BUILDING STATE CAPACITY FOR POWERFUL SCHOOL INFORMATION:
Results of the My School Information Design Challenge
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ABOUT EXCELINEd

Founded by former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) is igniting a movement of reform, state by state, to transform education for the 21st century economy by working with lawmakers, policymakers, educators and parents to advance education reform across America.

ExcelinEd.org | @ExcelinEd | Facebook.com/ExcelinEd
Over the past five months, the Foundation for Excellence in Education team has been focused on bringing creative energy to a national opportunity—improving access to powerful school information. The combination of reviewing the existing research, conducting our own analysis and launching the national My School Information Design Challenge has revealed a set of important findings that we are eager to share.

The following report reviews the research that inspired the project, recaps the submissions we received and features winning designs. But, because we set out on this journey with the ultimate goal of boosting access to useful school-level information, we’re doing more than writing prize checks to the winners; we’re sharing our thoughts about implications and implementation. We’re offering our expertise and our support. While there is certainly value in sharing the steps that got us to this point, the real power in this project comes next—helping states build capacity to improve their own school report cards.

We see this report as a first step towards supporting state efforts. Let us know how we can help.

Patricia Levesque
Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Excellence in Education
INTRODUCTION

The American public education system is transforming. Schools and districts are engaged in dramatic shifts to higher standards and the next generation of student assessments. States are developing accountability systems based on new metrics resulting in different rating systems for school quality. And new learning modalities that leverage technology—combined with evolving state school choice policies—are creating a growing array of high-quality learning options for parents.

Early results suggest these shifts will yield significant improvement in student achievement. But these shifts also mean that now, more than ever before, educators, parents and stakeholders need access to readily available, easily understood school information to monitor progress on the journey to better learning opportunities for all students.

School-level information in the form of school “report cards” serves many important purposes for a diverse range of stakeholders. At the local level, stakeholders include students, parents, educators and community members; at the state level, stakeholders include both legislative and executive policymakers, as well as education departments; and at the national level, stakeholders include policymakers and education reform advocates. While all states are required by federal law to create school report cards and make them available to the public,[1] both formal research and anecdotal evidence point to the myriad ways in which today’s report cards fall short of their potential to serve as a powerful tool for sharing school information.

Building off the work of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) in Rating States, Grading Schools: What Parents and Experts say States Should Consider to Make School Accountability Systems Meaningful, the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) conducted its own review of current state report cards and evaluated them related to factors such as readability, usefulness of information, and effort needed to locate information. As described in My School Information Design Challenge: Building A Better School Performance Report Card for Parents & Students, the research confirmed that in the majority of cases, school report cards are challenging to find, lacking in visual appeal, difficult to interpret, and missing key pieces of data. The sample of existing state report cards on the following page illustrates a number of these weaknesses.
Building State Capacity for Powerful School Information: Results of the My School Information Design Challenge

Foundation for Excellence in Education

Samples of Existing State Report Cards

Annual Adequate Yearly Progress Report
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

For School Year 2011-2012

Student Performance

Reading

Goal 1: Reading Proficiency (on or above Level 2)

- 80% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above
- 73% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above

Goal 2: Reading Proficiency (on or above Level 3)

- 52% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above
- 45% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above

Math

Goal 1: Mathematics Proficiency (on or above Level 2)

- 77% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above
- 73% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above

Goal 2: Mathematics Proficiency (on or above Level 3)

- 64% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above
- 58% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above

Science

Goal 1: Science Proficiency (on or above Level 2)

- 70% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above
- 61% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above

Goal 2: Science Proficiency (on or above Level 3)

- 55% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above
- 46% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above

Social Studies

Goal 1: Social Studies Proficiency (on or above Level 2)

- 85% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above
- 80% Met Phase-in 1 Level 2 and above

Goal 2: Social Studies Proficiency (on or above Level 3)

- 76% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above
- 70% Met Phase-in 1 Level 3 and above

