# Teacher-Student Data Link Stakeholder Workgroup Summary of Findings

**Submitted by:**

Education Commission of the States
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## Background

During the Fall of 2018, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) convened a stakeholder workgroup to examine the Teacher-Student Data Link (TSDL). With the exception of migrant data, CDE paused the TSDL collection in 2018-2019 to engage in conversations with partners about the collection's purpose, limitations and opportunities for improvement.

The TSDL Stakeholder Workgroup convened three times, for three hours each, to reflect on the overall purpose of the TSDL collection, discuss implementation challenges and establish improvement priorities. Among other things, the workgroup:

- Sought to understand the TSDL collection policy connections.

- Discussed the ability of the TSDL, as now conceptualized, to meet policy objectives.

- Discussed the value of having these data.

- Proposed ideas to make the data easier to submit while maintaining policy and legislative goals.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) hosted the TSDL Stakeholder Workgroup meetings and facilitated small and large group conversations with participants. ECS facilitators gathered participant feedback, captured common themes and helped participants draft, refine and prioritize recommendations to CDE. This report provides prioritized recommendations from the workgroup to CDE in addition to summary information and key takeaways from each of the three workgroup meetings.

## Participant List

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## Overview

The conversation with the workgroup participants evolved over the course of the three meetings. During the first two meetings, CDE provided the participants with more information about why the TSDL was implemented, how it operates and how the data are used. This provided a foundation for the recommendations that emerged by the end of meeting three.

Generally, participants agreed that:

- The TSDL collection, in its current form, is not meeting its intended purpose/policy objectives.
- The data, as it is currently submitted and reported, is not useful to the state or to districts.
- An improved collection—tied to useful district reports—could prove valuable to the state and to districts.

## Recommendations

The workgroup participants were appreciative of CDE's commitment to support and improve the TSDL collection by providing ongoing technical support to district data personnel, as needed, and pausing the collection to engage in conversations with stakeholders. Participants proposed the following recommendations to CDE to 1) improve the TSDL collection, and 2) make the collection more useful to districts:

### Improving the collection*

To improve the TSDL collection, participants suggested that CDE first

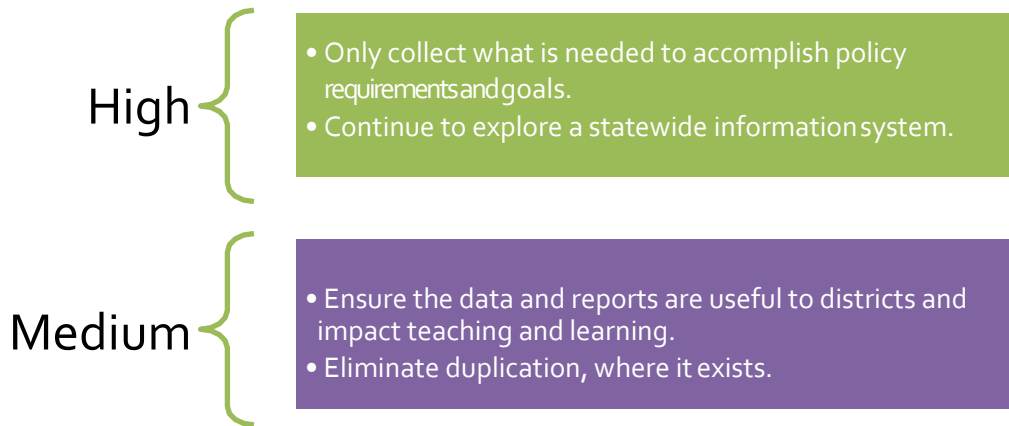1. Provide clarity around the entire data collection process.

   *For the TSDL collection AND all other collections: What data is collected from districts? Why and when is it collected?*

2. Create a TSDL schematic.

   *What is required by statute and what is required by regulation? What are the associated data inputs/fields?*

After this is complete, participants recommended that CDE, in order of priority

High
- Only collect what is needed to accomplish policy requirements and goals.
- Continue to explore a statewide information system.

