STATEWIDE DATA
CONVERSATIONS

Stakeholder Report

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Supplemental materials are available at
www.boces.org/statewide-data-conversations

- Complete notes from small-group conversations

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What is a BOCES?

For more than 70 years, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) have provided educational services and programs to students and school districts throughout New York. They are a key part of the P-12 education system. BOCES teachers and administrators work at the local level with public school districts and the communities they serve to meet a range of needs — including special education, Career and Technical Education, health and safety, office support and more. While most districts in the state are components of one of the 37 BOCES, membership does not include the "Big Five" city school districts such as New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Yonkers and Syracuse.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All students deserve an enriching education, one that offers every opportunity for them to grow into healthy, knowledgeable and successful adults. But every student has a unique background and singular strengths and follows their own distinct path to adulthood and the world of college or career. ***This information can be a powerful tool to inform educators' approaches to instruction and create opportunities for all students.*** Even so, educators, parents and other stakeholders have expressed concerns about student privacy and data security, especially as school districts and BOCES grapple with ransomware and hacking crises. As with all data collection, it is critical that data privacy and security laws be followed to protect student data.

The district superintendents of the 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York are working together on visioning work for a statewide K-12 student data system. They are leading the charge to find ways to improve how information is used in schools to help educators strengthen instructional practices and, at the same time, address privacy and security concerns.

To inform this effort, a series of seven listening sessions were held throughout New York state between Sept. 25 and Nov. 20, 2019 to gather feedback from stakeholders. Funding to support the logistics of holding these seven meetings (travel, hotel rental fees, food, etc.) was provided, in part, through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional financial and staff support was provided by Capital Region BOCES.

Organizers recommended that school districts and BOCES send a team to at least one of the events to learn more about the initiative, engage in the process and offer insight into how data can be used to create success for the students of New York. Stakeholders who are not part of a district team, or those involved with an educational advocacy or policy organization in New York, also were welcome to register and attend.

In addition, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) held a conversation with its Policy Council on Dec. 7, 2019, at the NYSUT headquarters in Albany, New York. Notes from this meeting were provided to the BOCES and are incorporated into this report.

> *As with all data collection, it is critical that data privacy and security laws be followed to protect student data.*

Three key themes, explained in detail in this report, rose to the surface across the series of meetings:

1. Access to and meaningful use of the data is inconsistent and inequitable across districts and regions of the state;

2. There is a lack of clarity about the purpose of various data points collected for local, state and federal reporting; and

3. Many participants expressed the need for a central system or dashboard connecting existing systems.

Listening sessions were held on the following dates and locations:

- **Southern Tier:** Sept. 25, 2019 – DoubleTree Hotel/Binghamton, 225 Water St., Binghamton, New York, 13901

- **North Country:** Oct. 2, 2019 – Best Western University Inn, 90 E. Main St., Canton, New York 13617

- **Syracuse:** Oct. 10, 2019 – Holiday Inn Syracuse/Liverpool, 441 Electronics Parkway, Liverpool, New York 13088

- **Capital Region:** Oct. 30, 2019 – Red Lion Hotel Albany, 205 Wolf Road, Albany, New York 12205

- **Long Island:** Nov. 6, 2019 – Hilton Long Island/Huntington 598 Broadhollow Road, Melville, New York 11747

- **Buffalo:** Nov. 12, 2019 – Salvatore's Italian Gardens, Transit Road/I-90 -6461 Transit Road, Buffalo, New York 14043

- **Hudson Valley:** Nov. 20, 2019 – Rye Hotel/Hilton Westchester, 699 Westchester Ave. Rye Brook, New York 10573

Stakeholders also were given the opportunity to offer input through a web-based survey and the Thoughtexchange platform.

BACKGROUND

A variety of information is collected about students—from birth into young adulthood. Used purposefully, this can be a powerful tool. It can paint a bigger picture of who students are and what they most need to grow, achieve and meet their educational goals, and help educators and others make connections that can lead to school and curricular improvements.

