

PERSONALIZING EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER PATHWAYS IN ARIZONA

How Integrated Data Platforms Support Improved Student Outcomes

For Arizona to prosper, the state and its municipalities must find ways to strengthen the systems that support students on their journeys through middle and high school, postsecondary education and training, and a career. Education and training after high school—and the resulting credentials—are vitally important for building a skilled workforce and advancing our state’s economy. As many as 70 percent of jobs in Arizona require a degree, certificate, or active professional license, yet only 48 percent of working-age Arizonans hold such a credential.

Increasing regional and statewide rates of postsecondary attainment—taken broadly to mean some form of education and training after high school that leads to a credential—to reach the state’s Achieve60AZ goal has become a centerpiece of the discourse about Arizona’s future. Educators, policymakers, employers, and voters recognize that expanding postsecondary opportunities and credential attainment represents a key economic and workforce issue and, ultimately, a quality-of-life issue for all Arizonans.

It is also a major equity consideration in our state. Too many Arizonans—especially Black and Latino high school graduates—who are eligible to pursue education and training opportunities after high school do not do so. As a result, they are more likely to encounter career limitations, such as fewer job options or diminished competitiveness in the workforce. They can also expect lower lifetime earnings compared to their peers who attain credentials.

73% of Arizona voters surveyed say they want more to be done to ensure that a greater share of Arizonans can get a degree or certification.

Of course, strengthening the entire education continuum and systems of support that unlock opportunities and contribute to career readiness and success is a multi-dimensional effort. It is also an effort that state-level policymakers must join municipalities in championing and implementing. But, on their own, municipalities can take important steps toward empowering students, families, and educators in their communities with practical resources that point to avenues of opportunity.

KEY ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF INCREASED EDUCATION AND TRAINING AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

- Higher lifetime earnings
- Better health
- Lower crime rates
- Reduced dependence on social safety net programs
- Stronger talent pipelines for employers and industries

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE PROMISE OF INTEGRATED DATA PLATFORMS

Ensuring that students and their families have a clear view of the opportunities available to them while they are in school and after they graduate, as well as the requisite steps to realize those opportunities, is fundamental to building effective systems of support for students as they pursue pathways that align with their interests, strengths, and aspirations. Regional leaders must come together to clearly map the student journey from middle school through high school, and from postsecondary through community and workforce opportunities, to ensure that all students have a clearly articulated pathway to good jobs.

Integrated data platforms can play a powerful role once regional leaders lay out student journeys. Three main users emerge to see, empower, and support students on their college and career journeys to earning credentials aligned to regional workforce needs.

SEE. Regional leaders must see the talent pipeline in real time. This requires combining data from across the K-12, higher education, community, and workforce continuum and aligning it to student journey maps. Examples include college readiness data, career pathway selection, and records of who has completed critical steps (such as submitting applications for financial aid). Data visualization and reporting platforms play a key role in facilitating this kind of visibility and collective accountability for student outcomes.

EMPOWER. Students play a central role in understanding and managing their own pathways. Integrated platforms can help students see how college credits earned in high schools apply to community college and university pathways aligned to jobs. As another example, student super app technology can help to operationalize and gamify the journeys for students.

SUPPORT. Front line advisors, educators, and administrators need new tools to gain a 360 degree view of student progress, no matter where they are in the K-12, postsecondary, community, and workforce continuum.

In practice, this might look like career and technical education teachers and work-based learning coaches and mentors being able to access the information necessary to know if students are on track with GPA, credits earned, and basic needs support. CRM technology platforms can help front line staff case manage the entire student journey.

Unlike data systems designed for longitudinal analyses or accountability purposes, integrated data platforms are designed for students and families and educators to use to inform decision-making about what they need to do—in terms of skills development, course requirements, or even required paperwork and applications—to take the next steps on their pathway to a career.

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE INTEGRATED PLATFORMS

- On-demand access to real-time data
- Digital credential wallet
- Progress monitoring dashboards
- Community-level data summaries
- Integrated communications
- Case management

Students and their families are empowered with ready access to their real-time data and records. Paired with educational roadmaps, this enables them to easily see where they are in their journey and how they can get to where they want to go. For counselors and other educators who support students and help guide their decision-making about postsecondary pathways, integrated platforms help to facilitate more effective case-management and seamless communication. Well-designed data platforms also enable regional and municipal leaders to access aggregate real-time data that enable progress monitoring.

In turn, this community-level view helps leaders identify and address disparities to make education and student support systems more equitable.

ABOUT THE ARIZONA MAYORS EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE

The Arizona Mayors Education Roundtable, an initiative of Helios Education Foundation and WestEd, brings together mayors of Arizona cities and towns, district superintendents, and their key staff to share data, evidence-based and promising practices, and programmatic strategies that can help address local challenges affecting students' educational and career choices. Major funding for the Roundtable is provided by the Helios Education Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Arizona Community Foundation.

