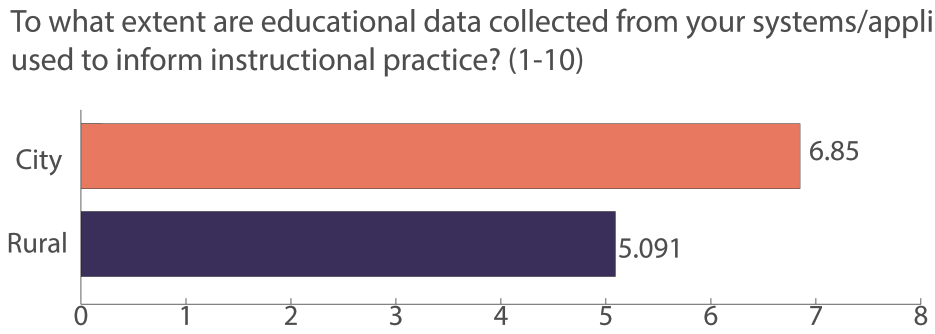

Why This Matters

Larger and more urban school systems tended to score higher on the survey overall than smaller and more rural school systems. Larger school systems tend to have commensurately larger technology staff and budgets, giving them more staff capacity to implement data interoperability. Because they make bigger purchases, larger school systems also have more leverage with vendors during the procurement process, making it easier for them to require vendors to align to interoperability standards. Support organizations should tailor technical assistance to meet the needs of districts of all sizes and education service agencies.

Creating Seamless Student Transitions

During the COVID-19 pandemic, districts were forced quickly transition from in-person schooling to remote and hybrid models. At Hinsdale Township High School District 86 in Hinsdale, Illinois, they were ready for these massive shifts, and credit their data interoperability work as one of the keys to success.

By implementing interoperability between SIS and LMS systems, the district ensured that data can flow easily between school registration and course scheduling systems to their Canvas learning management system. When the need for hybrid models that combined in-person and virtual learning arose due to COVID-19, Hinsdale quickly broke students up into smaller cohorts to allow for social distancing within the building. According to Chief Information Officer Keith Bockwoldt, this was made possible by having accurate data flow into the district's scheduling software. The pivot to smaller class sizes helped minimize instructional loss from missed school time.

Hinsdale also put new student success centers into place this year to help mitigate pandemic-related instructional loss. The centers are run by counselors, deans, teachers, and other staff who use comprehensive data dashboards to get information on students' academic progress. Information including course grades, attendance, and curricular data feed a dashboard created using the 5Lab analytics tool. The dashboard includes a Response to Intervention (RTI) model that schools can use to determine what academic interventions students need. This model has gone district-wide at Hinsdale, ensuring that every student has a pathway to success.

Hinsdale's team received many new data requests during the pandemic. Thanks to their investment in interoperable standards, data security and privacy, they were able to meet the challenges of the moment. "It was a tremendous amount of work," he says, "but it was also a tremendous success from the team. Dealing with a pandemic is hard enough, and being able to pull the data to show where we needed to adjust course was critical."