The current cross-state system – or web of systems – now in use by New York's schools was developed primarily for the purpose of complying with state and federal laws. Because of this, it has been challenging over the years to create timely, equitable and meaningful reports without a lot of manual intervention, planning and collaboration between the New York State Education Department, the Regional Information Centers (RICs), BOCES and school districts.

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has charged states with developing high-quality education goals that support all students' success and close achievement gaps. Data will play a key role when measuring progress around set indicators for success—among them, chronic absenteeism, English language proficiency, academic progress, graduation rates and college, career and civic readiness— as well as identifying best practices, and areas for improvement. While schools and other providers already gather and report data related to many of these indicators, ESSA requires the education community to move beyond the mere collection of these data points and find ways to work smarter and more collaboratively with these resources. The district

superintendents of the 37 BOCES in New York state have been working together on this visioning work.

Furthermore, it should be noted that previous attempts to create a cohesive data ecosystem for schools have been unsuccessful in New York. This is partially due to uncertainty and disagreement among stakeholders about what educational data should be, why and how it is/would be collected and used, and concerns about student privacy.
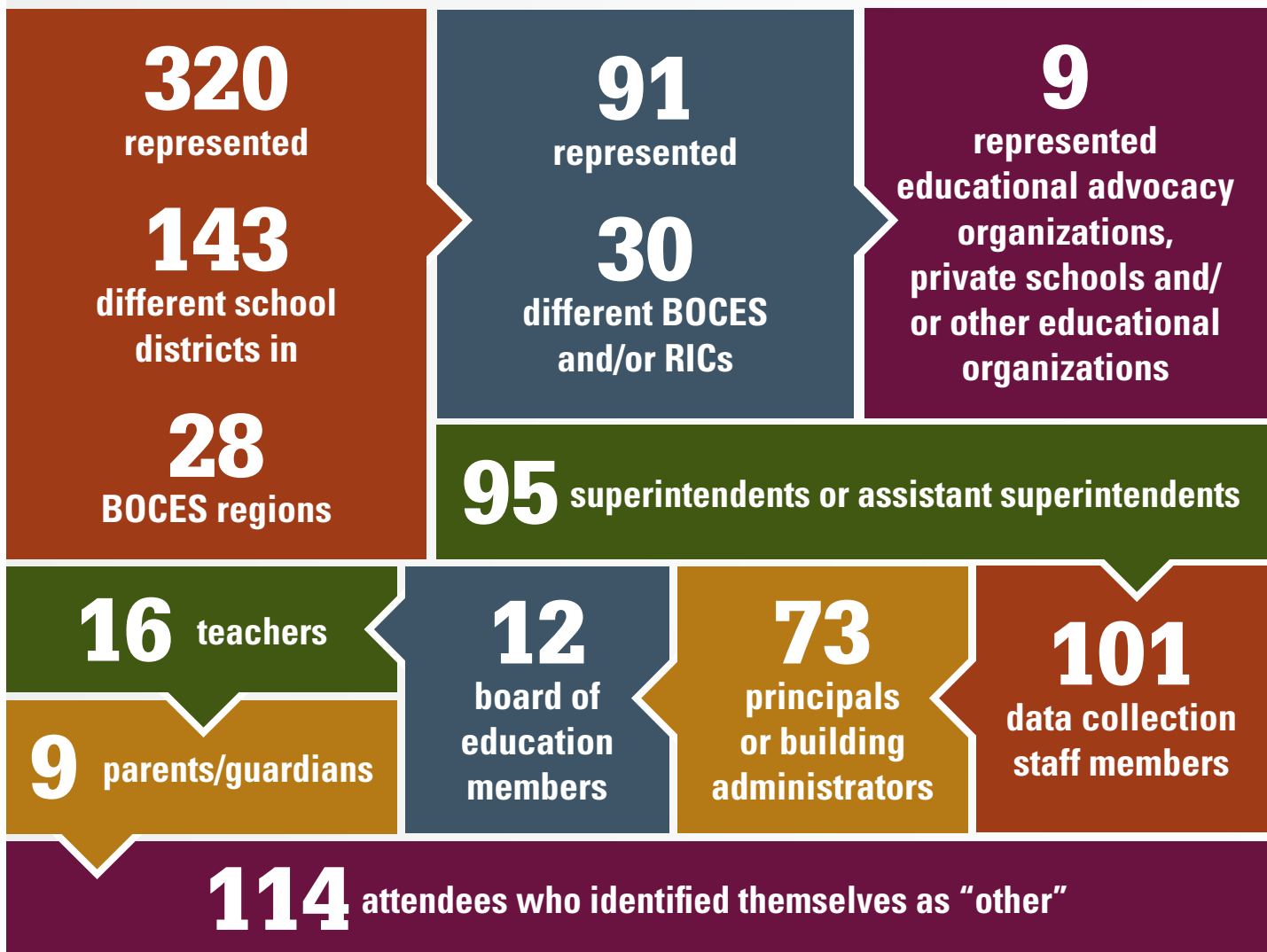
Clear communication about how a modernized data ecosystem in our schools could benefit students, families, educators and education policymakers is an essential part of this process. Equally important is the opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback on such a system and how data can inform and benefit them and the work they do, and to express concerns they may have. This was the rationale behind the Statewide Data Conversations initiative.

