CEDARS: NC COMMON EDUCATION DATA ANALYSIS & REPORTING SYSTEM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is CEDARS?

The North Carolina Common Education Data Analysis & Reporting System (CEDARS) is NC's PreK-13 State Longitudinal Data System. CEDARS is composed of various DPI source data collection systems, a student and staff identification system, a centralized data repository, and associated reporting and analysis (or "business intelligence") tools. Once completed, CEDARS will support NC's efforts to use high quality data about students, staff, programs, and finances to make policy and service decisions that will improve student outcomes. Specifically, CEDARS will enable State, local, and federal policy makers and service providers to analyze trends and relationships between various educational factors and student performance over time.

What is UID?

The Unique Statewide Identifier (UID) System assigns a unique statewide identifier for every student and staff member who participates in the NC education system at any point in time. Establishing the capability to assign these identifiers is the first step in the NC Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) multi-stage effort to create CEDARS. These identifiers will enable matching of student and staff data across DPI data collections and over time.

Who will use CEDARS?

State, local, and federal policy makers and service providers; educational researchers; and other consumers of educational data will use data stored within the CEDARS data repository to conduct analyses and produce reports.

How will data stored in CEDARS be used?

CEDARS will enable analysis of relationships between various educational factors and student performance over time. CEDARS will support the data sharing and reporting needs of DPI staff, school principals, and local administrators, state and federal policy and decision makers, researchers, and other consumers of educational data. It will also improve the state's ability to share and exchange data with external entities, including institutes of higher education, and other state agencies.

How will CEDARS affect school districts?

CEDARS will, over time, increase local capacity to track student performance and assist local educational leaders in making data-driven decisions. In addition, the unique student and staff identifiers that local school districts will assign using the UID System will enable, over time, a reduction of duplicative data entry. This will reduce data management burden and increase data quality.

Is the Unique ID the same as a Social Security Number?

No. Both are secure ways to identify an individual. The Social Security Number is a nine-digit number issued to U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and temporary working residents for the primary purpose of tracking individuals for taxation purposes. The Unique ID will be issued to public school students, teachers, administrators, and other staff with the primary purpose of enabling analysis of trends and relationships between educational factors and student performance.

Why is CEDARS needed or being implemented?

Currently, numerous data collection systems exist within the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), but there is no one system that brings all the data together. Conducting analysis of trends and relationships between educational factors that are captured in different data collection systems requires manually piecing together extracts from the various systems. This process is inefficient. Furthermore, sometimes the different systems contain duplicate or inaccurate data. CEDARS will use unique student and staff identifiers to connect data from multiple, different systems, thereby leading to both better quality data and more accessible data.

How much does CEDARS cost?
The US Department of Education awarded NCDPI a $6 million grant to support the development of CEDARS. The state of North Carolina is matching the federal funds with $6 million from the NCDPI budget. Local school districts and schools may be asked to do some things differently to assist with the implementation of CEDARS, but local districts and schools will not incur local cost.

Is CEDARS the same as NC WISE?
No. The North Carolina Window of Information on Student Education (NC WISE) is an electronic student information system. NC WISE is only one of many NCDPI source data collection systems that will contribute data to the CEDARS longitudinal data repository.

Will people be able to see my child's data?
No. As with other NCDPI source data collection systems, like NC WISE, CEDARS will employ state of the art security practices in order to comply with the federal Family Education Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

What's the time-line?
NCDPI is piloting the new UID system in summer 2009, and will rollout the system Statewide in August 2009. The CEDARS data repository and analysis and reporting (or "business intelligence") tools are targeted for implementation by summer of 2010.