Participation Rates

Reading: 99.7%
Math: 99.7%

Other Indicator

N/A

Star Rating Index Score

N/A

Uniform Averaging

N/A

Valid Test Scores

N/A

Other Data

N/A

Test Participation

N/A

Test Participation

N/A

Student Growth

N/A

Student Growth

N/A

Other Data

N/A

2012-2013 Report Card
Lincoln Elementary School

Student Performance

Reading 2012-2013 Assessments
- 85%
- 83%
- 83%

Math 2012-2013 Assessments
- 80%
- 78%
- 73%

Science 2012-2013 Assessments
- 80%
- 78%
- 73%

Social Studies 2012-2013 Assessments
- 85%
- 83%
- 83%

Participation

N/A

Participation

N/A

Test Participation

N/A

Test Participation

N/A

Student Growth

N/A

Student Growth

N/A

Other Data

N/A

Other Data

N/A

2013 Massachusetts School Report Card Overview
LINCOLN (02810121)

The Massachusetts School Report Card is a publicly available resource that provides information about the performance of schools and school districts in the Commonwealth. The report card includes data on academic performance, student achievement, and other indicators of educational quality.

How is our school doing overall?

Our school's performance is based on a variety of factors, including academic achievement, student growth, and other indicators of educational quality. The school receives a letter grade that reflects its performance on these indicators.

How does our school's achievement over time compare to the district and the state?

Our school's performance is compared to that of other schools in the district and the state. This allows us to see how our school is doing relative to other schools with similar characteristics.

Our school's performance on reading, math, science, and social studies is measured against the district and state averages. In reading, our school met or exceeded the district and state averages. In math, our school met or exceeded the district and state averages. In science, our school met or exceeded the district and state averages. In social studies, our school met or exceeded the district and state averages.

For a detailed report on our school's performance, please visit the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.
In an effort to help states improve their ability to share valuable school information through redesigned school report cards, ExcelinEd announced a creative solution opportunity—the My School Information Design Challenge. Because designers have a unique ability to take data and transform it into something valuable, usable and compelling, ExcelinEd enthusiastically engaged the design community to tackle this tough data visualization task.

Our ultimate goal is to use the results of the challenge to support state efforts to transform school report cards into a 21st-century tool that leverages the power of mobile technology and data visualization, making school information more accessible and useful to multiple constituencies. To that end, we offer this follow-up report of our findings as the first step in our partnership with states. Our report begins with an overview of the challenge, and then describes the key design elements of an effective report card and other lessons from states interested in reinventing their school report cards.

CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

Because prizes can inspire innovation and yield creative solutions, the My School Information Design Challenge was launched as a nationwide design competition. The competition offered $35,000 in prizes for designers who employed the latest strategies in data visualization to effectively reimagine the appearance, presentation and usability of school report cards.

Responding to information presented in the My School Information Design Challenge Designer Packet, dozens of talented designers from across the country entered the challenge. From independent designers to full-scale design firms, each presented a fresh and innovative look at how to best display vital school accountability information.

This section offers a brief overview of the challenge to provide context for the findings revealed in the next section.
DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Designers were asked to submit a presentation demonstrating how their design would empower stakeholders and how the report card would function as an interactive online tool and mobile application.

Based on a model data set, each report card design had to include five components:

- Student achievement
- Student academic growth
- Achievement gap closure
- Graduation rates
- Postsecondary and career readiness

JUDGES

ExcelinEd gathered an impressive lineup of judges for the challenge including designers, education and business leaders, and parents. The diverse panel of judges ensured that winning designs would not only be innovative but would also meet the needs of stakeholders. Education and business leaders brought their unique perspectives, while parents and designers were able to give a firsthand opinion on what designs were truly helpful in making data easier to understand and act upon.

Each judge brought a unique perspective while sharing a common commitment to improving education for all students in America.

ExcelinEd and collaborator Getting Smart selected a group of finalists, then the judges scored each finalist using a rubric measuring general school information and data sets; visual appeal and design presentation; and usability and engagement.
In light of our goal to inspire states to reinvent their report cards for parents and policymakers, it was essential to give the public an opportunity to weigh in.

The judging panel selected the overall winner and runner up, while ExcelinEd urged parents, teachers, community leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders to vote on their favorites in four categories -- best summary, best comparison, best user experience, and best trend data. Between November 19th and December 2nd, over 1,400 votes were cast.

