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To: District Superintendents of Schools, Superintendents of Public Schools, and Administrators of Charter Schools

From: James A. Kadamus 

Subject: Statewide Data Collection Activities in Support of the State Learning Standards and the State Accountability System

In February 2004, I wrote you that the State Education Department (SED) is developing a State Repository System to reduce the local burden of data collection, provide data analysis tools to local educational agencies, and provide a consistent and widely understood approach for collecting, storing, analyzing and using data about students. The system will give teachers and administrators access to analyses of assessment results and links to related curricular and instructional materials. The February 2004 memorandum, which provides an overview of the comprehensive system, can be found at the following Web address:

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/deputy/Documents/02-04studentid-fm.htm> .

Beginning in 2005-06, all K-8 data formerly reported in LEAP must be submitted through the State Repository System. The Department will discontinue use of the LEAP data system after the 2004-05 school year. We will continue to use STEP in the 2005-06 school year as we transition to full implementation of the new system. By the 2006-07 school year, all data elements now reported through STEP, LEAP and selected other Department data collection forms will be reported through the State Repository System. The goal is to consolidate the Department's collection of data based on individual student data in the repository system.

I write now to provide additional information on the repository system and to outline your responsibilities for participating in this system in the 2005-06 school year.

State Repository System

The purpose of the State Repository System is to provide a single source of standardized individual student records for analysis at the local, regional, and State levels to improve student performance and to meet State and federal accountability requirements. The three repository levels, each using the eScholar® data warehouse system and data model, will hold enrollment, demographic, programmatic, and performance data. The data source for these repositories will be the student management systems in charter schools and school districts. Attachment A provides a schematic of the organization of these repositories.

Level 1 Repositories will be implemented and operated by Regional Information Centers (RICs), Yonkers, Syracuse, and New York City. These repositories will be used by school districts to prepare data for submission to the Level 2 Repository. Each Level 1 Repository must include the data elements defined in the *New York State Dictionary of Reporting Data Elements for Use in 2005-06*. The users of each Level 1 Repository may include additional data elements in the repository to meet local or regional needs. All charter schools and school districts except the Big 5 must participate in a Level 1 Repository operated by a Regional Information Center.

The State has contracted with Western New York Regional Information Center to develop the Level 2 and Level 3 Repositories. The Level 2 Repository will hold records for all public school students and provide educators and policy makers with a resource for data-driven decisions to improve curriculum and instruction. Level 2 records will include student names and unique identifiers, assigned by the New York State Student Identifier System (defined below). Data in the Level 1 and 2 Repositories will be available only to users with a legitimate educational interest.

The Level 3 Repository will replicate the student records on the Level 2 Repository; however, as records are transferred to Level 3, student names will be removed and the unique identifiers will be encrypted to protect the privacy of students. Level 3 will provide data for the New York State School Report Card, for determining the accountability status of public schools and districts, to meet federal reporting requirements, to inform policy decisions, and to meet other State needs for individual student data. Standard aggregations of data from the Level 3 Repository will be placed in the Annual Reporting Database to provide the general public with access to school performance data.

Districts must transfer student data from their student management system(s) to the Level 1 Repository. RICs and student-management-system vendors can assist districts with developing procedures for transforming data to the required format for loading into the Level 1 Repositories. In 2005-06, special procedures will be available to districts for entering data not available in the local student management system into the Level 1 Repository. From the Level 1 Repository, districts can obtain verification reports with individual student data and summary counts to ensure that data are accurate. If errors are found, districts must correct data in the district source systems and transfer corrected data to the Level 1 Repository. The district must certify that the Level 1 Repository data are accurate. Only data certified to be accurate by district officials will be transferred to the Level 2 Repository. Additional verification reports, allowing districts to preview their report card and accountability data, will be available from the Level 2 Repository. These reports will provide districts with a second opportunity to identify and correct errors. Approximately 11 times annually, at scheduled intervals, selected data will be transferred from the Level 2 Repository to the Level 3 Repository.