Medium
- Ensure the data and reports are useful to districts and impact teaching and learning.
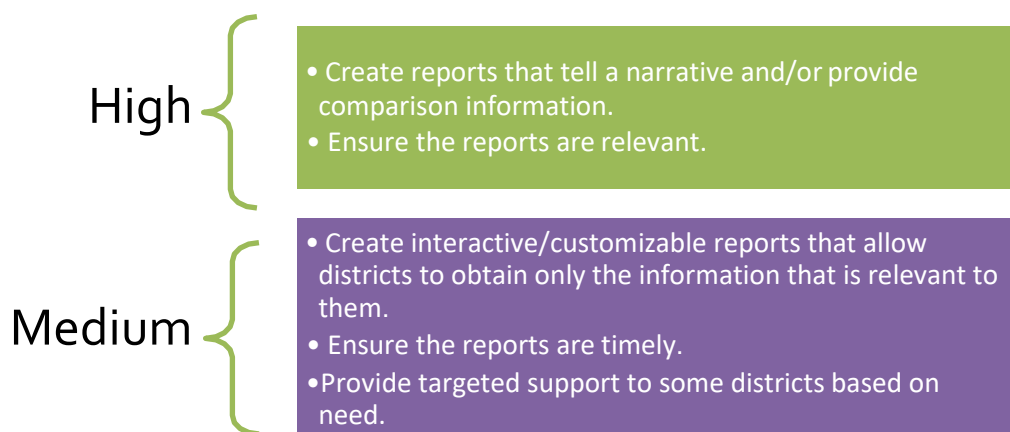- Eliminate duplication, where it exists.

The following recommendations to improve the collection made it through to the end but did not receive any votes when participants were asked to prioritize their top two: 1) break the collection into smaller collections; 2) continue to hold the public reporting requirement until the data is reflective/representative; and 3) align the timing of the collection with the Civil Rights Data Collection.

*Two stakeholder participants later reiterated their belief that statutory mandate is not sufficient to support TSDL continuation and requested evidence that the TSDL data supports the policy goals before improvements are made to the collection.

## Making the collection more useful to districts

To improve the usefulness of the information/reports, participants suggested that CDE, in order of priority:

High
- Create reports that tell a narrative and/or provide comparison information.
- Ensure the reports are relevant.

Medium
- Create interactive/customizable reports that allow districts to obtain only the information that is relevant to them.
- Ensure the reports are timely.
- Provide targeted support to some districts based on need.

The following recommendation to improve the usefulness of the reports/information made it through to the end but did not receive any votes when participants were asked to prioritize their top two: 1) provide informational resources for the community.

**Communication**

Participants requested that CDE maintain communication with the workgroup members and inform them of the changes made in response to the workgroup recommendations.

**Next Steps**

CDE will review the TSDL Stakeholder Workgroup recommendations and create a TSDL action plan. When it is ready, CDE will share the plan with workgroup participants. CDE will continue to communicate information and updates to workgroup participants.

# Meeting Summary Information

## Meeting One | September 25th

**Purpose**

Participants will acquire or solidify factual information about why the Teacher-Student Data Link (TSDL) was implemented, how it operates and how the data are used. Participants will discuss the value in having these data.

**Agenda**

- ECS Welcome
- Facilitator and Participant Introductions
- TSDL Background: When, What, Why, and How? (CDE)
    - TSDL Policy Connections
    - Educator Effectiveness
    - Educator Preparation Programs
    - Course Taking Reports
    - Migrant Education Data Collection
- Individual Brainstorm, Small Group Discussion (ECS)
    - TSDL Purpose and Outcomes
    - TSDL Values
    - State vs. Local Role
- Small Group Report Out
- Large Group Discussion: Common Themes and Prioritization (ECS)
- Wrap-up and Next Steps

**Discussion Overview**

During the individual brainstorm and small group discussion, participants considered the four questions below.

TSDL Purpose and Outcomes

1.  *What is the intent of the TSDL collection?*

    According to the participants, the TSDL collection is intended to: 1) bring heightened focus to issues of equity; 2) capture data to inform practice, provide accountability and improve teaching and learning at the school and district levels; 3) support district comparisons; and 4) meet statutory requirements. A few stakeholder participants expressed a belief that statutory mandate is not sufficient to support TSDL continuation and requested evidence that the data supports the policy goals.