"No longer do parents need to make decisions in the dark. States now have the data and authority to get useful information into the hands of parents. But more work remains to make that information accessible and in formats that aid understanding and use. I applaud My School Information Design Challenge and its contestants for helping empower parents to make good decisions for their child."

-- Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Executive Director of the Data Quality Campaign

**PUBLIC VOTING**

View the full winning design gallery along with other top submissions at [www.myschoolinfochallenge.com](http://www.myschoolinfochallenge.com).
"Congratulations to the winning entries. I was pleased to see so much innovative work to help our schools improve the way they communicate with parents and families going forward. I hope all of us in the education community will use these report cards as models to make sure every piece of information we give to parents is well-designed, accessible and easy to understand."

— Chris Minnich, Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers
The public selected the following category winners, who were each awarded $2,000:

- Best Summary - HD Web Studio
- Best Comparison - Rennzer
- Best User Experience - Collaborative Communications + Social Driver
- Best Trend Data - Collaborative Communications + Social Driver
As a part of this challenge, ExcelinEd identified a number of design elements that are required to build an effective report card. A brief explanation of each essential design element appears below, as well as examples from challenge submissions that best demonstrate each element.

The challenge did not address the accountability components or other school information that should be in each report card. For a great discussion of that issue, see this Education Commission of the States’ ECS report on how to make school accountability systems more meaningful. Instead, our challenge focused on the design of report cards (i.e., how the information is organized and represented visually).
DESIGNED WITH THE USER IN MIND

Effective report cards should be designed to accommodate a wide variety of users, including parents of all educational and language backgrounds, community members, policy makers, school leaders and students. To meet the needs of this diverse group, report card designers should consider these design elements:

High-Level Summary

Report cards should be easily skimmable, clearly summarizing a school’s performance by prominently displaying the school’s overall grade or rating.

“School report cards should reflect the very latest in graphic design. The design should be intuitive, so the strengths and challenges of a particular school are easy to understand by all audiences, whether you are an education policy expert with a Ph.D., a parent in an underserved community with failing schools looking for better school options, a busy parent managing a child’s involvement in school activities, or a first-time parent choosing a kindergarten.”

— John Bailey, Vice President of Policy, Foundation for Excellence in Education
Deconstruction of Grade

A school’s grade should be plainly shown with a clear explanation of what the grade means and what performance measures were combined to calculate that grade.
Drill-Down Capacity

Users interested in greater detail around a particular point—for example, what a growth model actually measures or whether students with disabilities are demonstrating improved reading performance—should be able to drill down to see additional data or more detailed definitions of key terms.
Researchers, policymakers and parents should have access to the data sets behind the report card.
Customization

Users should be able to customize report cards to highlight and refine the data most relevant to them. For example, a recent immigrant selecting a school for her daughter should be able to view a report card that highlights the performance of English language learners (ELLs).
**School Demographics**

Total Students: 900

- **Student Subgroup**
  - White: 60.56%
  - Hispanic: 20%
  - Black: 17.67%
  - Asian: 1.44%
  - Native American: 7.89%
  - Minority: 0.33%

**Graduation & Readiness Rates**

- **Student Proficiencies**
  - White: 39.44%
  - Black: 43.5%
  - Hispanic: 43.5%
  - Asian: 43.5%
  - Native American: 43.5%

**Growth Rates**

- **Gap Closure for Low Performers**

**Translate this site**

- العربية
- भारतीय
- 中文
- Español
- Français
- Deutsch
- Kreyòl ayisyen
- हिंदी
- क्वातो
- తెలుగు
- Espanol
- Deutsch
- Arabic
- Hindi

**Choose Year**

- 2014 School Year

**Proficiency Rates in Mathematics (by demographic)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>% of Proficient Math Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use Case:**

Jasmine wants to compare proficiency rates for black students across grade levels. She chooses the current year and the chart generates proficiency rates grouped by demographics. The grouping allows Jasmine to see an upward trend for this student subgroup. Hovering over the 3rd grade bar shows her that the rate is 50% for these students.

Groups with no data are grouped separately and this is explained when the user hovers over the section.

