

## Connecticut: State Data Policy and Data Systems

Connecticut collects all information required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB): student performance by grade and content. Individual districts can use off-the-shelf tests in years that are not covered by the state assessments, but they do not submit their scores to the state. Outside of FRPA, the state does not limit data distribution. Several state statutes mandate data collection (Connecticut General Statutes 10-224). Currently, no state agency can link teacher and student data. One staffer noted, "It's a project for the future, but most manpower is devoted to expanding testing to the off grades required by NCLB."

Connecticut maintains a teacher certification database and an employment database, known as the Certified Staff File, which are linked to one another, enabling state officials to determine where licensed teachers are employed and if they are appropriately certified to teach. To enable this link, the state uses teachers' Social Security numbers (SSNs), allowing researchers to follow the same teacher in each database. The certification database includes teacher demographic data, a record of the teacher's licensure area and scores on state licensure tests, and the name of the institution or agency that prepared the teacher for certification. However, data are only available for certification institutions or agencies in Connecticut.

The only teacher data that cannot be released is the SSN, but aggregate analysis is possible. The Division of Evaluation and Research has its own Web server that is available online to house most of the information. Yet, this information is public, and researchers only need to e-mail the division for any data requests. The SDE conducts a fall hiring survey of school districts that is available online.

Currently, credentialing and teacher characteristic databases are separate. They can be merged right now, but the capability is limited. The certification data system has been redesigned recently to include the major and degree at point of entry. Connecticut is unique in that it has an identifier to enable linking to the credentialing database. However, the database does not include the teachers' major, minor, or grade-point average. The Certified Staff File, which was mandated by state statute, includes information on teachers' experience, their race and gender, their salary, the grades they are teaching, and the percentage of time they spend teaching each subject. It also indicates whether teachers have taken leadership roles, such as department chair or curriculum coordinator. Starting this year, the Certified Staff File will begin including information on graduating institution and degrees (possibly also the high school from which teacher education students graduated).

State officials say the linked databases have proven useful as management tools. Districts provide the information, which is compiled in school profiles. These profiles provide data on teacher quality and student performance and are used to make a variety of policy decisions. In addition, the state department of education uses the data for an annual survey of teacher supply and demand. Despite this value, the database has some limitations. One of the most significant is technical: The certification database uses COBOL, an old software language that few people use anymore. Once current

administrators are replaced by a newer generation, state officials say, few people will know how to maintain the database. In addition, the data the systems provide have limits. By including information only on in-state teacher preparation in the certification file, the database does not enable administrators to track the background of teachers who may have been prepared in other states.

State higher education and K–12 agency staff have indicated that, despite the achievement gap in the state, the teacher quality piece in Connecticut is a non-indicator. They report only 1.2% teachers are not highly qualified, so teacher quality is not an issue. The certification requirements are so rigorous that most have credentials. However, the state is planning to conduct a teacher supply and demand study and a study on institutional barriers on recruitment at the district level focusing on school culture. One staffer noted, “There is an idea that urban districts are the training ground for new teachers, so we want to test to see if that is a myth. We have found that there is a certain type of teacher who selects urban districts, and they pay well.” Occasionally the state produces a report, “Characteristics of School Teachers and Student Support Staff by District.”