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has charged states with developing high-quality education goals that support all students' success and close achievement gaps.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

A total of 420 individuals attended the seven statewide meetings. As stated earlier, it was recommended that school districts and BOCES send a team to at least one of the events to learn more about the initiative, engage in the process and offer insight into how data can be used to create success for the students of New York. Stakeholders who are not part of a district team, or those involved with an educational advocacy or policy organization in New York, also were welcome to register and attend.

Of the **420 attendees**...

320 represented

143 different school districts in

28 BOCES regions

91 represented

30 different BOCES and/or RICs

9 represented educational advocacy organizations, private schools and/ or other educational organizations

95 superintendents or assistant superintendents

16 teachers

9 parents/guardians

12 board of education members

73 principals or building administrators

101 data collection staff members

114 attendees who identified themselves as "other"

In addition, another 180 individuals registered for the meetings but did not attend. These individuals received communications about the meetings and meeting materials. They also were encouraged to participate via the web-based Thoughtexchange platform. See page 14 for more information about Thoughtexchange.

MEETING **STRUCTURE**

Each of the seven statewide meetings consisted of a brief presentation by Dr. Michael Doughty, executive director for statewide projects at Capital Region BOCES, followed by facilitated small-group discussions. At several of the meetings, Dr. Doughty was joined by a BOCES district superintendent from the region. This included Allen Buyck from Broome-Delaware-Tioga BOCES at the Binghamton meeting, Jacklin Starks from Madison-Oneida BOCES at the Syracuse meeting, Anita Murphy from Capital Region BOCES at the Albany meeting, Daniel White from Monroe 1 BOCES and David O'Rourke from Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES at the Buffalo meeting, and Harold Coles from Southern Westchester BOCES at the Rye Brook meeting. He also was joined by Adrienne Leon, director of communications and public relations at Capital Region BOCES. A video of the presentation slides from the meetings, with a voiceover, is available here: http://bit.ly/2Qf4HrB.

In most cases, the small-group discussions were facilitated by communications professionals from the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service. The RICs across the state also provided facilitation support, as well as note-takers for the seven meetings.

In the small groups, attendees weighed in on the following questions:

1. How accessible do you feel student data is to educators? Do you feel as though this level of accessibility is adequate? Too much?

2. In an ideal world, how should information about students and staff be used?

3. It has been said that our current data system was built for collecting information rather than analyzing or digesting it to inform decision-making. Some educators have expressed a need to have a system that connects information to better inform programs and services for students. Do you agree with this sentiment? Why or why not?

   a. Are there connections you would like to see made between different data elements that you currently don't have access to?

   b. Is there information that is NOT currently collected that you believe should be?

   c. Is there information that you have to collect now that is of no help to you?

   d. Are there ways that you are currently connecting different data elements to inform instruction and affect student outcomes?