Can add subject-specific subnavigation (appearing on Student Proficiencies view) if other subject proficiency rates are added.
Performance Trends

The School Report Card provides a graphic interpretation of achievement in math for 5th graders over three years. The data is provided for all students and four subgroups of students – white, black, Hispanic and low income. The online School Report Card will generate trend data for all tested subjects.

Because there were less than ten students with disabilities and English language learners, the trend data was interpreted graphically as steady, declining or improving.

Required Information:

✔ Three years of data on math proficiency of students in one grade, organized by race/ethnicity, English language learner status, disability status and socio economic status.

✔ A graphic depiction for students in subsets with less than 10 students. (Because only one student was in the subgroup, Native American and Asian subgroups were not depicted.)

Storytelling

The report card should bring important narratives about the school to life. For example, are elementary school ELLs showing remarkable improvement? Does the user need to be concerned about a recent drop in seventh and eighth grade test scores?
Charts and Tables

Charts and tables should use color and interactive graphics to make complex data inherently easy to understand.

Cohort trends

Given historical information student performance in a subject across grades, what's the best way to check to see if a school is getting better or worse in teaching students that subject?

Comparing student results in a grade with the previous year won’t always be accurate. To consider why, let’s perform a thought experiment with the following imaginary performance scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Change 2013-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the change between 2014 and 2013 tells us every grade got worse except for grade 5 which students performed better.

Mathew Sanders

Oak Grove School

StUDENT POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Minority</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>17.67%</td>
<td>17.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60.56%</td>
<td>60.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRADE 3 MATH PROFICIENCY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minors (39.44%) represent minority students in this school, which includes students who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American or White.

Minority (39.44%)

Free & Reduced Lunch (81.22%)

Students with Disabilities (7.89%)

White (60.56%)

Oak Grove School

Principle: John Johnson

123 Third Street, Franklin, USA

(800) 555-1234

www.OakGroveSchool.gov

SPECIAL PROGRAMS & COURSE OFFERINGS

- AP Calculus
- AP Biology
- AP Chemistry
- AP English
- AP History
- AP Physics
- AP Psychology
- AP Statistics
- AP Studio Art

Graduation & Readiness Rates

Demographics

Student Proficiencies

Growth Rates

Gap Closure for Low Performers

The components act as navigation on the left-hand side.

Tiffany Gagnon

Building State Capacity for Powerful School Information: Results of the My School Information Design Challenge

Foundation for Excellence in Education
Students Making Growth

Growth expectation met if current test score is:

1. Below proficient, but the student is on track to reach proficiency within 3 years.
2. At the proficient level, and the student is on track to reach advanced within 3 years.
3. At the advanced level, and the student is on track to remain advanced over the next 3 years.

A student whose growth trajectory is negative is not meeting the state’s growth expectation, regardless of the student’s current proficient (or advanced) level.
What does this mean?

- **Below proficient**, but the student is on track to **reach proficiency within 3 years**.
- At the **proficient** level, and the student is on track to **reach advanced within 3 years**.
- At the **advanced** level, and the student is on track to **remain advanced over the next 3 years**.

**Proficient**

A student whose growth trajectory is negative is not meeting the state’s growth expectation, regardless of the student’s current proficient (or advanced) level.

This window shows the definition of “growth expectation” in a visual way for parents.
Plain Language

All terms and acronyms used within the report card should be defined and all components explained in plain language that is easily understood by a variety of users.

Lingo ate my baby
Key terms are linked to tooltips that provide quick, easy-to-understand definitions. Users are invited to “Learn More” at glossary pages, which provide encyclopedia-style entries.

If you liked this data
Pages suggest other websites containing related or relevant information, encouraging users to dig deeper and combine multiple matrices into a more complete picture.

Show these data
Workbook-like data tables that you can sort, filter and print make data easy to review.

Ask a Question
Questions about the content or the school are answered by the school district or the state.

Search
Searchable encyclopedia-style entry method enables users to find information about any topic.

Compare and conquer
Data displays enable users to compare school values to state averages, look across student subgroups and examine trends over time, all in one place.