A key element of the State Repository System is the New York State Student Identification System (NYSSIS). SED developed this system to assign a stable, unique student identifier to every pre-kindergarten through grade 12 student in New York State. Unique identifiers will enhance student data reporting and improve data quality and ensure that students can be tracked longitudinally as they transfer between districts. In the Level 2 Repository, each student record will be uniquely identified with a 10-digit number assigned when the student first enters a State public school or participating nonpublic school. The Level 3 Repository will contain an encrypted version of this identifier on each student record.

The Analytical Tool and Virtual Learning System

SED is committed to providing administrators and teachers the capacity to use the information in the repository system to improve instruction and thereby student performance. Through the New York State Virtual Learning System (NYSVLS), SED will provide curriculum resources.

SED is soliciting proposals from vendors to design and implement a Web-based Analytical Tool that district and school staff can use to view student records stored on the Level 2 Repositories. Educators can use the Analytical Tool to:

- access the verification reports needed to certify data accuracy;
- create standard reports and analyses, using data from the grades 3-8 English language arts and mathematics assessments, the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), and, ultimately, other State assessments, including Regents examinations;
- create custom reports based on Level 2 data to meet the unique needs of districts and schools; and
- provide school superintendents with access to the New York State Report Cards before they are publicly available.

The reports for the grades 3-8 assessments will replace the individual-student and district- and school-summary reports now provided for the elementary- and middle-level English language arts and mathematics assessments and the NYSAA. The reports will be designed to enable school administrators, teachers and parents to better meet the instructional needs of individual students. These reports will be available for viewing and printing from the Level 2 Repository within one week after the Department certifies the correctness of the reported scores.

Using the SED Analytical Tool, the public will have access to summary reports and data analyses on the Annual Reporting Database created using data on the Level 3 Repository. The New York State Report Cards will be produced from this database and viewed using the Analytical Tool.

To further assist districts to improve instruction, we are developing an education portal, the New York State Virtual Learning System (NYSVLS). VLS provides instructional content to teachers that will enable students to meet the State's learning standards. The Web portal organizes resources and tools to provide "one-stop shopping" for instructional needs. This centralized place will eliminate the time and effort that is involved in searching and researching appropriate educational resources and will ensure that resources are of high quality. Online professional development opportunities will also be available through VLS.

Local Data Systems

The key to successful participation in the statewide data system is a district student management system that contains accurate and complete data for State reporting and subscribes to the appropriate standards for format and content. Districts that accomplish this goal will find that transferring data to the Level 1 Repository is an efficient process. Districts are strongly advised to appoint a data administrator to coordinate and lead the collection of data, oversee changes in and maintenance of the local data management system, and chair a committee of

district staff charged with ensuring the accuracy of data. The Department will provide leadership, guidance and support of local data systems in the three core areas described below.

Data Standards In collaboration with representatives of the Big 5 districts and the RICs, the Department has developed data standards for the 2005-06 school year. These standards will help to ensure data quality by defining the meaning and purpose of data items, as well as their format and structure. These standards are implemented through the eScholar® data “templates.” The templates define the specific order, structure and technical requirements necessary to format data from source systems and load the data into the repository. These standards will facilitate the transfer of data stored in local student information systems to the Level 1 Repository. The *Dictionary of Reporting Data Elements* is available at the following Web site: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysstudents/Documentation/DataDictionary.doc> .

Data Requirements An outline of the student data elements that each public school district and charter school will be expected to submit in 2005-06 is attached. SED has provided this information to vendors of student management systems, RIC and Big 5 staff so they can be ready to assist with data preparation.

