Students Want Access and Support to Use Their Own Data to Navigate Their Futures

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students have faced uncertainty inside and outside of school. A national student poll from the Data Quality Campaign and the Kentucky Student Voice Team surveyed high school students to find out how they are thinking about data as they navigate high school and are making their postsecondary and workforce plans.[1] Students resoundingly conveyed that data about learning and academic progress is important to helping them stay on track after the pandemic but that their own data isn't getting back to them. **One message came through loud and clear: students want access to their data to navigate their futures.**

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Students are in the dark about their own learning.

<50% report getting any information from their school about whether they're meeting grade-level expectations, if they're on track to graduate from high school, or how much academic progress they've made this year.

Students are out of the loop just as the pandemic is prompting them to rethink what they're going to do after high school.

67% say the 2021–22 school year was challenging.

54% say the pandemic has changed how they think about what they might do after school.
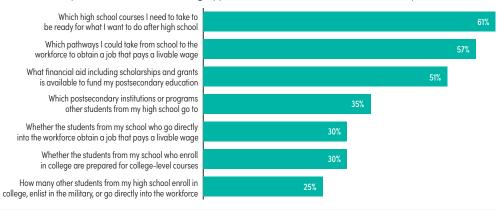
35% report that their school informed them about what postsecondary or career paths are available to them, and the same low percentage report that their school told them if the courses they're taking are preparing them for higher education.

1   This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the Data Quality Campaign from June 6 to June 13, 2022, among 1,007 high school students ages 14–18 in the United States who attend public school or public charter school.

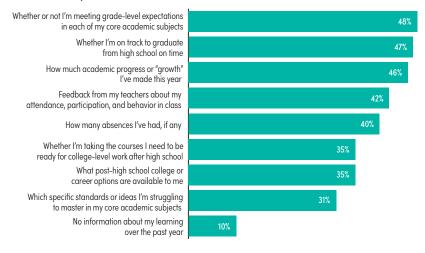# Students want and need more information to navigate their options.

90% **feel that at least one type of information included in the chart at right would be helpful** for understanding whether or not they are prepared for their next steps after high school.

Students report that the following types of information would be helpful:

Which high school courses I need to take to be ready for what I want to do after high school	61%
Which pathways I could take from school to the workforce to obtain a job that pays a livable wage	57%
What financial aid including scholarships and grants is available to fund my postsecondary education	51%
Which postsecondary institutions or programs other students from my high school go to	35%
Whether the students from my school who go directly into the workforce obtain a job that pays a livable wage	30%
Whether the students from my school who enroll in college are prepared for college-level courses	30%
How many other students from my high school enroll in college, enlist in the military, or go directly into the workforce	25%

Fewer than half of students say they received the most fundamental information they need to understand if they are meeting basic standards for success in high school, let alone to make decisions about their futures. Worse, while 81 percent of students agree that data about their learning and academic progress is important to staying on track after the pandemic, one in 10 students say they did not receive any information about their academic progress over the past year.

Students report that they received the following information from their school in 2021–22 school year:

Whether or not I'm meeting grade-level expectations in each of my core academic subjects	48%
Whether I'm on track to graduate from high school on time	47%
How much academic progress or "growth" I've made this year	46%
Feedback from my teachers about my attendance, participation, and behavior in class	42%
How many absences I've had, if any	40%
Whether I'm taking the courses I need to be ready for college-level work after high school	35%
What post-high school college or career options are available to me	35%
Which specific standards or ideas I'm struggling to master in my core academic subjects	31%
No information about my learning over the past year	10%

Three-quarters of students feel they're on track for success (e.g., ready for postsecondary education or career). However, **only 61 percent of students feel confident they know all their options.** A vast majority of students would feel more confident about their future if they had better access to information.

80% agree that they would feel more confident about the path they will take after high school if they had better access to information.

87% think it would be helpful to know more about what degrees or training they would need to be prepared for different types of jobs.

84% want to know more about the different types of careers that they could have after they finish school.

Although students want their own information to make decisions for themselves, they also **value transparency** when it comes to data on all students.

85% support sharing transparent, disaggregated data—reporting that it's important for their school to share data on how it serves different groups of students (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender) even if the results aren't favorable for their school.
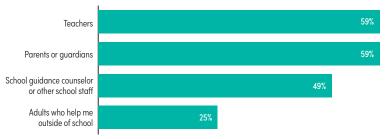
84% believe it is their state's responsibility to share clear information with students and their families about whether or not schools are effectively teaching and supporting all students.

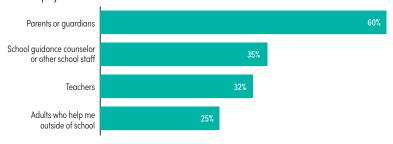# Students trust adults in their lives to help them navigate these choices—but they want greater access to counselors.

While many students trust their teachers and parents to view and use their academic data to help them, four in 10 do not. And when it comes to nonacademic data, there is a gap between students' level of trust in family and in other adults. However, 10 percent of students feel that no one should be able to see their academic data except for them, and a similar percentage (15 percent) feel that no one should be able to see their nonacademic data except for them.

74% of students agree that it would be helpful if their school could share some information about students' academic needs with trusted organizations outside of school.

When it comes to your academic data, whom do you trust to see and use that data to help you?

Teachers	59%
Parents or guardians	59%
School guidance counselor or other school staff	49%
Adults who help me outside of school	25%

When it comes to nonacademic data, whom do you trust to see and use that data to help you?

Parents or guardians	60%
School guidance counselor or other school staff	35%
Teachers	32%
Adults who help me outside of school	25%

Although many students want to discuss information with the adults already in their lives, they value and want access to counselors. **One in four students indicate they do not have regular access to their school's college counselors** to talk about preparing for college, but students view counselors as a trusted resource to discuss career readiness with.

74% of students say their family has discussed career readiness with them.

55% of students say their counselors have discussed career readiness with them—although only 7 percent of students say their counselor was the most helpful in making postsecondary decisions.

41% want to discuss career readiness with their counselors—compared to 34 percent who want to discuss career readiness with family.

Students want more information to navigate their academic experience and chart their path after high school. Without access to data about their own progress, students are being left in the dark. State, district, and local education leaders must prioritize giving students access to data and ensuring that they have the resources to use it to understand and navigate their K–12 education as well as their postsecondary and workforce options.