

Supporting Data Use Through an Online Learning Hub

SLDS SPOTLIGHT

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For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program or for support with system development, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS>.

CONTRIBUTORS

Kathi Gillaspay, *SLDS Grant Program State Support Team*
Fiorella Gallia and Nora Morris, *Minnesota Office of Higher Education*
Jennifer Verbrugge, *Minnesota Department of Education*

Stakeholder engagement is key for a successful and sustainable statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS). To fully engage in the SLDS, however, stakeholders must understand how to navigate the system and correctly use the data within. This spotlight showcases how Minnesota's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) redesigned its tutorials web page into an online hub that allows users to follow customized learning paths. Making learning tools more accessible helps make SLDS data more accessible and increases data use.

Making Education Resources More Accessible

Using an SLDS can be daunting for any user. In 2018, SLEDS and the state's Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS) staff worked with a vendor to create several simple tutorials to help users better understand how to navigate the systems and the data within. These tutorials were used primarily as an introduction for new users. However, advancements to both data systems over the years made the tutorials dated.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes and challenges to SLDSs and their stakeholders, including SLEDS. Prior to the pandemic and using federal SLDS grant funds, SLEDS staff had built a regional coaching network to provide in-person technical assistance and

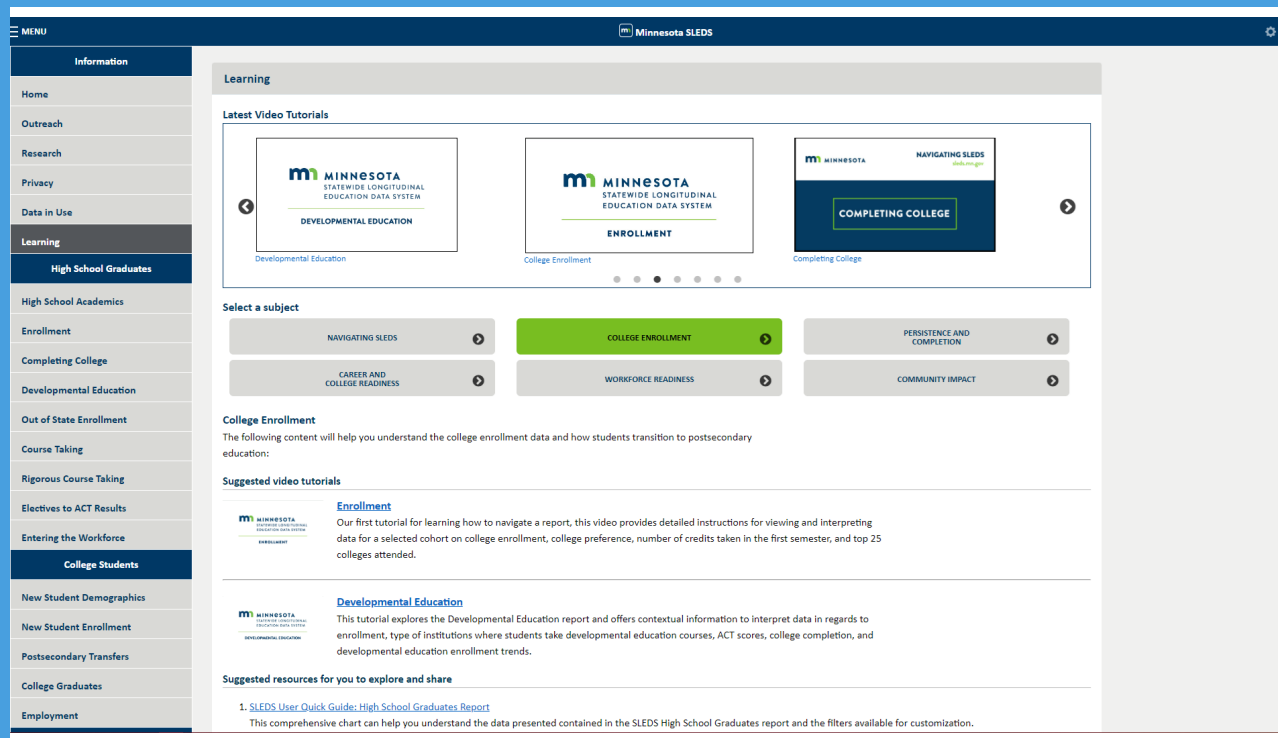
training to new SLEDS and ECLDS users across the state. Because of quarantine and other mandates in place throughout the pandemic, these coaches could no longer provide the in-person training they were contracted to do.