4. Is there any information that for privacy/security or other reasons, you believe should not be collected from students or staff?

   a. Are you aware of existing security provisions surrounding student and staff data in our schools? Are you satisfied with these provisions?

5. Is there anything we didn't address today that you would like to add?

Answers to these questions are summarized in this report (see page 12), and complete notes from the seven meetings are avilable at www.boces.org/statewide-data-conversations. The complete notes from the NYSUT Policy Council meeting are also available on the website listed above.

At the conclusion of each meeting, attendees were encouraged to participate in the Thoughtexchange via a web link, which offered an opportunity to answer the question: "If you were advising a team redesigning the way New York's schools currently collect and use student and staff data, what would be your No. 1 piece of advice?" Learn more about the Thoughtexchange on page 14.

All attendees received a handout with the Thoughtexchange information, a handout with the small-group discussion questions and at least one copy of the "Educator Toolkit for Teacher and Student Privacy – A Practical Guide for Protecting Personal Data." The toolkit was printed and provided at the meetings as a courtesy to the Parent Coalition for Student Privacy.

COMMUNICATIONS & ONLINE
PARTICIPATION

Communication about the events was handled by the district superintendents from the 37 BOCES, and the following webpage was used for the purposes of registration: www.boces.org/statewide-data-conversations.
The webpage also included frequently asked questions about the initiative and links to the Thoughtexchange and presentation video.

The email address statewidedata@neric.org was used for the purpose of communications and questions about the event. This address was monitored by Capital Region BOCES Director of Communications and Public Relations Adrienne Leon.

Prior to each meeting, an email was sent to all registrants reminding them of the date, time and location. Following each meeting, an email was sent with links to the post-event feedback survey, Thoughtexchange and presentation video.

Individuals who registered for the event but did not attend also were included on the post-event communications so they could view the presentation video and participate in the Thoughtexchange.

Following all seven meetings, two additional emails were sent to all attendees, reminding them to take the survey and participate in the Thoughtexchange.

From the seven statewide meetings and the NYSUT Policy Council meeting, the following key themes emerged. Please note that complete notes from the seven meetings as well as the complete notes from the NYSUT meeting can be found by visiting www.boces.org/statewide-data-conversations.

COMMON THEMES FROM THE
SMALL-GROUP CONVERSATIONS

Districts are looking to develop local systems that can inform instruction. Some districts have the resources to do this, and some do not. Some of those systems cost a lot of money.

– Southern Tier Meeting Participant

We would love the ability to connect some of the data and be able to draw conclusions in real time. But everything is isolated.

– Long Island Meeting Participant

Theme 1: While data is collected and stored in various systems, access to and meaningful use of the data is inconsistent and inequitable across districts and regions of the state. While some districts are using systems that offer a complete "snapshot" of each student, other districts reported the creation of such a snapshot to be labor-intensive and time-consuming.

Inconsistencies reported by meeting participants include:

- Data points collected and analyzed at the local level vary widely between districts and regions, partially due to the availability of staff to do this work. Some districts reported having in-house staff members who do data analysis, others contract with a BOCES or RIC for this service, while others do not have any staff members solely dedicated to this work.

- The reports that are available through the RICs vary widely based on BOCES/RIC region.

- Professional development/ training for administrators and teachers on how to analyze data and take actionable steps based on data is needed, as is time for such training.

- Local systems used to store and analyze data vary widely. Along these lines, many participants expressed frustration about the lack of standards for vendors to follow, and the resulting lack of consistency between student information systems and other systems used to store student and staff information.

- With the inconsistencies between districts and regions of the state, many participants expressed frustration with how this relates to students who transfer between districts. It was reported that getting information in a timely manner on students who are new to a district can be difficult even when students move between districts within the state.

