1/03/2012

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Portland, Oregon

Members of the Oregon Education Investment Board,

I attended the recent Oregon Leadership Summit. Following a small group workshop on education reform, I delved into Oregon's efforts to create a longitudinal database through Project ALDER (Advancing Longitudinal Data for Educational Reform).

Project ALDER is the Oregon Trail for Oregon's knowledge economy. The depth and breadth of Project ALDER is staggering.[1]

Project ALDER is prescriptive. Standardized tests, including "common formative" tests will be the data points for data-mining, thrusting more burdens and pressures on teachers who are expected to overcompensate for growing poverty. The longitudinal database is a costly diversion of the knowledge economy and it infringes on confidentiality and civil rights.

It's been nearly three years since President Obama proclaimed in his first address to the Joint Session of Congress, *"In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite."[2]*

The knowledge economy measures its return on investment of human capital, which, no doubt, explains the sweeping changes in Oregon's education governance and public education restructured as "a seamless, outcomes-focused system." Shifted from a manufacturing to a service sector economic base, the knowledge economy is seen as the latest stage of development in global economic restructuring.[3]

The work of the OEIB follows the tracks that are already laid down by Project ALDER. Oregon's waiver application states the "data elements and data collection for educator evaluation systems will support the broader accountability system and continuous improvement processes." Multiple measures will be used measure student achievement and growth, which, in turn will be "significant contributor to the overall performance rating of teachers and administrators."[4] How relevant are these reassurances when computerized data drives decision-making?

Oregon was a major beneficiary of the knowledge economy as one of only two states awarded three federal grants (totaling nearly $19 million) to help states design, implement and enhance Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS).[5]

Project ALDER, the largest award, builds upon the work of the first two grants.

- The Open Source Laboratory on the OSU campus serves as the data warehouse merging data from multiple sources. [6]
- Collaboration between employment , K-12and higher education allows systematic tracking of student education progress and workforce outcomes (including employment, wages and earnings) over time.
- A social security number will be necessary to track students through postsecondary education and beyond into the workforce.

Project ALDER has firewalls, but we must acknowledge that data can be carelessly handled and increasingly mined or hacked for abuse or misuse.[7] The Open Source Laboratory depends on contributions to support it. They quote platinum sponsor Google: "Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."[8] Could sponsorship by Internet giants breach confidentiality of this database in unknown ways?

The Privacy Act of 1974 explicitly states a government agency cannot "deny to any individual any right, benefit, or privilege provided by law because of such individual's refusal to disclose his social security account number" and requires agencies to provide a SSN disclosure notice.[9]

An unnecessary collection of SSNs is a significant vulnerability for young children. Identity thieves often target children because they have clean credit histories, and their

records may be used for years before they realize their identity has been used for criminal activities.

A July 2010 report[10] from the Social Security Administration Inspector General acknowledged the growing trend among State Departments of Education to establish longitudinal databases and include SSNs of K-12 children. While the SSA cannot prohibit states or schools from collecting and using SSNs, they concluded "…there are many risks associated with schools using SSNs as primary identifiers and we actively discourage use of SSNs."

Advocates for Human Rights[11] recommend schools assign a school-generated I.D. number to comply with Plyler v Doe and guard the confidentiality of immigration status under the Family Education and Privacy Act (FERPA).[12]

The easiest way to decrease an achievement gap is to devalue knowledge with lower paying jobs—something recent college graduates are facing.[13] But the best example is the teacher, a career that has waned in prestige and compensation for decades. A career that seems on the verge of replacement by virtual education.

Parents and taxpayers must see research that demonstrates proven advantages of standardized curriculum-based measurement over teachers' authentic formative assessments. Without that, any growth measured in a longitudinal database will be flawed—the bitter irony of a knowledge economy that diverts resources toward Orwellian ends.

Kris Alman

The following are excerpts from Project ALDER.

During Project ALDER, stakeholder teams will design and implement reports that link formative and summative data with functionality that allows users the capability to view both types of data at the same time, such as a simultaneous plot of data from EasyCBM and OAKS. Access to this information would support a multi-trait/multi-measure approach to instructional decisions that would help to ensure data-driven decision making is based on measures that have depth and breadth. This also allows for an analysis of the relationship between formative assessments, state assessments and other measures, which can help schools develop a systematic approach to using lowcost, easily accessible data to identifying whether or not students are on track to mastering the state content standards.

Project ALDER will add integration with EasyCBM through the new District EasyCBM, released in August of 2009, a tool to aggregate CBM data that provides a more robust teacher-students linkage (e.g., it allows for multiple teachers in reading and math).

ODE will develop the capability for districts to store information on two user-selected formative assessment measures (e.g., DIBELS, AIMSweb – two widely adopted CBM systems). In addition, ODE has been developing a standardized criterion-referenced kindergarten readiness survey measure. The measure is ready for validation trials and will undergo a formal content validity review.

During Project ALDER, ODE will request and store SAT, PSAT, and, where available, ACT data at the student level linked by SSID. When not available from a vendor, ODE will develop a repeatable systemic approach to attaching an SSID to these data using established matching criteria. These data can then be used as part of the operational data store for additional information regarding student progress toward college readiness and as part of program evaluations.

