



## Teachers encouraged to sign up for August data use courses

In June, the South Dakota Department of Education teamed up with professors from the University of South Dakota to provide three data use courses for administrators. Approximately 50 administrators from all over the state participated. They learned foundational skills needed for using data in their jobs as superintendents, principals, reading/math specialists, counselors and curriculum directors.

In August, South Dakota teachers will have the same opportunity. Courses are filling up with more than 90 teachers already registered.

### TEACHER TRAINING

Using Data to Inform Instruction

August 4 – Rapid City

August 5 – Pierre

August 6 – Sioux Falls

Register at [southdakota.gosignmeup.com](http://southdakota.gosignmeup.com). Participation is free, and mileage/lunch will be reimbursed by the department. One graduate credit is available through USD at a reduced cost of \$40. These courses promise to be fun and informative.

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# SD-STARS to load DIBELS and AIMSWEB

When SD-STARS rolled out in spring 2013, the South Dakota Department of Education received feedback from districts. Districts liked what SD-STARS had to offer, but they wanted more. Specifically, districts wanted to have local assessments included in SD-STARS.

Districts asked, and the department answered. The department is working to load DIBELS and aimsweb results into SD-STARS. "It is a very exciting step for SD-STARS," says Judy Merriman, with the Office of Data Management. "There are only a handful of states that are doing this, so South Dakota will be a leader in this process."

SD-STARS will include DIBELS and aimsweb data only for those districts that give permission and only from the following vendors: DIBELS from University of Oregon, DIBELS from DIBELS.net and aimsweb from Pearson. Districts that do not give permission will not have the data loaded in SD-STARS.

Developing protocol for this process will take about a year. Districts are encouraged to sign the vendor permission forms this summer. During the 2014-15 school year, the department will begin loading benchmark DIBELS and aimsweb assessment data into SD-STARS. With help from districts, current SD-STARS reports will be modified or, if needed, new reports will be designed using local assessment data. "There are a lot of details to work out," Merriman says. "But right now our hope is that district users will be able to access local assessment data in SD-STARS during summer 2015."

As with all other data housed in SD-STARS, local assessment data will be secure

and protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. A district can only access student level data for students attending schools in that district. If a student transfers to a different school, their DIBELS or aimsweb data will follow them. Only aggregate data that is appropriately suppressed can be reported publicly by the department.

Once in SD-STARS, districts can access the local assessment data in the form of reports and dashboards. This data could be used in a number of ways:

- Users could compare student performance on these assessments to performance on the state assessment.
- Districts could connect DIBELS or aimsweb data with attendance or other valuable information.
- Teachers could use the data as they develop Student Learning Objectives, or SLOs.

The department plans to use DIBELS and aimsweb data for program evaluation, district support and public reporting. "One of the department's goals is to have students enter 4th grade proficient in reading. The department has designed an action plan to achieve this," explains Becky Nelson, Director of Learning and Instruction. "With local assessment data, we can better gauge the effects of the department's actions on students' performance in the early grades."

The 2014-15 school year will be an exciting one for SD-STARS. If your district uses one of these assessments and would like to participate, contact [STARSHelp@state.sd.us](mailto:STARSHelp@state.sd.us).



## About Us:

South Dakota STARS Connections is a bi-monthly publication for South Dakota administrators and teachers, produced by the South Dakota Department of Education. This publication is intended to communicate news and events regarding the South Dakota Student Teacher Accountability and Reporting System (SD-STARS), our Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

To view an online edition of this newsletter, go to [doe.sd.gov/publications.aspx](http://doe.sd.gov/publications.aspx).

Email story ideas or questions to [marcus.bevier@state.sd.us](mailto:marcus.bevier@state.sd.us) or [sara.kock@state.sd.us](mailto:sara.kock@state.sd.us).



## Schopp Talk Melody Schopp, Secretary Of Education

It's hard to believe South Dakota's statewide longitudinal data system, SD-STARS, is already entering its third year of operation.

Many improvements and updates have been made in the past two years, and many more are in store. I encourage all South Dakota educators to take advantage of what SD-STARS has to offer. Please note two important things for the 2014-15 school year.