With the coaching network on board that had time to fill, SLEDS staff recognized a need and opportunity to take its online learning opportunities a step further. Staff and coaching network members concluded that basic tutorials on how to navigate SLEDS were not enough for stakeholders with varied needs to find and use the data they wanted effectively.

Coaching network members suggested creating an instruction platform that mimicked LinkedIn Learning's model, where users can choose content pathways and learn at their own pace. Creating defined pathways for specific types of users helps stakeholders get to the most appropriate resources more quickly.

SLEDS staff members also wanted to ensure that the resources were stored in a central location to make it easier for content managers to monitor and evaluate materials for future updates. Accomplishing both tasks meant that SLEDS staff and the coaching network would need to create new content, evaluate existing content, and redesign the current web page on which the older tutorials lived.

FIGURE 1. The SLEDS Learning page features a variety of tutorials and resources, with topics ranging from navigating SLEDS to pulling and interpreting data from SLEDS and its reports and dashboards.



SLEDS staff set to work, relying heavily on the regional network coaches to identify and create new content and update existing content where able. Having the regional network coaches pivot to this new work moved the educational hub from an idea to an actionable project. The project was able to rely on coaches’ expertise in training others about SLEDS to inform tutorial content that could best address the needs of new data system users. Coach feedback also replaced the more traditional feedback from school and district leaders, stakeholders whom SLEDS staff ordinarily would consult when working to build a user-friendly resource.

Minnesota’s Online Learning Hub

Minnesota’s new SLEDS Learning page (<https://sleds.mn.gov/#learning>) features a wide variety of data use resources, from video tutorials to handouts and other data tools, which explain not only how to navigate SLEDS, but also how to access and interpret data within the system. Users can choose to learn along six different pathways (FIGURE 1), depending on how they want to use the data:

- Navigating SLEDS
- College Enrollment
- Persistence and Completion

- Career and College Readiness
- Workforce Readiness
- Community Impact

Staff and regional coaches brainstormed these learning pathways and layouts based on past feedback from their stakeholders. School district staff working with regional network coaches often ask more customized or specific questions because they are asking about their own data.

SLEDS staff plan to add to and adjust the content of the SLEDS Learning page based on continual stakeholder feedback. They solicit feedback through a variety of means, including the system’s quarterly newsletter, network of regional coaches, and directly from district leaders and staff. Plans also are underway to rework the ECLDS video tutorials page to mirror the SLEDS Learning page’s new pathway options.

Using the learning page

SLEDS stakeholders have given the SLEDS Learning page positive feedback. One advantage of the learning page is that it provides alternative means of access for individuals with disabilities. Leaders in the deaf and hard of hearing education community find the hub particularly useful. Rather than having to retain large

amounts of information filtered through a translator at in-person presentations, these users can go back to the accessible tutorials online and learn at their own pace.

Lessons Learned

SLEDS staff offered the following lessons learned.

Determine explicitly how your stakeholders plan to use the data

Ask your stakeholders about decisions they are making in their day-to-day work and their objectives and determine how SLDS data can support them. Considering how users were accessing and interpreting data helped shape the content and layout of the SLEDS Learning page.

Help users find the information they need as quickly as possible

SLEDS staff have developed a wide variety of dashboards and user guides that walk users through their various reports based on how they use the data. This approach helps avoid overwhelming users by making them spend large amounts of time clicking through the websites. Creating customized pathways also opens avenues for other, less obvious users to use SLEDS, such as school counselors using the system to guide students making postsecondary plans.

Ensure that your materials are accessible

Although providing information in a variety of ways and formats can be expensive, making materials accessible to all audiences widens the pool of potential stakeholders who will want to access and use data.

Consider the sustainability of your resources

Resources must be updated over time so that they evolve along with the SLDS. Creating content, especially in video form, can require a lot of time and money. Consider how often you will need to revise and update your content. Create an inventory of your resources and schedule when each resource should be reviewed to determine how to fund new and updated materials.

Additional Resources

Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System Learning
<https://sleds.mn.gov/#learning>

SLDS Issue Brief: Implementing and Evaluating Data Use Training Programs for Educators
<https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/18389>

SLDS Webinar: Fostering a Culture of Data Sharing and Use
<https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/14792>

SLDS Webinar: Maintaining Sustainable Data Use Training Programs
<https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/16961>

SLDS Webinar: Promoting Effective Understanding and Use of Integrated Early Childhood Data
<https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/18938>

SLDS Webinar: Stakeholder Training on Understanding and Using Financial Reports and Data Tools
<https://slds.ed.gov/#communities/pdc/documents/17758>