Transitions to non-Oregon postsecondary institutions will be tracked through participation in the National Student Clearinghouse.

Recognizing the political challenges of overcoming pervasive assumptions that the linkage is always tied to teacher evaluation and sanctions, Project ALDER contains a significant educational factor and relies heavily on building trust and creating a shared vision for the use of the linked data.

Collaboration with the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, an external Oregon agency that issues teacher licenses and tracks teacher pre-service and inservice activities, will be significantly expanded.

Oregon Department of Education – US Department of Education

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Site Visit

August 1, 2011

Project ALDER: Advancing Longitudinal Data for Educational Reform

Grant Name: 2009-ARRA Grant – Statewide Longitudinal Data System Recovery Act Grants

Award Number: R384A100053

Award Amount: $10,475,997

Performance Period: July 2010 – June 2013

Project Director: Josh Klein

Website: http://alder.orvsd.org/

Outcomes:

• Design and implement K-12 teacher-student linkage components that allow subsequent reporting to support instructional decision making and potential analysis of teacher-level variables that may impact student achievement at the elementary and secondary levels.

• Develop policies, procedures and partnerships needed to expand collection and integration of early childhood, post-secondary success and workforce data.

• Design and implement an active multi-state and multi-sector data exchange with the states of Washington, Hawaii and Idaho through the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

• Create a P-20 Operational Data Store (ODS), which consolidates data instead of splitting data between current transactional systems and an initial data store. The P-20 ODS will be designed to decrease the time between data collection and reporting, and to support the multi-state and multi-sector data exchanges.

• Develop a comprehensive statewide data quality plan, including a policy manual with associated governance, which builds on Oregon's strong efforts to date.

Project OFAR: Oregon Formative Assessment Resources

Grant Name: 2009 Grant – Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems

Award Number: R372A090048

Award Amount: $3,696,615

Performance Period: May 2009 – April 2012

Project Director: Josh Klein

Website: http://ofar.orvsd.org/

Outcomes:

• Integrate the infrastructure already extant in the Oregon Department of Education that supports the statewide assessment data with the University of Oregon's formative evaluation system easyCBM, using standardized curriculum-based measurement.

• Support a large-scale database mining system for researchers across the country to conduct empirical investigations on either or both of the longitudinal data sets.

o Distal measures using annual statewide tests

o Proximal curriculum-based measures (measures collected monthly or more often)

• Develop a web-based curriculum for the professional development of teachers-in-training who are attending one of the seven state institutions of higher education; these modules address assessment literacy as well as data-driven decision-making and are

designed to be incorporated into courses offered as part of each institution's teacher-training program.

Oregon DATA Project: Direct Access to Achievement

Grant Name: 2007 Grant – Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems

Award Number: R372A070026

Award Amount: $4,705,977

Performance Period: September 2007 – August 2011

Project Director: Josh Klein

Website: http://oregondataproject.org/

Outcomes:

• A highly structured module of policies, procedures and curriculum for professional development.

• A comprehensive survey of the data needs of key stakeholders in the Oregon school system, from the public, parent and student levels through the school, district, regional and state levels.

• A comprehensive survey of business needs.

• Creation of an enterprise-wide data architecture that draws from analysis of information needs, includes all data elements required for reporting, and specifies a data model, data dictionary, business rules, and quality assurance procedures.

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[1] http://alder.orvsd.org/sites/alder.orvsd.org/files/ALDER_Grant_Narrative.pdf

[2] http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Fact-Sheet-Expanding-the-Promise-of-Education-in-America

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_restructuring Sociologists affirm a knowledge economy ensues in massive public de-investment, privatization, less public accountability and greater unevenness in the distribution of resources.

[4]http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3475 pages 102-105

[5] http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=381 Oregon DATA (Direct Access to Achievement) Project and Project OFAR (Oregon Formative Assessment Resources). The DATA Project has run its course and funding for Project OFAR ends in April.

[6]http://alder.orvsd.org/sites/alder.orvsd.org/files/USED_Site_Visit_Session_Materials_Binder.pdf p. 83

[7]http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2011/12/data_breaches_in_2011_carry_un.html

[8] http://osuosl.org/members

[9] http://www.justice.gov/opcl/1974ssnu.htm Agencies must also state whether or not disclosure is mandatory or voluntary and what uses will be made of the SSN. (Section 7 of the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552a note)

[10] http://oig.ssa.gov/newsroom/news-releases/social-security-inspector-general-report-kindergarten-through-12th-grade The U.S. Department of Education does not direct the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program to collect them.

[11] http://www.energyofanation.org/sites/25e1f498-741c-478a-8a08-aa486d8533a5/uploads/Undocumented_Students__National_.pdf

[12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plyler_v._Doe A 1982 Supreme Court decision that struck down a state statute denying funding for education to illegal immigrant children.

[13]http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/Work_Trends_May_2011.pdf Half of recent college graduates are working in jobs that don't require college