2.  *Can the TSDL, as now conceptualized and with the current systems and structure, meet its intended purpose/policy objectives?*

    Participants agreed that the current collection is not meeting its intended purpose/policy objectives. The data,

as it is currently submitted, is low quality, incomparable and not useful to CDE or to districts.

<u>TSDL Values</u>

3. *Thinking outside of the limitations of the data collection process (to be address in a later discussion), do you see value in the information and data TSDL could provide?*

   Some participants saw value in the overarching purpose of the TSDL collection; others did not. Generally, participants: 1) were not convinced that the TSDL collection is comprised of the right data to meet its intended purpose; and/or 2) struggled to look past its current limitations to see how the data could become useful and comparable.

4. *What are the pros and cons of collecting the TSDL data at the state level?*

   Some participants were able to list potential benefits of an improved data collection tied to helpful district reports, including: 1) providing valuable information on issues related to equity and teacher effectiveness; 2) improving educator preparation programs; 3) providing trends analyses; 4) measuring intervention strategies; 5) supporting information-sharing regarding best practices across districts; and 6) contributing to the Civil Rights Data Collection.

**Key Takeaways**

1. Stakeholders need more detailed information about the collection. What are the statutory and regulatory requirements? What are the data inputs? What is the collection being used for currently, and what will it be used for in the future?

2. Stakeholders don't see value in the current collection but can envision how an improved collection could prove valuable to the state and to districts.

## Meeting Two | October 16ᵗʰ

**Purpose**

Participants will solidify their understanding of the Teacher-Student Data Link (TSDL) and brainstorm opportunities for improving the TSDL collection. Time permitting, participants will begin drafting recommendations to CDE.

**Agenda**

- ECS Welcome
- Facilitator and Participant Introductions
- Understanding the TSDL (CDE)
    - Presentation based on questions raised during meeting #1
    - Q&A
- Small Group Discussion (ECS)
    - Investigating Scenarios
- Small Group Report Out
- Large Group Discussion: Common Themes and Prioritization (ECS)
- Wrap-up and Next Steps

**Discussion Overview**

During the "investigating scenario" small group discussion, participants considered the four questions below.

If Colorado retains some or all of the current policy requirements:

1.  *How does CDE meet these requirements well?*

    Generally, participants agreed that CDE needs better data submissions from the districts. To meet statutory requirements and obtain high-quality TSDL submissions, participants suggested CDE consider: 1) tying specific and fewer data inputs to each statutory requirement; 2) reducing redundancies in data submissions (e.g. can any of the data can be pulled from other existing collections?); 3) breaking the collection apart into smaller, separate collections; 4) pulling the data from a statewide information system; and 5) providing training/professional development opportunities to districts to support the initial collection.

2.  *What could be done to improve the collection?*

    Generally, participants agreed that CDE should consider how to make the collection less onerous and more useful for districts. (See participant recommendations under question #1.)

3.  *What analyses would you expect from CDE?*

    Participants agreed that the reports should be reliable, useful, specific and actionable for districts. To meet this need, participants suggested CDE consider: 1) releasing the reports in a timely manner; 2) moving away from data "snapshots" and instead provide qualitative information and cross-district analyses, particularly among like districts; and 3) providing mentorship to district personnel based on data findings. Participants suggested that meetings could be arranged to showcase successes, facilitate ongoing learning and provide connections to targeted supports.

4.  *How might the reports be used locally?*

    Participants agreed that an improved and reliable collection could provide helpful information to districts. Participants suggested the reports could: 1) provide helpful information specific to the migrant student population; 2) provide information used to assess educator preparation program and teacher quality; 3) provide information used to assign struggling students to high quality teachers; 4) provide course participation information valuable for assessing course rigor; and 5) support district comparisons, particularly among like districts.