Since the launch of SD-STARS, we at the Department of Education have wanted to include local assessment data in the system, to enhance usefulness at the local level. I'm happy to say that we are now going to be able to offer that option for districts that see value in it. It is optional for districts to participate, and our hope is that district users will be able to access local assessment data in SD-STARS beginning in summer 2015. Initially, we are concentrating on two commonly used assessments: DIBELS and aimsweb.

I encourage you to take advantage of the free supports, including trainings, still available during this coming school year. SD-STARS is moving into its third and final year of a federal grant, and this means 2014-15 is likely the final year for districts to receive supports provided by ESAs free-of-charge. Contact your ESA for more information about what they can do for you.

Though our federal grant ends in summer 2015, SD-STARS will continue to move forward. Reports, resources, news and calendar events are continually updated. Reports allow educators to analyze their data over several years. Resources in the content library provide information on professional development, resources for classroom use, data analysis tips for improving student achievement and much more. SD-STARS will continue to aid educators, helping them measure outcomes and make informed decisions.

## SD-STARS in the Classroom Megan Vockrodt, SD-STARS intern

"How can SD-STARS help me teach a classroom full of children?"

This was the question I asked myself as I began my summer internship with the statewide longitudinal data system team. As a senior elementary education major at Northern State University, I had only heard of SD-STARS a couple of times, but was curious as to how I could use it to become a better teacher.

One of my duties is to assist with reports in SD-STARS. These reports provide demographic, enrollment, assessment and attendance information to teachers and administrators that can be used to understand students' strengths and weaknesses.

In the near future, SD-STARS will also begin loading local assessment results from districts that have given their permission. By taking advantage of all the data SD-STARS has to offer, teachers can easily adjust their lessons based on the information about their students.

As a soon-to-be teacher, I'm always looking for valuable (and free!) resources I can use in the classroom. Having browsed through the resources in the SD-STARS Content Library, I found that it contains countless ideas on how to nurture a student-centered classroom based on data-supported techniques.

The news feature of SD-STARS keeps users updated on the latest education information. Having the data available is one thing, but having it organized, customizable and easily accessible is essential and one of the many benefits of SD-STARS.

SD-STARS provides an easy, efficient way to make data-driven decisions. As I begin my own teaching career, I look forward to using SD-STARS for lesson ideas, professional development notifications, news updates, and district, school, and state data. SD-STARS makes data useable and beneficial in educating all students across South Dakota.

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# Ask the Experts

## What are local assessments?

In this context, “local assessments” refers to those purchased by districts, developed by an outside organization (e.g. vendor, non-profit) and administered more than once a year. Often, local assessments are used as tools to monitor student progress in reading and mathematics throughout the school year. Local assessments are key to tailoring instruction to individual student needs because they are administered more frequently than the state summative assessment.

## What local assessments are being loaded into SD-STARS?

SD-STARS will include DIBELS and aimsweb data only for those districts that give permission and only from the following vendors: DIBELS from University of Oregon, DIBELS from DIBELS.net and aimsweb from Pearson. Districts that do not give permission will not have the data loaded in SD-STARS.

## How often will local assessments be loaded?

Right now, the department plans to load the benchmark assessments for DIBELS and aimsweb. This means the department will load local assessment data approximately three times per school year. In the future, we will look at the possibility of supporting more frequent assessments.

## How were DIBELS and AIMSWEB selected?

The department, with help from ESAs, surveyed districts. Districts were asked which local assessments they use to monitor student progress in reading and mathematics. The results of the survey indicated that a large number of respondents were using DIBELS and aimsweb assessments. We also know that other states have been successful loading DIBELS and aimsweb assessments into their statewide longitudinal data systems.

## Is local assessment data in SD-STARS secure?

As with all other data housed in SD-STARS, local assessment data will be secure and protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. A district can only access student level data for students attending schools in that district. If a student transfers to a different school, their DIBELS or aimsweb data will follow them. Only aggregate data that is appropriately suppressed can be reported publicly by the department.

## I can't access my accountability reports. Who should I talk to?

The first person to contact is your STARS Account Manager. Your SAM will be able to tell you whether you are on your district's accountability team. If you are, please contact the SD-STARS project managers at [STARSHelp@state.sd.us](mailto:STARSHelp@state.sd.us).

## Take advantage of free support for SD-STARS

In July 2012, the South Dakota Department of Education received a \$3 million federal grant to help implement a statewide longitudinal data system we call SD-STARS. Using funds from this grant, the department contracted with Education Service Agencies to provide support, including training, for districts. The grant, which is for three years, is entering its final year.