Theme 2: Between the data that is collected for the purposes of state and federal reporting and additional data points that are collected at the local level, participants reported a lack of clarity about the purpose of the information and what is being done with it. As a result, educators in the field often don't trust data reports or, at the very least, don't find them useful.

Along these lines, participants expressed frustration that state-level reporting requirements are often redundant, and data reports are not produced in a timely manner. While most participants agreed data should be used to improve instruction, many felt the process is hampered by the cumbersome nature of the systems used, lack of training for educators and timeliness of reports, leading to a reactive approach to using the information that is collected.

Theme 3: Many participants championed the idea of a "dashboard" where multiple data points could be accessed in one system and/or pulled together from two or more systems. The idea of connecting existing systems to better understand students and their individual needs was a common thread in many of the conversations. That said, many participants expressed concern that such a system could be a security risk for schools.

In addition to concerns relating to unlawful hacking, it was stated that there are certain data points that not all educators should have access to. Two examples used were socio-economic information and discipline data. Participants also reported security concerns about student information currently being emailed through an unsecure system and/or the way paper copies of such information is often shared among educators.

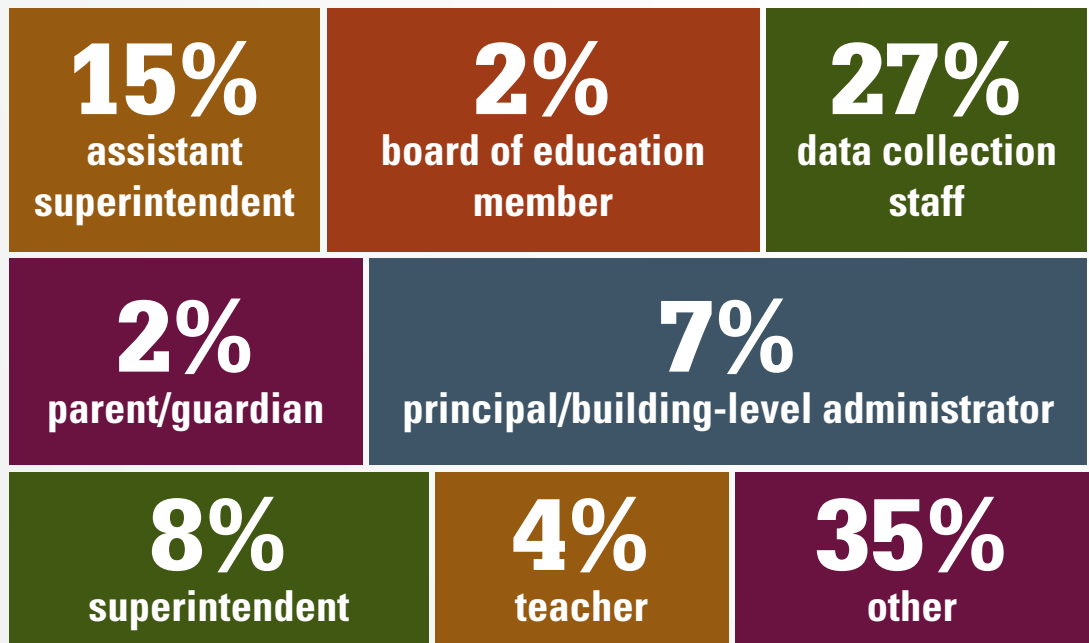# COMMON THEMES, TOP RANKED "THOUGHTS" FROM THOUGHTEXCHANGE

Thoughtexchange is an online platform that allows users to answer a question about a topic and then rate the answers of other users on that same question. More information about Thoughtexchange and what it is can be found here: https://www.thoughtexchange.com/.

