

# CONNECTING THE CONTINUUM

*Longitudinal Data Systems in North Carolina*

## What is a Statewide Longitudinal Data System?

A Statewide Longitudinal Data System, often referred to as an SLDS, connects two or more individual education data systems, allowing data to be compiled across agencies and time. By bringing these data together, policymakers will be better able to answer questions that can guide decision-making about the many paths our young people take along their educational journeys.

### What makes an SLDS valuable to stakeholders?

Most state agencies collect data independently of one another and typically do not have structures in place to guarantee alignment with the types of data points collected and how each are defined. Though each agency has some capacity to use its own data to analyze performance, **larger policy and practice questions can be answered when data are compiled across agencies and time.** To answer these questions, we need student-level data from multiple government agencies over a number of years. Data accessed through an SLDS can answer questions from a number of stakeholders:

- ▶ **Policymaker:** How likely is it that students who are reading on grade level by third grade will complete a postsecondary degree or credential?
- ▶ **Department of Public Instruction:** Are students who graduate from our high schools equally likely to complete a four-year degree regardless of their racial or socioeconomic subgroup?
- ▶ **Superintendent:** What Educator Preparation Programs provide teachers who are most effective in teaching math in grades three through five?
- ▶ **Principal:** Are students of color who complete AP coursework more likely to complete a postsecondary degree or credential than those who do not?
- ▶ **Teacher:** What percentage of my secondary students required remedial coursework in my subject area at the postsecondary level?
- ▶ **Parent:** What local pre-K programs are most effective at preparing 3- and 4-year-olds for Kindergarten?
- ▶ **Student:** Among graduates from surrounding community colleges, which are most likely to be employed within one year of graduation?

### *There are a number of questions policymakers should consider when determining the effectiveness and functionality of a SLDS.*

1. What questions do we need to answer in order to make progress toward our state's education goals?
2. Which audiences will benefit from data provided through the System?
3. What partners are engaged in data sharing?
4. Does the SLDS have a robust governance structure in place to provide necessary oversight and coordination?
5. What are the staffing and technological requirements needed to reliably collect, maintain, and submit data? What personnel are needed to ensure effective governance and communication?
6. How is the System funded, and is that funding sustainable?
7. How will stakeholders access the information in the System?
8. What steps are being taken to ensure that data privacy is protected?

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-QUALITY SLDS:



Widespread policymaker support



Meaningful agency collaboration



High-quality governance structure



Robust privacy and security protocols



Standardization of data



Adequate technical infrastructure and dedicated human capital



Sustainable internal leadership

# Snapshot of the North Carolina Education Longitudinal Data System

The **Education Longitudinal Data System (ELDS)** will be a **federated system** that can pull data from the centralized Common Follow-up System, and match those data with the federated NCSchoolWorks and NC Early Childhood Integrated Data System using Unique Identifiers (UID).

Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)	NCSchoolWorks (NCSW)	Common Follow-up System (CFS)
This birth-to-five system is administered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and includes data on early childhood education, health, and social services. Recurring state funding to support the operation and maintenance of ECIDS has been provided by the North Carolina General Assembly.	This federated, P-20W system includes data from the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), NC Community College System (NCCCS), UNC System, and NC Department of Commerce. Future partnerships with the NC Independent Colleges and Universities and ECIDS are pending. The System is governed by NC General Statute Chapter 116E and is overseen by the Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC).	First created in 1992 to capture outcomes of public education, employment, and training programs, the CFS currently includes data from the NC Department of Commerce, NCDHHS, NCDPI, NCCCS, and UNC System. The System resides under the NC Department of Commerce.

## Building an Education Longitudinal Data System


- ▶ Per NC General Statute 116E, the **ELDS is governed by the Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC)** but resides administratively in the **NCDPI**.
- ▶ The North Carolina Education Cabinet has played an integral role in identifying longitudinal education data as a priority across state agencies through the creation of the ELDS Working Group.
- ▶ Currently, **researchers and the public can access data and standardized reports from the NCECIDS and the CFS**.
- ▶ **NCSchoolWorks and the ELDS are still being developed and are not yet accessible to the public**. The System contributors of NCSchoolWorks and the ELDS are currently reviewing a “Contributor Data Sharing Agreement” and are working with the North Carolina Rules Review Committee to formalize rules to further govern the system and partnerships.
- ▶ NCECIDS and NCSchoolWorks were originally funded by federal grants from the U.S. Department of Education. **NCECIDS now receives recurring funds from the North Carolina General Assembly, while funding to support the governance of NCSchoolWorks is provided through GDAC.**
- ▶ **The ELDS Working Group, established in 2018 by Governor Roy Cooper and the Education Cabinet, is focused on continuing the development of the broader ELDS.** It has developed a number of key principles regarding system governance, including that each partner will maintain authority over its data, be able to request data from other partners in the System, and have the right to deny a data request.

## Future of Longitudinal Data Systems in North Carolina

- ▶ The contributing partners in the ELDS Working Group are already having conversations about what the next iteration of the data system might be and are **thinking ahead to envision what a modern system would look like**.
- ▶ There is hope that the ELDS would have a **public-facing data dashboard** where standard data sets are presented in a meaningful and accessible way.
- ▶ **NCCCS is currently working to enhance its UID assignment and matching processes**, which would improve the accessibility, accuracy, and timeliness of data they submit to NCSchoolWorks and the ELDS.
- ▶ Questions remain about long-term governance of both systems, though it is evident that **a clear governance structure is necessary to continue driving the work forward**.

View the full report:  
[bit.ly/connecting-the-continuum](https://bit.ly/connecting-the-continuum)

 [www.hunt-institute.org](https://www.hunt-institute.org)

 [@Hunt\\_Institute](https://twitter.com/Hunt_Institute)

 [/company/the-hunt-institute](https://company/the-hunt-institute)

 [/thehuntinstitute](https://thehuntinstitute)