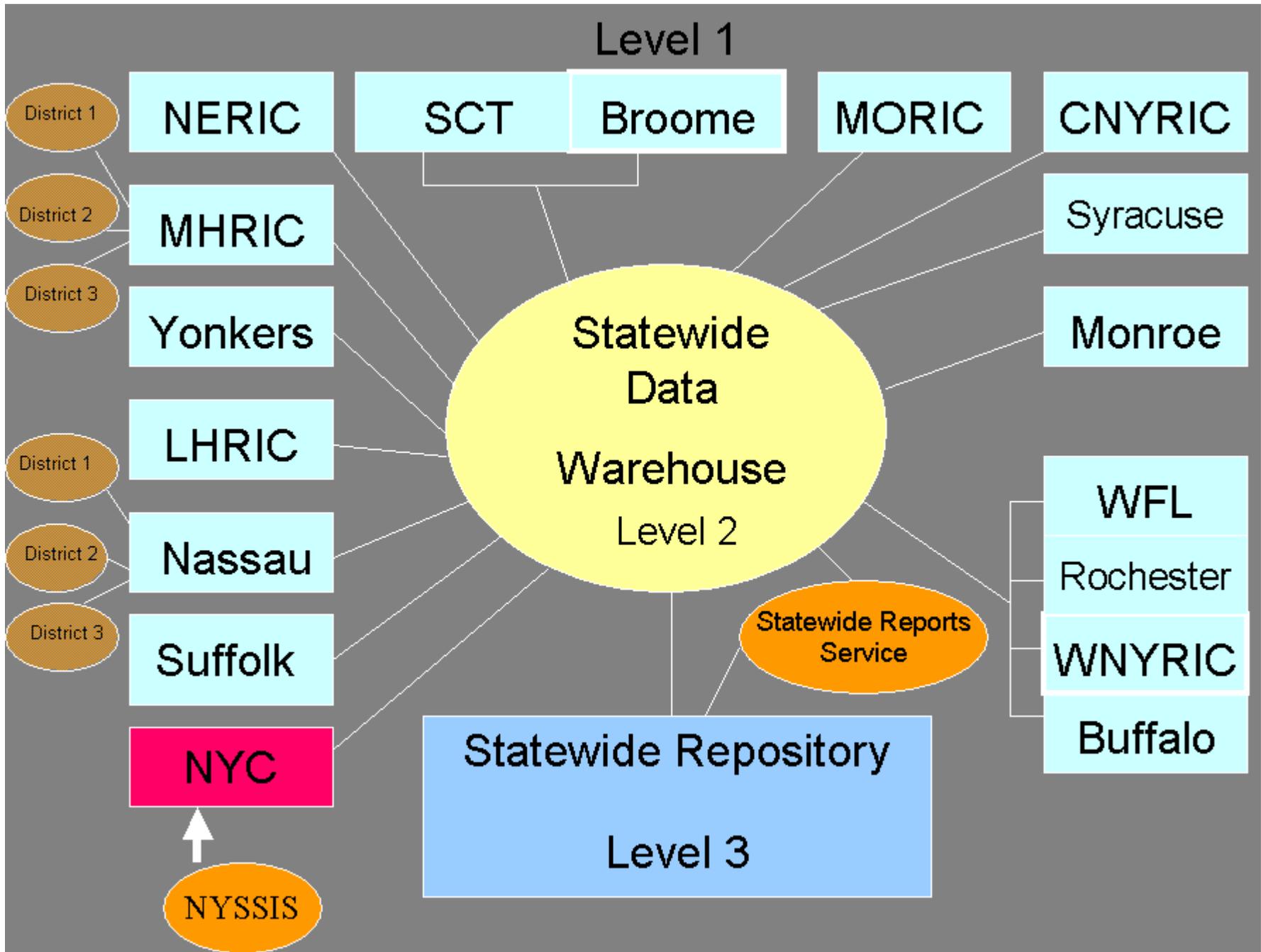
Local Technical Assistance For districts and regional centers to participate effectively in a statewide system, they must understand and use the statewide data standards. We will rely on our partners at the RICs to provide hands-on technical assistance to participating school districts. The purpose of this assistance will be to ensure that district staff understand the repository system and have the information they need to provide high-quality data. The integrity of a statewide system rests on those staff at the district level who provide the data to the system. It is important that appropriate district personnel participate in all available data-readiness and data-use training.

Additional Information

Two attachments to this memorandum — Responsibilities of Public School and District Administrators in 2005-06 and Timeline for Data Collection through the State Repository System — provide a summary of the requirements for participating in the repository. If you have any questions about the implementation of the State Repository System, you may send them to STUDENTDATA@mail.nysed.gov .