For the Statewide Data Conversations, participants were asked: ***"If you were advising a team redesigning the way New York's schools currently collect and use student and staff data, what would be your No. 1 piece of advice?"***

Access to the Exchange was open to anyone wishing to participate, with the link posted on the website used for registration for the Conversations. While it was promoted at the seven meetings, the link also was emailed out several times to everyone who registered for one of the meetings (whether or not they actually ultimately attended a meeting). It was also promoted by NYSUT at their Policy Committee meeting.

Those who participated associated themselves with the following roles:

In total, the Exchange had 139 participants. Of those, 47 shared thoughts, 52 rated thoughts and 25 explored thoughts. There were total of 89 thoughts shared in the Exchange and 1,158 ratings. Of the 89 thoughts, 78 received enough ratings to be ranked and 11 did not.

15% assistant superintendent	**2%** board of education member	**27%** data collection staff
2% parent/guardian	**7%** principal/building-level administrator	
8% superintendent	**4%** teacher	**35%** other

In summary, the thoughts that were shared were broken into four themes. Those themes, along with the five top-ranked thoughts* within each theme, are:

Systems that connect, integrate *(29 total thoughts with an average rating of 3.9 stars)*

1. All systems we use connect to each other automatically. So we do not have to wait for information to be updated manually

2. Systems need to better integrated Huge amounts of data are collected, much of it several times over - for instance TSDL and ePMF. You have the data, why are we submitting again?

3. Consolidate SED data requests Why so many landing pages and places for redundant info?

4. One system that holds all data By having to submit information to diff. data locations, we are unable to cleanly pull all the data we would like to analyze w/o going to multi. sites

5. The complexity of the systems has required schools to create new (unfunded) positions (ex: chief info officer; chief info security officer). A single secure system that provides ease of use and the purposeful transfer of data to NYSED and Civil Rights Offices that use the data is needed.

Timely access to data *(14 total thoughts with an average rating of 3.9 stars)*

1. I think more timely access to student data, especially as it relates to areas within the Standards that students may need support in is crucial. It will help drive instructional practice, student grouping, and curriculum reviews.

2. Data from NYSED assessments should be released immediately after testing. This would give teachers, parents and students instant feedback and address areas of weakness

3. Move the timeline along, we've been waiting forever! We have duplicate processes to provide the same data over and over again....streamline.

4. Timeliness of data Takes a lot of time to assess data, cannot afford to wait

5. Make the data more readily available, at least for the district that owns it. Even if reports are preliminary before data is finalized. Districts must wait sometimes months before reports are available. There is no reason to go through levels, the data should be seamless.

*❚ * Please note that thoughts shown in this report have not been edited.*

Accessibility, transparency and consistency *(37 total thoughts with an average rating of 3.8 stars)*

1. Simplify the process The amount of staff that are required to keep pace with the data input expectations is excessive and time consuming.

2. Sharing data in an easy to use, graphic way will make it less daunting for teachers to use. Teachers need to see data as something they use, not something by which they are evaluated.

3. Make it simple and secure Currently, the amount of data and the many ways that data is exchanged and used is complex and often duplicitous.

4. Make it easy for the average person to access, understand, and use to make decisions to benefit students and schools. Data systems that aren't transparent, interactive or easily interpreted aren't useful and are often mistrusted.

5. Make sure that the system is easy to use to get data reports out that are useful to the different stakeholder groups. Data that is not easy to get in a useable format, will not be used & those of us responsible for using the data have to spend a lot of time & effort.

Security and privacy *(nine total thoughts with an average rating of 3.5 stars)*

1. Ensure same level of security for PII as outlined in Ed Law 2D Part 121 for student and staff data stored in a statewide system. Protection and use of PII data should be consistent. All organizations should be held accountable for breaches and/or misuse of student and staff data

2. Student data privacy. I shouldn't have to explain that.

3. Develop strong cyber-security practices—test networks & applications using a 3rd party to prepare for cyber-attacks. Follow DFS 23 NYCCR 500 framework It is necessary to collect information. The more important question is…how to protect it.

