



VLDS

VLDS E-Newsletter - January 2014

IN THIS ISSUE

[A VLDS Primer](#)

[VLDS: A Year in Review, a Look Ahead](#)

[VLDS in the News 2013 Recap](#)

[Tod Massa to Present at National Center for Education Statistics Symposium](#)

[Save the Date – VLDS Insights Conference](#)

[Enhancing Workforce Development](#)

A VLDS Primer

Four years ago, Virginia received a \$17.5 million grant from the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program of the United States Department of Education. Although a foundation had been laid in the years before the state received the grant, the creation of VLDS can be traced to 2010.

Many of you have accompanied us on the four-year ride, which culminated with the official launch of VLDS in early September. Yet, since our launch, we continue to meet new friends and organizations who are hearing our story for the first time.

So indulge us as we catch readers up on some of the basics of who we are and what we can do – for those who know us well, read ahead to see all that we accomplished in 2013.

For starters, VLDS stands for Virginia Longitudinal Data System, a pioneering collaboration among four state agencies that gives the Commonwealth an unprecedented and cost-effective mechanism for extracting, shaping and analyzing educational and workforce development data and more in an environment that ensures the highest levels of privacy. The agencies – the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) – support secure, authorized research addressing today's key educational and workforce training questions.

When we began building VLDS, we chose to develop what's known as a "federated" model – one in which each partner agency's data remains their own and under their control, rather than all the data being placed in a central database. As a result, no direct access to the raw data is available through VLDS. Before the data from the participating agencies is merged, it is double-deidentified, which is akin to a double-blind study in that VLDS protects the integrity and privacy of the data even within its own collaborative process (for a more detailed explanation of the process, visit <http://www.vlds.org/privacy.html>). This process complies with or exceeds state and federal privacy laws and guidelines. What's more, the federated system was created almost entirely with in-state resources, including Virginia Tech, Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) and Center for Innovative Technology (CIT).

We're proud to be recognized by other states as a leader in the development of longitudinal data systems (LDS). Several states have called on us for assistance (and have invited us to explain how VLDS works) to help them focus their efforts in developing their own LDS systems. We expect to continue working hand in hand with these states in the coming year.

This brings us to today. We currently have seven research projects in development and plan to release their results by June. These projects examine diverse research questions and will reveal insights previously unavailable.

Our agencies are working to improve education across the Commonwealth, from pre-school through college, and to better prepare our children to be successful in the workplace. Together, we're making a difference.

VLDS: A Year in Review, A Look Ahead

2013 was a banner year for VLDS. Here's a quick look back at the year that was and what's on top for 2014.

In June, nearly 200 people attended the inaugural VLDS Insights Conference at George Mason University. Elise Miller of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Kathleen Styles of the U.S. Department of Education served as the conference's keynote speakers and addressed, among other subjects, the role that data plays in ensuring that the U.S. higher education system acts as an engine of social mobility and economic development. Four breakout sessions were held with 16 presentations on a wide range of topics related to VLDS and how it already has been used to reveal some of the answers to today's burning educational questions.



VLDS Participating Agency Panel presenting 'The Power of VLDS' at the 2013 INSIGHTS conference. Photo by Rona Jobe.

In early September, VLDS officially went live after four years of planning and the partner agencies began accepting applications for agency-sponsored research. Currently there are seven research projects being conducted using data from VLDS.

Also in September, VLDS was recognized as one of the winners of the 2013 Governor's Technology Awards at the Commonwealth of Virginia Innovative Technology Symposium (COVITS). The award, for Cross-boundary Collaboration on IT Initiatives, showcased the outstanding collaboration among the VDOE, SCHEV, VCCS and VEC.

In 2014, we anticipate the seven agency-sponsored projects using VLDS data will complete their analyses by June 2014. The projects will examine topics such as the best and worst practices of longitudinal data systems, the efficacy of teacher preparation programs, the college and career readiness of Virginia high school students and the outcomes of adult education programs. Additionally, this month we have added 216 data elements from Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance and Unemployment Insurance Benefits, bringing the total number of exposed data elements to 996. Finally, we are on track to incorporate Workforce Investment Act data into VLDS before the summer of 2014.

VLDS in the News 2013 Recap

- [At Fairfax forum, Virginia officials highlight privacy protections in new data system](#) – Washington Post
- [Baltimore Builds a Data Dictionary](#) – Government Technology
- [Arlington Schools tap big data to reduce dropout rate](#) – Washington Post

Tod Massa to Present at National Center for Education Statistics Symposium

The National Center for Education Statistics, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education, put out a call in December for detailed input from experts as it works toward recommendations for how the administration should develop a proposed college rating system. Tod Massa, the VLDS agency lead from SCHEV is among only 19 confirmed presenters at a [symposium on February 6](#) on the subject.

Save the Date – VLDS Insights Conference



VLDS will hold its second Insights Conference on Tuesday, June 24, 2014 at the Hilton Richmond Hotel & Conference Center in Short Pump, a suburb just west of Richmond. We're thrilled to announce Aneesh Chopra, Virginia's former Secretary of Technology, who also was appointed by President Obama as the nation's first Chief Technology Officer, as the keynote speaker. Chopra will be introduced by Karen Jackson, the newly appointed Secretary of

Technology for the Commonwealth.

Enhancing Workforce Development

For the first time since 2009, Virginia was ranked No. 1 by Forbes magazine as the "Best State for Business." For those counting, the Old Dominion state has ranked No. 1 or 2 in each of the eight years Forbes has released its "Best States for Business" rating.

Virginia's workforce development has played and will continue to play a major in making the Commonwealth a great place to work. And now that VLDS has launched, the insights gleaned from VLDS research are expected to help shape future workforce development strategies.

"A lot of the research we have been working on will lay the framework for how we envision using the VLDS system in the future," said Wendy Kang, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Workforce and Research Evaluation at Virginia Community College System (VCCS).

The VCCS recently completed a mapping project of the 24 workforce programs developed and administered by eight state agencies, on behalf of the Governor's Office and Virginia Workforce Council. The project, conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University, reviewed how the programs are funded, how many people they serve and how they use their funds, and described how they support workforce development. Moreover, VCCS also has been working with the Council for Virginia's Future, which developed a workforce scorecard that indicates where additional workforce and education needs may be. The Virginia Workforce council used the cards to identify additional needs for low-skill, low-wage workers (adult education population), business services and veterans.

Finally, VLDS is being used for several workforce-related projects that are expected to be completed by June. One project looks at the return on investment on programs funded by the Wagner-Peyser Act, the Workforce Investment Act and the Trade Adjustment Act. The Department of Education's Career

and Technical Education office is examining high school postsecondary enrollment and workforce outcomes four or more years after high school graduation, and VLDS is being used to evaluate VDOE's PluggedIn VA, an adult education program.

"Workforce development continues to be a key tool for job seekers and businesses alike," Kang said. "Working hand in hand with the other participating VLDS agencies will only strengthen our ability to connect Virginians to work opportunities and to provide businesses with the skilled workforce they need."



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For more information on VLDS, visit

<http://vlds.virginia.gov>

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