



A New Era for School Data

The scope and breadth of Wisconsin school data is about to expand this fall with the public version of WISEdash

Kurt Kiefer

The ability to turn data into information quickly and easily has become increasingly important in education. As part of the Department of Public Instruction’s (DPI) ongoing effort to support research and analysis that improves educational outcomes, the Department of Public Instruction has developed a new data tools system called WISEdash.

The goal of WISEdash is to increase access to education data — and, in doing so, enable more data-informed decisions — by providing access to an unprecedented number of reports on a variety of topics. DPI believes that multiple indicators of student learning and performance should be incorporated

into analysis and decision making at all levels including the classroom, school and district. WISEdash will enable DPI to provide a plethora of reports and dashboards — in a single location — directly to districts on topics that draw from our longitudinal data system.

WISEdash has both a secure and public version. The secure site, which rolled out last fall, is available only to authorized school district staff because the data are viewable down to the individual student. Districts are responsible for authorizing access to the secure site. The public site will go live this fall. That site contains summary data, meaning no individual level data are displayed. It even uses a “redaction”

process to protect all data so that inferences about individual students is not possible.

Today, districts have access to the following types of data within the secure WISEdash website:

- Enrollments
- Attendance
- WKCE tests
- ACT tests
- Advanced Placement exams
- High school completion
- Post-secondary enrollment

■ New Features

WISEdash development is always a work in progress as more data become available. This school year,



USING DATA MEANINGFULLY

In addition to working to provide school data, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is also engaged in a project aimed at helping school leaders and educators use data more effectively. As school leaders know, using data effectively can be a challenge. All of the number-crunching in the world won’t make a bit of difference to instruction if educators don’t actively discuss the data they have and design and implement a thoughtful action based on their analysis.

To address this challenge, the DPI partnered with the CESA Statewide Network (CSN) in the fall of 2012, to assemble a work team with the charge of developing a common data inquiry process to disseminate to teachers and school leaders statewide. This team became known as the WISEExplore Work Team.

The purpose of the WISEExplore Work Team is to design, develop, pilot and disseminate a consistent data inquiry process for use by school

boards, administrators and classroom educators to improve student achievement in Wisconsin.

The WISEExplore inquiry process utilizes DPI data tools such as WISEdash as they evolve and are connected to the accountability system, school improvement planning, and classroom decision-making. The DPI plans to use this inquiry across every type of data being used within the agency so inquiry is done in the same rigorous and meaningful manner. Just

Helping Students Graduate

Approximately 6,000 students drop out of Wisconsin public schools each year.

While most of these students drop out in the 11th or 12th grades, it is during the middle grades these students typically exhibit characteristics connected to dropping out, falling behind and losing interest in school.

The Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS) is a new system developed by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to help school districts identify students that may be at risk of dropping out. DEWS scores are available for all students in grades seven through nine beginning in 2012-13.

The DEWS score is a number from 0-100 that represents the probability of a student graduating within four years of entering high school. The DEWS score is calculated individually for each student and represents how often similar students graduated high school on schedule in prior years. Thus, a student with a score of 60 has reported data that looks very similar to students in previous cohorts who graduated on schedule 60 percent of the time.

The DEWS score is accessible through three dashboards in WISEdash (secure home version) – Enrollment, WSAS, and Attendance. By navigating to any of these three dashboards and drilling on any metric, school staff can retrieve a student roster where the DEWS Outcome and DEWS Score will be displayed along with the DEWS Margin of Error. □

For more information, visit wise.dpi.wi.gov/wise_dashnews

the DPI plans to unveil a new “early warning system” to help districts identify students potentially at-risk for dropping out of school. DPI also plans to add more data that help with classroom level decision making like the new Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) assessment.

The DPI also hopes to include other assessments commonly used by school districts in the WISEdash system such the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). DPI’s goal is to put data in one place for educators to help save them time and to make it easier to recall how to use the software system. Experience shows that this strategy leads to more use of data for decision making.

Public Version to be Released Soon

As mentioned earlier, the DPI plans to release WISEdash in a public version this fall. The secure and public version utilize the same software system, which saves time for DPI staff to manage the data and get data onto district dashboards more quickly. Using the same system for the secure and public versions is also more user-friendly, making it easier

to remember where to look for data, what buttons to click, and how to find out what data mean.

The public version went through an extensive feedback process to arrive in its final form. User practice sessions, focus groups, and feedback surveys that included educators, parents, school board members, researchers, journalists, elected officials, and the DPI staff were all part of the review. Their insights led

to many changes to the software to make it more intuitive to use and helpful in answering any questions.

Transition from Old to New

In the past, school districts and the public relied on WINSS (Wisconsin’s Information Network for Successful Schools) for school data. The DPI plans a gradual transition from WINSS to WISEdash. This fall, in the first release of the public version,

like the rationale in using a common software system for data display and reporting, using a common inquiry method will make it easier for educators across the state to dig into the data for analysis and action planning.

The WISEExplore Work Team is in the exciting process of piloting and receiving feedback on the WISEExplore inquiry process. The process includes e-learning modules and valuable data inquiry methods that are free to use by Wisconsin educators through the DPI.

Training began this spring with a focus on the CESA personnel who will assist school district staff to gain secure access to the WISEdash tool. Two sessions were offered and a total of 32 CESA staff were trained. Each CESA then offered six days of WISEExplore data retreats in their region during the past summer.

Feedback from CESA retreat facilitators, data retreat participant survey data and work documents gathered from districts is being used to eval-

uate the effectiveness of the process, leading to refinement of future training and data inquiry process tools.

For more information visit, the website listed below. Online training resources around the data inquiry method are being stored in an accessible digital folder for any school district to access as they plan and conduct data retreats. □

wise.dpi.wi.gov/wise_dashhome

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

enrollment, attendance, state assessments, ACT scores, and Advanced Placement (AP) exam data are to be included. To help make the transition smooth, the WISEdash screens will have direct links to high school completion, discipline, staff, courses, and finance data, which remain in WINSS for now.

Eventually, the WISEdash public version will replace the commonly used WINSS system. WINSS has been a valuable tool for many years, but technical improvements in data systems software allow for more features, which WISEdash includes.

WISEdash will change the way the DPI provides the data we collect back to schools and districts, and the way school and district staff, as well as the public, can access data about Wisconsin public schools. ■

Kiefer is the Assistant State Superintendent Division for Libraries, Technology and Community Learning at the Department of Public Instruction.

KURT KIEFER, Assistant State Superintendent Division for Libraries, Technology and Community Learning at the Department of Public Instruction, answers questions pertaining to the new, online WISEdash school data warehouse.

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What do school board members need to know about the WISEdash system?

The WISEdash system is the new go-to place for data from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) about their districts and schools. WINSS (Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools) used to be that. We are transitioning that purpose to WISEdash.

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What role does WISEdash play in regards to the Common Core State Standards and educator and principal effectiveness?

WISEdash contains data that relate to the district and school accountability

systems. WISEdash can be a solid source of data for district and school improvement planning groups. WISEdash is being built as a data inquiry process for that very purpose.

To the extent that the state assessment measure state standards, and the new state assessments will align to the Common Core State Standards, then results from those assessments will find their way onto WISEdash dashboards once the assessment are deployed in districts after next year.

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How is WISEdash an improvement over the previous data system (WINSS)?

WISEdash provides many more sophisticated features for analyzing data including more filters and the ability to perform more comparisons of data. The graphics are improved, too.

And by building WISEdash into the dashboards, it helps districts directly on their data for improvement planning. □



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