Know it all
The report card encourages users to ask questions about what they see. Searchable responses not only serve to create a living and robust knowledge base of information about the school, they offer built-in feedback mechanism that can inform future improvements to the tool.
A student whose growth trajectory is negative is not meeting the state’s growth expectation, regardless of the student’s current proficient (or advanced) level.

Growth expectation met if current test score is:

1. at the advanced level, and the student is on track to remain advanced over the next 3 years.
2. at the proficient level, and the student is on track to reach advanced within 3 years.
3. below proficient, but the student is on track to reach proficiency within 3 years.

What does this mean?

This window shows the definition of “growth expectation” in a visual way for parents.
**What is student growth?**
Percent of students that meet the state’s growth expectation (growth to proficient) for English/Language Arts and Math.

**Why is growth important?**
The goal of this growth model is to hold schools accountable for ensuring that all students are on track to reach proficiency or above.

**Who is showing growth?**
A student is considered to be meeting the state’s growth expectations if:
1. The student’s current test score is below proficient, but the student is on track to reach proficiency within 2 years;
2. The student’s current test score is at the proficient level, and the student is on track to reach advanced within 2 years;
3. The student’s current test score is at the advanced level, and the student is on track to remain advanced over the next 3 years.

**Who is not showing growth?**
A student whose growth trajectory is negative is not meeting the state’s growth expectations, regardless of the student’s current proficient (or advanced) level.

### STUDENT ACADEMIC GROWTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>English/Language Arts</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Why is growth important?**
The goal of this growth model is to hold schools accountable for ensuring that all students are on track to reach proficient or above.
Every report card should have translation capabilities into multiple languages to accommodate a diverse array of parents and community members.
Adaptability

Report card designs should be consistent across multiple modalities, including print, online and mobile.
FUNCTIONALITY

When designed correctly, state-level school report cards can be an invaluable tool for all users. To be fully functional, report cards need these key features:

Easy Navigation

The report card should be well organized, searchable and intuitively easy to navigate.
There is a main "viewing window" which displays data and the interactive sections.

Overall design is clean and user-friendly.

Current Grade is on display globally.

Graduation & Readiness Rates

Student Proficiencies

Growth Rates

Gap Closure for Low Performers

The components act as navigation on the left-hand side.
Empowerment

Report cards should empower parents, teachers, administrators and other users to ask questions about the school and its performance. Parents should be given enough information to understand what they can do and to whom they can speak if they are dissatisfied with some element of their child’s current or potential school.

“Keeping families informed of the progress of their child’s school is critical for them to be active partners along the education journey. The My School Information Design Challenge took on this task in a unique and creative way to find the best ways to share relevant information in a family-friendly format. Kudos to all who submitted entries and congratulations to the winners. The work of these designers demonstrates the capacity to engage families when we begin the design process with them in mind.”

— My School Information Design Challenge judge Byron Garrett
A parent notices a trend in the data and submits a question using the "Ask a Question" button underneath the display.

A staffer reviews incoming messages and either answers the question or passes the question along to the school.

The contact at the school now has the opportunity to respond to the question. In this case, the principal of the school responds, and opts to publish the question and answer to the report card.

The parent is notified that her question has been answered. The question becomes part of the living archive of information about the school.

**Key Features of Our Design**

*Each page has customized tools and resources to encourage exploration and participation.*

**NAVIGATING THE REPORT CARD**

Users (parents, students, and educators) will have very different needs and priorities. Our goal is to only make information visible when needed but recommend data.

Our report card design seeks to minimize information overload and help users locate the most relevant information.

Our design allows users to navigate using three different approaches: (1) explore on their own; (2) search for customized data; or (3) have a guided search.
Comparability

Using a variety of data visualization tools, report cards should clearly show year-to-year trends in performance across a variety of metrics and allow users to compare one school to others in the district or state. For example, a parent moving to a new town with a daughter struggling in math should easily be able to compare local schools based on their ability to improve student math scores.

![Diagram of report card interface]

- **Comparability**: Using a variety of data visualization tools, report cards should clearly show year-to-year trends in performance across a variety of metrics and allow users to compare one school to others in the district or state. For example, a parent moving to a new town with a daughter struggling in math should easily be able to compare local schools based on their ability to improve student math scores.