Now is the time to take advantage of the many things ESAs have to offer districts. First, ESAs will be working with district Data STARS to complete implementation plans for their districts. This helps districts make a plan to support SD-STARS for future years, including doing trainings themselves. In addition, ESAs will be working with STARS Account Managers (SAMs) to build the skills necessary to manage SD-STARS accounts. Security is important, too. Therefore, ESAs and districts will be working together in order to create a security plan tailored to their needs. Districts will also continue

to hear from ESAs about available SD-STARS training opportunities.

Districts should be aware that the 2014-15 school year is the last opportunity to utilize the free support provided by ESAs. Over the last two years, most districts benefited greatly from this support. ESAs will continue their support, but after the 2014-15 school year, they could likely charge districts for these services. If your district wants more information, including further training on SD-STARS, the department encourages you to contact your ESA Data STARS soon.

Even with the grant ending in a year, rest assured, SD-STARS is here to stay. Data-driven decision making is critical to student success. The department recognizes this and is making sure teachers and administrators have the tools they need to help students become college, career and life ready. This includes making sure SD-STARS is around for the long term.



## Accountability tutorials available

It's that time of year again. The South Dakota Department of Education is working hard to prepare and release the accountability report card. Like last year, districts can access the report card through SD-STARS.

To help districts better understand the reports, the department produced a series of accountability tutorials. The videos direct users through the accountability report card addressing items like page navigation, features found within the report card, and interpreting results. The videos also highlight differences in the accountability model for 2013-14.

All accountability tutorials can be found in the Training Center within the SD-STARS portal. If you have any questions, contact us at [STARSHelp@state.sd.us](mailto:STARSHelp@state.sd.us).

# National STARS: Delaware

One of the national frontrunners in data management is Delaware. Delaware recently included local assessment data in its statewide longitudinal data system. As South Dakota looks to implement local assessment data in SD-STARS, Delaware serves as a good example.

Delaware implemented a data warehouse, designed interactive reports and dashboards and provided an analytical toolkit to stakeholders. These efforts are helping educators make informed decisions.

Adding local assessment data has made the system even more useful for districts. Delaware's SLDS currently includes local assessment data

from Renaissance Place and DIBELS. Sean Anthony, an education associate in Delaware's Unit Count Program, says that classroom teachers enjoy the convenience of having benchmark and progress-monitoring test results all in one easily accessible data warehouse.

While South Dakota works to load local assessments, the Department of Education and local districts are excited to use these data for more frequent analysis and action. Having this information centralized will make it easy for busy teachers to analyze their students' progress and adjust instruction or curriculum to more effectively meet students' needs.

## Importance of STARS Account Managers John Swanson, ESA 7

STARS Account Managers, or SAMs, are critical to the success and sustainability of SD-STARS. SAMs are empowered to control access to SD-STARS using a variety of assignments, permissions and approvals. Providing access to accountability reports is an exceptionally important role for SAMs, in conjunction with school leaders. SAMs also have responsibility for maintaining up-to-date accounts for all staff in their districts, including creating accounts for new staff and deleting accounts for departing staff.

Because the role of a SAM is so important in allowing for the most effective use of SD-STARS, we encourage districts to consider that role carefully. Does the person identified as the SAM in your district have adequate time and support to effectively fulfill the role? Does your SAM have experience with information systems management, knowledge of FERPA laws and strong technical skills? These questions and

others should be considered when identifying SAMs who will most effectively support and promote SD-STARS at the district level.

With the new school year, staffing changes result in districts identifying new SAMs. This is where ESAs can help. In ESA 7, we plan to host two networking sessions for SAMs during 2014-15. These sessions will include sharing strategies for successful management of the portal and problem-solving activities aimed at common issues. Other ESAs are offering similar in-person or even virtual (ex: webinars, videos) trainings. ESAs look forward to working closely with the SAMs throughout the coming year.

Sherry Crofut will be joining our SD-STARS Team for ESA 7 for the 2014-15 school year. Sherry's expertise with technology will be extremely valuable as we develop continued training and support for districts.

## ESA DATA STARS

Every ESA has representatives who have been trained in SD-STARS. They are ready and willing to answer your questions. If you don't know your ESA assignment, see <http://doe.sd.gov/octe/sdesa.aspx>.

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