

# A Vision and Roadmap for Education Statistics

## Opportunities for Researchers

Education researchers may soon be able to access new resources as well as new opportunities to collaborate.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) seeks to re-envision its role in the 21st-century education data ecosystem and prioritize its work and operations to accomplish that vision. To assist NCES, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), within which NCES is located, commissioned the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to convene an interdisciplinary panel of experts to develop consensus recommendations on how NCES should move into the future. This issue brief focuses on the panel's recommendations that create new opportunities for education researchers.

### WHAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT ARE FORTHCOMING?

Increased engagement of external researchers benefits both the researchers and NCES. Specifically, NCES would benefit from the introduction of innovative ideas, supporting a learning-oriented and creative environment within NCES, and continuously improving the quality, fitness, and relevance of NCES data for emerging issues.

The panel suggested the following tools for increasing engagement with researchers:

- In collaboration with IES, NCES should establish a joint statistical research program, matching internal staff with highly qualified external researchers, statisticians, and data scientists (Recommendation 4-5).
- To expand access and use of NCES data, NCES should modernize its data-licensing program. This might also increase diversity across NCES data users, helping to generate new perspectives and unique uses of data.
- NCES can use IES grants to promote research in areas where knowledge needs to be advanced.
- Developing a community of users with feedback mechanisms would help NCES provide technical assistance and create data products that are useful, actionable, and timely (Recommendations 4-1, 4-6).
- NCES should establish a nimble, ongoing consulting body to help NCES innovate and be accountable for progress on strategic goals (Recommendation 4-3).
- NCES should use contractors and external experts, via nontraditional staffing arrangements, to work collaboratively with staff to build internal capacity. NCES could create such opportunities for researchers

via fellowships and Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments (Recommendation 5-1).

In response to changes in the education environment, NCES is encouraged to more systematically address changes that fall outside current data collection systems' boundaries (see Chapter 3). For instance, NCES should actively design data collections for measuring vocational education and adult education programs and their outcomes. Both vocational education and adult education programs have expanded greatly in terms of the number of students and the importance of these programs to the economy.

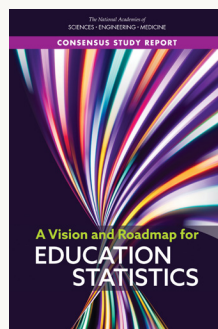
Additionally, the panel suggested paying more attention to the education process, finding ways to measure education policies and programs. Important topics for NCES to examine include: equity and access issues in education (see Recommendation 2-4), early childhood education, and key aspects of the educational environment such as the administrative infrastructure, access to and use of technology and online education, and cross-state and international comparisons in education, including differences in curricula, policies, and practices.

#### **WILL NEW TYPES OF DATA BECOME AVAILABLE?**

The panel recommended that NCES respond to the growth in new kinds of data, including the growth of big data. Some new sources NCES should explore include federal, state, and local administrative data, commercial data, social media and network data, and internet documents, webpages, and videos harvested from the internet. Also, NCES should expand secure data access and promote data sharing through privacy-protected linkages with other data sources (Recommendations 2-3, 2-5, 2-6, 4-2). Similarly, the panel recommended assisting states in creating data linkages and providing actionable information to state and local education agencies (Recommendation 4-4).

#### **CONCLUSION**

NCES has indicated its intention to follow up on the panel's recommendations, suggesting that new types of data will become available, and that there will be new opportunities for external researchers to become actively engaged.



To read the full report, please visit <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/26392>.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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