

From Measuring What Matters to Doing What Matters

The Institute for Research and Reform in Education and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation are pleased to announce ***From Measuring What Matters to Doing What Matters (DWM)*** – an opportunity for Texas school districts and their high schools to strengthen their data reporting systems, engage in powerful data-driven dialogue; and develop specific reform strategies to increase student performance and commitment.

What is DWM?

DWM is a set of technical assistance and professional development activities that help districts:

- Create more accessible, useful and timely reports of critical indicators including:
 - attendance
 - progress toward graduation and college admission
 - post-secondary status
 - academic achievement, and
 - student engagement, beliefs and behavior;
- Provide easy access to these reports by teachers and administrators;
- Use these reports to design and assess targeted interventions and systemic reform strategies; and
- Provide leadership training at every level and all parts of the system to make all of the above happen.

Who Is Involved In the Project and Over What Time Period?

DWM is a partnership between the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF), the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) and up to three Texas school districts. The first phase of the project begins in late Winter 2009 and continues through Spring 2010.

Why Is DWM Needed?

Research on school improvement places data-driven dialogue at the heart of any successful reform effort.¹ Two major challenges face educators trying to make data-driven dialogue work in their schools and districts: how, when and what data are currently available to teachers and administrators; and lack of well-developed strategies for converting information about students into actions benefitting them.

DWM addresses both of these challenges.

¹ Cawlti & Protheroe, 2001; Massell & Goertz, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000; Snipes, Doolittle & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003.

What is the History of this Work?

Measuring What Matters (MWM) was developed by IRRE as part of the comprehensive high school reform framework *First Things First*.² MWM tools and processes have been developed and field-tested over IRRE's ten years of experience supporting high school reform in nine states – including five districts in Texas. These applications of MWM involved diverse student information systems and hundreds of district- and building-based educators. In doing this work, IRRE and its district and school partners learned some hard lessons – all of which will guide this initiative's activities. Examples include:

- Too much data can undermine data-driven decision making as much as too little data.
- Data must be on time as well as on point.
- Data now available to school and district staff are often not actionable. For example, average daily attendance isn't actionable; knowing the names of students who missed more than a day of school last week is actionable.
- Teachers and administrators won't access and use data to drive their daily work unless they are expected and supported to do so every day.

What Are the Project Activities?

Over a 17-month period, IRRE will work with participating districts and schools to:

- Examine current data reporting activities and technical capacities to find out what's needed to produce more timely, credible and actionable reports on student progress.
- Identify and generate the highest priority student outcome reports without totally revamping your entire technology reporting system.
- Build district- and school-level capacity to engage in effective data-driven dialogue using these reports.
- Enact targeted interventions and generate systemic reform strategies to improve key student outcomes at the building and district levels.
- Collaborate with partner districts and schools in this project to strengthen each others' work on all of the above.

What Costs Are Associated with DWM?

All costs associated with IRRE support of DWM activities and some costs of district and school participation in the DWM network are covered. Districts are expected to cover costs associated with their staff participating in all other project activities.

How Do Districts and Schools Get Involved in DWM?

Districts with one or more comprehensive high schools with at least 50% of their students qualifying for free or reduced lunch will be invited to submit applications to participate in this effort. Applications will be due by January 15, 2009. Site visits will be scheduled for approved applications during January and February 2009. Three districts (and up to nine high schools across these districts) will be selected by March 1, 2009.

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