on investing in people - including parents, educators, and school and district leaders - by ensuring that stakeholders at every level have the knowledge, training, resources, and time to *use* data effectively.

As a result of tremendous leadership over the past decade, states have made significant progress in increasing their capacity to collect robust longitudinal data that provide decisionmakers - from state policymakers to teachers - information on student progress through K-12 into postsecondary education and into the workforce. However, without an ambitious effort to ensure access and capacity to use data, these infrastructure investments will never be fully realized. Districts are the agents of change, and where student learning happens, and states must work to shift the traditional state-district role from one that is focused on compliance and box-checking, to one that is focused on service and mutual benefit. While there is still much work to be done, the Data Quality

Campaign annual survey of the states, [Data for Action](#), demonstrates that some states are leading the way in ensuring that data are effective tools for system improvement. [Nebraska](#), with only three of DQC's 10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data use, has fallen behind. With increased knowledge in the field, and ever-increasing demand from stakeholders for quality data, there is an opportunity to move forward not just in building systems, but in building systems with quality, that meet stakeholders needs, and therefore meet state education priorities.

*Data Quality Campaign is a national, non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization focused on the effective data use to improve student achievement.*



If you do not wish to receive this newsletter or if you wish to be removed from all future newsletters, please [click here](#) to manage your subscriptions.