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The Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard and the Strategic Data Project select 5 new education agencies to focus on using data to transform policy making

The Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University today announced five new partners for the Strategic Data Project (SDP). Albuquerque Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, Los Angeles Unified School District, The School District of Philadelphia, and The College-Ready Promise will work with SDP. SDP works with over ten school districts and charter management organizations that collectively serve over 1.5 million students, 65% of whom are eligible for free or reduced lunch and 82% of whom are ethnic minorities. The Strategic Data Project, launched in 2009 with support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is a national initiative that helps district and state education leaders increase student achievement by significantly improving how data analysis supports planning and policy-making.

The Strategic Data Project (SDP) partners with state and district leaders to transform the way leaders use data and analysis to support decision-making. Comprehensive data analysis provides policymakers with much needed information about trends on student graduation and college going, teacher- and school-level effectiveness, and human capital management. “In the last half century, other sectors have been transformed – whole new sectors created, even – by analyzing with increasing sophistication the vast amount of information now collected,” said Sarah Glover, executive director of SDP. “It is time for rigorous and thoughtful analysis to generate such transformation in education. By bringing together the right people, the right data, and the right analysis, we expect to see significant improvements in student achievement by greatly improving the quality of decisions education leaders make.”

SDP pursues two core strategies with each partner. We: 1) place top notch analytic leaders as “Fellows” in each partner site for two years, attracting new talent to the sector and bringing much needed analytic expertise to partners; and 2) conduct rigorous diagnostic analysis of teacher effectiveness and college-going success using agency data. Both the diagnostic work and the work of SDP Fellows provide a foundation for decisions that improve student achievement and allocate resources wisely. In addition, SDP is developing a set of tools and resources aimed at providing the education sector with critical information about how data can be used to transform the way decisions about teachers and students occur.

SDP has rapidly expanded over the past two years and is currently working with six other school districts: Boston Public Schools; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina; District of Columbia Public Schools; Ft. Worth Independent School District, Texas; Fulton County Schools, Georgia; and Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia.

SDP is housed at the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University (CEPR), a university-wide research center dedicated to bringing academic researchers together with policymakers to ensure that research is solving real problems. “CEPR has a track record of bringing academic researchers together with education policymakers so that real-time policy decisions in the sector are informed by data,” said Jon Fullerton, executive director of the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard. “SDP provides an opportunity for more state and local policymakers to have access to quality data analysis, an opportunity that can lead to decisions that positively impact student achievement on a large scale.”

For more information on the Strategic Data Project or the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard, visit www.gse.harvard.edu/sdp.