- **Print Optimized**: Interactions like tooltips are expanded, excess items are removed for clean printing. Colors are reduced because...well, we all know what ink cartridges cost.
Digital Bulletin Board

Report cards should become the primary repository of information about the school, including new courses and faculty, events and activities, and other announcements. This will encourage more users to visit the report card with greater frequency.

DEMographics

Detailed information about online courses, college-preparatory courses such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Program, industry-based certifications, special focus programs such as STEM, dual enrollment, internships and apprenticeships will be available on the online School Report Card. These offerings will be uploaded by schools into a statewide searchable database.

School Grade

The School Report Card provides one grade for the overall performance of students in tested subjects across the school. In the print version, school grades for the current year and two previous years are emphasized to provide parents with the most recent and pertinent information about performance and trends.

Required Information:

- Current Year School Grade
- 10 Years of School Grades

The online School Report Card will provide information, including eligibility requirements, on school choice options, allowing parents to consider alternatives if they are dissatisfied with their school grade.
Social Engagement

Key school information should be shareable over a variety of social media channels. For example, a parent should be able to share impressive school performance data with her friends and family over Facebook. An advocate committed to improving his local school should easily be able to distribute school data on proficiency, growth, and students’ poverty levels.
IMPLICATIONS

In addition to the design elements discussed above, the challenge generated some important additional lessons for states and education policymakers that seek to empower their stakeholders with more useful school report cards. In order to realize the full potential of school information, states must also consider the following issues:

- **Communication and outreach:** As research from both ECS and ExcelinEd revealed, even the best report cards are useless unless they are easily found and accessed. States should consider communication and outreach plans, including awareness campaigns to make sure stakeholders know what information is available and how they can find it, use it and share it.

- **Stakeholder engagement:** Each state is unique, and each should design a report card that meets the unique needs of its educational stakeholders. In addition to working with designers, states should engage parents and other stakeholders in important conversations about the kinds of school information they find most useful, how they would like to access it, and more.

- **Educator engagement:** States must also consult teachers. Teachers are important users of school information systems for tracking their students in a broader context, for identifying best practices in similar schools, for identifying connections to professional development opportunities, and for researching employment opportunities.

“Ensuring students are in high-performing schools is of utmost importance; this makes school accountability a very important policy driver in all the states we work with. The My School Information Design Challenge provided a unique opportunity for policymakers, parents and community leaders to investigate some of the best school accountability designs in the nation and refer to them as they work to improve accountability structures in their own states.”

— Jeremy Anderson, President, Education Commission of the States
IMPLEMENTATION

ExcelinEd is committed to the next—and possibly most important—step in the challenge process: working with states to reinvent their school report cards.

Through our state-based network, we shared the winning designs and contact information for the winning designers with state departments of education and legislators. Under the terms of the challenge, states are permitted to use and build upon the designs as long as they attribute the designs to the original designer. States are also welcome to reach out to individual winning designers for help rethinking their existing report cards.

Our goal is to inspire states to take the first steps toward developing the next generation of school report cards. Of course, those first steps will look different in every state.

RESOURCE:
Empowering Parents and Communities through Quality Public Reporting

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) has published valuable resources in a series on public reporting. The resources provide recommendations for all stakeholders to find education data that supports informed decision making. As stakeholders move to the implementation phase of creating a new school report card, this set of resources will support the process of gathering trustworthy and easy-to-understand education data.

To view the DQC resources visit: www.dataqualitycampaign.org/publicreporting.
This era of increased accountability and increased educational options for students demands that school performance data be easy to find and easy to understand for local, regional, state and national stakeholders. Parents use school information to decide where to live and what schools their children will attend. School leaders use school information to study best practices and guide school improvement. Teachers use school information to make employment decisions. Businesses use school information to make location decisions. Lawmakers use school information to guide policy decisions, hold schools accountable for student performance, and ensure equitable provision of services.

Because school information serves important functions for many types of users, this challenge was launched as a national design competition to rethink and redesign the way in which school performance data is presented. We have learned that, to be effective, school report cards must have the following design elements:

- User-centered design, including information summaries, drill-down access, customization, translation, and multiple modalities.
- Functionality that empowers action, allows easy navigation, and provides comprehensive and comparable information.