Attachments

cc: RIC Directors



Responsibilities of Public School and District Administrators in 2005-06

- Arrange to participate in a Level 1 Repository. Big 5 Districts may develop a Level 1 Repository or contract with a RIC to participate in an existing repository. All other school districts, charter schools, and State agencies must contract with a RIC for services necessary to participate in a Level 1 Repository.
- Designate a data administrator for the district to coordinate revisions to and maintenance of student management system(s), the submission of data to Level 1, the verification of data reports, and the use of data to inform policy.
- After reviewing the *Dictionary of Reporting Data Elements*, assess the local student management system(s) and determine whether any required data elements are missing. Develop short- and long-term plans for providing any missing data elements. RICs can assist participating districts with this process.
- Identify the location of all required data in the district and the person responsible for each data element.
- Determine if the local student management system(s) include records for all students for whom the district has reporting responsibility, including students placed out of district. Create records for missing students.
- Begin now to obtain unique identifiers for students from your RIC. Student records cannot be entered into the Level 2 Repository without State-assigned unique identifiers. Each district must obtain unique identifiers for all students for whom repository records are required in 2005-06 by November 2005. More information about unique identifiers can be found at the following Web site: www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysstudents/.
- Create a process for transforming data in the local student management system(s) to the format specified in the *Dictionary of Reporting Data Elements* and the eScholar® templates. Your RIC or student management system vendor can provide assistance.
- Obtain authorization for school and district personnel to view student records in, and obtain reports, from the repository system. The Department will provide an authorization and authentication system to allow districts to ensure that only individuals with a legitimate educational interest can access data in the State Repository System. This process is essential to ensuring the confidentiality of student records as required by FERPA. (More information on Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) can be obtained at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.)
- Provide student data to the Level 1 Repository on the required schedule.
- Develop a data verification protocol coordinated by the district data administrator to ensure that data are accurate when they are transferred to the Level 2 Repository. This process is essential to ensuring that school and district report cards and accountability status determinations are correct. In the fall of 2005, the Department will provide procedures for verifying that student records are correct before transmission from the Level 1 to the Level 2 Repository and that verification reports are correct before student records are moved from the Level 2 to the Level 3 Repository.
- Review the data requirements for 2006-07 and succeeding years as they are published. Take the necessary steps to assure the district can provide accurate data as required to the Level 1 Repository.

Timeline for Beginning Data Collection Through the Repository

The following table is intended to help in planning for the implementation of the repository system. In addition to transferring enrollment and program service data to the repository by these deadlines, these fields must be updated at specified times. Districts will be expected to have accurate data in each category on the Level 2 Repository by the following deadlines.

Deadline	Data Category
October 2005	Unique student identifiers for all students in grades 3-8 and ungraded students of equivalent age (preK-12, if preferred), all limited English proficient students in grades K-8, and all K-3 students in schools with Reading First Programs, including students in participating nonpublic schools within the district.
November 2005	Enrollment and demographic data for students in grades 3-8 and ungraded students of equivalent age (date of birth, grade level, race/ethnicity, gender, poverty status, migrant status and program service records for limited English proficient students)
December 2005	Program Service data related to students with disabilities in grades pre-K-8 and ungraded students of equivalent age (enrollment service provider, disability classification, level of integration)
January 2006	Program Service data for all grade K-8 limited English proficient students, and all K-3 students in schools with Reading First Programs (date of birth, grade level, race/ethnicity, gender, poverty status, migrant status and program service records for limited English proficient students)
March 2006	Scanned item data for the grade 3-8 assessments in English language arts (Big 5 districts and RICs will scan answer documents and submit files to the State Repository System.)
May 2006	Data from LEAP and STEP files for 2004-05 (The Level 1 Repository operators will convert files to eScholar® format using a process developed by the State.)
May 2006	Scanned item data for the grade 3-8 assessments in mathematics (Big 5 districts and RICs will scan answer documents and submit files to the State Repository System. The vendor will provide student scale scores and performance levels directly to the Level 2 Repository.)
June 2006	Scanned item data for the May 2006 NYSESLAT assessment (Big 5 districts and RICs will scan answer documents and submit files to the State Repository System.)
July 2006	Test results for other State assessments administered in 2005-06 (elementary- and middle-level science, elementary- and middle-level social studies, NYS Alternate Assessment)