4. How is this data collection effort in compliance with Ed Law 2d?

5. In what ways is data collection effort similar/different than the InBloom debacle?

Overall, the top-ranked responses from the Exchange were:

1. All systems we use connect to each other automatically. So we do not have to wait for information to be updated manually

2. Systems need to better integrated Huge amounts of data are collected, much of it several times over - for instance TSDL and ePMF. You have the data, why are we submitting again?

3. Ensure same level of security for PII as outlined in Ed Law 2D Part 121 for student and staff data stored in a statewide system. Protection and use of PII data should be consistent. All organizations should be held accountable for breaches and/or misuse of student and staff data

4. Consolidate SED data requests Why so many landing pages and places for redundant info?

5. Simplify the process The amount of staff that are required to keep pace with the data input expectations is excessive and time consuming.

6. I think more timely access to student data, especially as it relates to areas within the Standards that students may need support in is crucial. It will help drive instructional practice, student grouping, and curriculum reviews.

7. Sharing data in an easy to use, graphic way will make it less daunting for teachers to use. Teachers need to see data as something they use, not something by which they are evaluated.

8. Make it simple and secure Currently, the amount of data and the many ways that data is exchanged and used is complex and often duplicitous.

9. One system that holds all data By having to submit information to diff. data locations, we are unable to cleanly pull all the data we would like to analyze w/o going to multi. sites

10. The complexity of the systems has required schools to create new (unfunded) positions (ex: chief info officer; chief info security officer). A single secure system that provides ease of use and the purposeful transfer of data to NYSED and Civil Rights Offices that use the data is needed.

The complete Thoughtexchange responses, including how they were ranked, can be found at www.boces.org/statewide-data-conversations. A summary of the responses and themes can also be found via Thoughtexchange at: http://bit.ly/2EkhWQD.

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK SURVEY RESULTS

The questions asked on the survey were:

- Which of the seven statewide data meetings did you attend?
- Which role do you most closely associate with?
- In the meeting you attended, what was your favorite part?
- In the meeting you attended, what could've been improved?
- Please rate your overall satisfaction with the meeting you attended.
- What questions or concerns (if any) did you have during or after the meeting that you were not able to share with your small group?
- What additional thoughts (if any) would you like to offer at this time?

Visit www.boces.org/statewide-data-conversations for complete feedback survey results.

Following each of the seven Statewide Data Conversations, participants were sent a link to an online survey (via Survey Monkey) and asked to offer feedback on the Conversation they attended.

In summary, many respondents identified their favorite part of the meeting as the facilitated small-group discussions and hearing from their colleagues across the state. Many respondents also said they were hoping to receive more detailed information on next steps and what work is being done at the state level with regard to data and data systems.

More than 77% rated their satisfaction with the meeting they attended as "satisfied" or "highly satisfied."

Of the 420 meeting attendees, 116 (28%) completed all or part of the feedback survey. Of those who completed the survey:

9.5%	11 had attended the meeting in Binghamton *(Southern Tier)*
6%	7 had attended the meeting in Canton *(North Country)*
12%	14 had attended the meeting in Syracuse
14.7%	17 had attended the meeting in Albany *(Capital Region)*
26.7%	31 had attended the meeting on Long Island
19.8%	23 had attended the meeting in Buffalo
11.2%	13 had attended the meeting in Rye Brook *(Hudson Valley)*
19%	22 were assistant superintendents
0.9%	1 was a board of education member
24%	28 were data collection staff members
0.9%	1 was a parent/guardian
16.4%	19 were principals/building-level administrators
7.8%	9 were superintendents
5.2%	6 were teachers
25.9%	30 identified as "other"

NEXT STEPS

This report will be reviewed by the 37 BOCES district superintendents, who will determine how to proceed based on the information herein. Next steps may include additional research, feedback to the New York State Education Department and/or collaborative efforts between the BOCES, RICs and districts.

Anyone with questions regarding this effort or this report should e-mail statewidedata@neric.org.

This complete report, along with any supplemental materials, can be found at www.boces.org/statewide-data-conversations