The good news is that today’s technologies (such as mobile delivery and custom search and comparison capabilities) and achievements in data visualization empower states to do all of this well. But, as we learned from the designers who entered our challenge—as well as those who did not—developing a well-designed school report card is no easy task.

We’re up to the challenge, and we know states are too. We look forward to working with states to revolutionize stakeholder access to powerful school information.
APPENDIX

CHALLENGE WINNERS

Best Summary - HD Web Studio
“For a public school to be most effective, all stakeholders must understand the state’s goals, what individual schools are doing well, areas of challenge, and how they plan to improve. Design, transparency and clear expectations are essential components of an engaging, meaningful school report card. Winning the Best Summary category was exciting for my team because we know families are busy with many demands on their time. Understanding how a school is performing should be simple and easy for all stakeholders. We look forward to the ongoing collaboration among educators, design communities and policy makers and hope our winning design helps in this process.” — Melany Stowe, HD Web Studio

Best Comparison - Rennzer
“We were thrilled to be selected for the Best Comparison category. Comparative and relative context is a critical user flow for effective analysis of school performance. While two schools appear to be similarly performing through their current-year grade, doing a deeper, comparative analysis can tell a user which school is a stronger longitudinal performer or better in specific groupings, like gap closure. Uncovering these insights can help educators to explore best practices, community leaders to focus efforts, or parents to perhaps choose a more affordable home in a developing community close to a school on an upward trend.” — Omid Jahanbin, Founder/CEO, Rennzer

Best User Experience - Collaborative Communications + Social Driver
“School report cards need to be more than just easy to use; they need to be tools that parents will want to use. We need to understand what questions parents are asking and what challenges they are facing in order to build a tool where users know that they can find the information that they want and need quickly and easily and where data will spark conversations and inspire action.” — Chris Given, Senior Creative Technologist, Collaborative Communications
Best Trend Data - Collaborative Communications + Social Driver

“Analyzing information about schools is complicated no matter how you approach it. But every data point tells a story, not just about the past but also about the future. When parents are able to see in the data the story of their child, their school, and their community, they can use that data to change the trajectory of the story. Ultimately, we want users to be able to examine the information in ways that reveal relationships, patterns and trends that shed light on what is needed to support success for all students.” — Katherine Ward, President, Collaborative Communications

Overall Winner - Collaborative Communications + Social Driver

Collaborative Communications + Social Driver melds deep knowledge of public education with user-centric design and technology to bring together families, educators and communities in using data to improve outcomes. Their approach to report card design reflects the fact that all of these stakeholders have an important role to play and that school data should be accessible to anyone in order to empower everyone. The team at Collaborative Communications + Social Driver are actively working to make information about schools meaningful and are eager to do more with districts and states. The technology is available, and their design offers one way to think about using it to improve outcomes.

Runner-Up - Rennzer

Omid Jahanbin, Chief Executive Officer at Rennzer, is a product designer and engineer by education and professional experience. He has spent the better part of 10 years bringing together user experience design, engineering and data to improve education experience and outcomes, working to develop products for WeatherBug and Blackboard.

When asked why he participated in the challenge, Jahanbin said, “I founded my company, Rennzer, on the premise that we do great, important work. Given our experience in developing data warehouses and analytics tools as well as solutions for the education space, we found a natural alignment to take on this important challenge. We also had a prospective impact: current solutions, even some of the newer report card tools, do not go far enough to address the needs and empower all facets of the community to use school data effectively. States can also see significant economic benefits accelerated by constituents, investors and developers uncovering the insights in this data.”

Motivated and inspired by the challenge, Rennzer is nearing the completion of the infrastructure they will be using to store and present state data and are in active implementation conversations with several states to get their data live. They are also developing individualized data engagement campaigns to help states inform constituents about the benefits of their platform.
DESIGNERS’ LIVE SUBMISSIONS

Collaborative Communications + Social Driver
collaborativecommunications.com
Team Lead: Chris Given

Rennzer
rennzer.com
Team Lead: Omid Jahanbin

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ENDNOTES
