

Talking about the Facts of Education Data with Policymakers

DQC prepared this document to help its state and national partners respond accurately to policymakers who have questions about education data.

QUESTION: Is the federal government using Common Core to collect data about individual students and educators?

ANSWER: NO. Common Core is NOT a mechanism for federal or state data collection.

State implementation of [Common Core and its related assessments](#) **do not** require any new federal or state data collection beyond the aggregate data (i.e., data about a large group of students) authorized by ESEA reauthorization in 2001 and **do not** require the sharing of individual student data among states or with the federal government.

In addition, [several federal laws prohibit](#) the creation of a federal database with students' personally identifiable information (e.g., name, place and date of birth, SSN, or any other information that could be used to distinguish an individual's identity). The federal government also **does not** have access to the student-level information housed in secure state data systems and can only publicly report aggregate-level data.

QUESTION: Are states selling student-level data to vendors and corporations?

ANSWER: States and districts CANNOT and DO NOT sell student information.

No. Out of necessity, states and districts have always contracted with for-profit and nonprofit partners to securely manage, analyze, and store their data so that they can provide timely, meaningful, and useful information to the education stakeholders who need it to improve student achievement. Even when a state or district contracts with a vendor or nonprofit for data management technologies, the state or district retains ownership of all data, and the vendor cannot access or use the data in any way they are not specifically authorized to do through their contract. The aggregate-level information that states and districts collect is used for compliance and accountability purposes and for informing policy, practice, and research to improve education and support student success.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)) ensures that any individual or entity that a state or district authorizes to access its data must use student data only for authorized purposes, protect the data from further disclosure or other uses, and destroy the data when no longer needed for the authorized purpose. In addition, most states have their own [laws and procedures](#) that protect student privacy, laws that limit who has [access to student data](#), and [governance bodies](#) charged with monitoring student data collection and protecting privacy.

QUESTION: Is the federal government collecting 400 pieces of student data, including religious preference and health information?

ANSWER: NO. The "400 data points" reference comes from the National Education Data Model (NEDM), a technical tool that states and districts developed to show how data could be organized to inform policy and practice, with the goal of improving student achievement.

The NEDM is **not** a data collection and **does not** contain any data. The model references 400 data elements, but is **not at all** related to Common Core or any federal initiative or funding. No state or district is submitting data to the federal government based on this model. The NEDM was funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), managed by the NCES Forum (composed of state and district representatives from every state), and received technical assistance from the Council of Chief State School Officers. The federal government did not contribute to the model and does not use the model for any purpose.