**Key Takeaways**

The following key recommendations were made during meeting two to 1) improve the collection, and 2) make the collection more useful to districts:

Improving the collection

1.  CDE should consider how to tie specific and fewer data inputs to each statutory requirement.
2.  CDE should consider how to reduce redundancies in data submissions (e.g. can any of the data can be pulled from other existing collections?).
3.  CDE should consider how to break the collection apart into smaller, separate collections.
4.  CDE should consider how to pull the data from a statewide information system.
5.  CDE should consider providing training/professional development opportunities to districts to support the initial collection.

Making the collection more useful to districts

1. CDE should consider how to release the reports in a timely manner.
2. CDE should consider moving away from data "snapshots" and instead provide qualitative information and cross-district analyses, particularly among like districts.
3. CDE should consider providing mentorship to district personnel based on data findings. Meetings could be arranged to showcase successes, facilitate ongoing learning and provide connections to targeted supports.

## Meeting Three | November 13th

**Purpose**

Participants will revisit the work group goals, discuss key takeaways from meeting #2, and draft, refine and prioritize recommendations to CDE.

**Agenda**

- ECS Welcome
- Overview and Facilitated Discussion (CDE)
  - Revisit work group goals
  - Summarize and discuss pros and cons of key takeaways from meeting #2
- Small Group Work (ECS)
  - Draft recommendations to CDE to:
    - improve the collection (Group 1)
    - improve the usefulness of the information/reports (Group 2)
- Small Group Report Outs and Large Group Discussion (ECS)
  - Refine recommendations to CDE
- Participant Voting
  - Prioritize recommendations to CDE
- Wrap-up and Next Steps

**Discussion Overview**

CDE walked through each of the key recommendations from meeting #2. In a large group format, participants brainstormed potential benefits and challenges of each of the proposals (see Meeting #3 Notes for additional details). Participants then broke into two groups to finalize their recommendations to 1) improve the collection and 2) improve the usefulness of the information/reports provided by CDE to districts. Once the small group participants agreed upon their recommendations, they shared them with the large group. Participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback and/or add additional recommendations. After the large group agreed upon the final recommendations, participants were led through a voting activity and asked to select their top two recommendations for each category.

**Key Takeaways**

The following key recommendations were made during meeting three to 1) improve the collection, and 2) make the collection more useful to districts:

Improving the collection

To improve the TSDL collection, participants suggested that CDE first:

- Provide clarity around the entire data collection process (For TSDL and all other collections. What is collected, why, and when?).
- Create a TSDL schematic: What is required by statute? What is required by regulation? What are the associated data inputs/fields?

After this is complete, participants recommended CDE:

- Only collect what is needed to accomplish policy requirements and goals. **(seven votes)**
- Continue to explore a statewide information system. **(four votes)**
  - *The information system should be customizable to districts.*
  - *Districts should be able to confirm that the data is ready for submission.*
- Ensure that the data and reports impact teaching and learning. **(three votes**)
- Eliminate duplication, where it exists. **(two votes)**
  - *Consider the entire data collection process and ensure the same data are not collected multiple times for multiple collections.*

The following recommendations to improve the collection made it through to the end but did not receive any votes when participants were asked to prioritize their top two:

CDE should:

- Break the collection into smaller collections.
- Continue to hold public reporting requirement until data is reflective/representative.
- Align the timing of the TSDL collection with the Civil Rights Data Collection
  - *Every other year.*

Making the collection more useful to districts

To improve the usefulness of the information/reports, participants suggested that CDE:

- Create reports that tell a narrative and/or provide comparison information. **(five votes)**
  - *What does the data tell us?*
- Ensure the reports are relevant. **(four votes)**
- Create interactive/customizable reports that allow districts to obtain only the information that is relevant to them. **(three votes)**
  - *Create an interactive database that allows districts to pull the information they want.*
  - *Add a pop-up after the data submission that allows districts to select what related reports/information they would like to receive back from CDE.*
- Ensure the reports are timely**. (two votes)**
- Provide targeted support to some districts based on need. **(two votes)**
  - *e.g. Small, low-performing districts.*

The following recommendation to improve the usefulness of the reports/information made it through to the end but did not receive any votes when participants were asked to prioritize their top two:

- Provide informational resources for the community.
  - *For districts that provide data reports/information to their community, CDE could provide additional resources and translated documents.*