

The quest to collect and analyze data to understand student outcomes is complex and ongoing. As educators, we know that there are many ways measure student performance. Likewise, there are many ways to present the data we collect about student performance: charts that show the percentage of students demonstrating a certain level of proficiency each year; tables that provide information about student responses on a quiz; a grade book that documents performance on a collection of assignments; more complex measures of individual student growth over time.

Educators strive to balance these measures of performance and use these data to inform their classroom practices, individual interventions, and overall planning, but education data extends beyond student performance measures: it includes attendance and discipline information; financial information; data about interventions; extracurricular involvement and course taking patterns; graduation data and postsecondary enrollment; and more.

The ability to turn data into information quickly and easily has become increasingly important to guide decisions at all levels of education and is a top priority for DPI. In our ongoing effort to support educational research and analysis to improve educational outcomes, the Department of Public Instruction has recently purchased a suite tools—called business intelligence, or BI, Tools—that will change the way DPI provides the data we collect back to schools and districts, and the way school and district staff, as well as the public, can access data about the public schools in the state of Wisconsin. The BI solution and toolset will be provided by a Wisconsin company called VersiFit Technologies. The solution incorporates Microsoft BI technologies as well.

DPI's BI solution will increase data use by enabling access to the data warehouse in an unprecedented way. Making a plethora of reports and dashboards available—from a single location—to districts on a variety of topics that draw from our longitudinal data system aligns with DPI's message that multiple indicators should be incorporated into analyses and decision-making processes.

This project will enable DPI to create reports and dashboards to provide a better understanding of education performance and outcomes for Wisconsin students, and help inform decisions ensuring every child graduates from high school prepared for both college and career pathways.

The VersiFit (VF) business intelligence solution selected by DPI will provide:

- A way of organizing our education data (called a data model) pre-structured to enable easy, intuitive, and smart reporting;
- Role-based data access and dashboards;
- Public and secured reporting that can reach a wide variety of users with a wide variety of data needs;

- Simple ad hoc reporting functionality (choose a district, choose a demographic);
- Advanced reporting capabilities for power users at the district and state level to create customizable reports;
- Professional development resources such as pre-made workbooks to guide use and understanding of tools, dashboards and reports;

DPI's initial implementation will include a variety of data, reports and dashboards. Final scope is to be determined. Future phases are being planned to incorporate additional capabilities after the initial release. The table below provides information and timelines related to our initial rollout. Further, we share some possible components of later phases, for which scope is yet to be defined.

Phase I BI Tool Rollout	
August 2011	
Plan	BI toolset available in a training capacity
Data/reports available	Demonstration data, reports and dashboards for training purposes
Intended users	School, district, and CESA staff interested in learning how to use the BI tool to access reports and data; not intended for actual analysis but for technical instruction
Note	Secure release only; log in required
September 2011	
Plan	BI toolset operational for district analysis purposes
Data/reports available	District-level and school-level data, reports and dashboards
Intended users	School and district staff interested in accessing a variety of dashboards and reports populated with their district/school data
Note	Secure release only; log in required and available to school and district staff only. Specific access information will be provided by DPI closer to the tool's release, but will mirror the access process for secure LDS tools. (For more information, visit the LDS homepage: http://dpi.wi.gov/lds .)

Later Phases

Public reports, eventually replacing reports currently provided in WINSS
 Reports available at a classroom level (note: secure, i.e., log in required, only)

DPI signed a contract with VersiFit to purchase the solution in February of 2011. The project is in early phases and more information will be made available as soon as possible. Ultimately, our goal is to contribute to the work of educators raising individual student achievement and closing achievement gaps.