



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Balancing the Equation:

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HOW TALENT DATA CAN LEAD TO  
BETTER DECISION-MAKING  
FOR K-12 LEADERS

# Across the field of education,



schools, districts and states have made great strides in their thinking about the ways to best support educators and other key personnel who work with students every day. Rather than simply an administrative function, talent management has become a central strategy in maximizing the quality and fit of education programs from pre-kindergarten through high school. But the best ways to maximize talent management systems are far from self-evident, and leaders find themselves without clear roadmaps to ensure they are best supporting their most precious resources.

Although effective pathways to developing state of the art talent systems are not yet obvious, we can learn a great deal from our efforts to date to attract, engage, grow and retain educators. Access to data has leapt forward in recent years, unlocking insights into the entirety of the educator talent pipeline. Most school districts have already begun to adopt electronic systems for capturing and managing data from across the talent management lifecycle—and those systems hold the seeds to smarter management. Taken together, these systems can tell a sophisticated story and lead to smarter human capital decisions.

If leaders bring the right data together with the right lens, coupled with the right policies and systems, they can build strategic human capital management systems that turn the tide on teacher recruitment and retention, yielding better outcomes for students. The systems are here. This paper uses the policy and practice lessons from the last few decades to outline the lenses that can unlock the power of these data systems.

Using insight from the data-driven decision-making efforts focused on student data, for example, we begin with **five key principles for smarter use of data:**

- 1 *All data are not necessarily useful or relevant.*
- 2 *The translation of data into action requires thoughtful planning, training and practice.*
- 3 *The data that are collected must be trusted.*
- 4 *Data collection and use must be part of an iterative cycle that involves testing hypotheses, measuring outcomes and making course adjustments.*
- 5 *Data systems must have the flexibility to help gather, measure and focus on the things that matter most.*

Although federal policy led the way on human capital advances over the last decade, the combination of new law and new leaders means that it's now up to states, school districts and school leaders to lead when it comes to best practices in human capital management. Leaders now have the flexibility to define the data that matter most to them. While strategies should evolve over time, the key consideration is that data systems need to be organized according to a theory of action—grounded in a school or district's own vision—to which leaders can commit for a prolonged period of time.

In addition, data must transcend departmental boundaries and silos.

**The groundwork can be set by exploring five essential questions:**

- 1** *Do the parts of the current system work together?*
- 2** *Do leaders have the mandate and the time to connect the dots?*
- 3** *Does everyone have access to information from across the entire talent pipeline?*
- 4** *Have the barriers to collaboration and feedback among talent leaders been eliminated?*
- 5** *Is talent data driving decision-making across school or district systems?*



With connected data systems, a coherent theory of action and cross-departmental collaboration in place, school systems and states can create a new future in which data are rigorously collected and evaluated **to support educators from “hire to retire.”**

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# A Vision for Strategic Human Capital Management

This paper proposes a vision for strategic human capital management characterized by a holistic approach to building and maintaining a high-performing employee culture. In this culture, leaders make data-driven decisions aligned to the school system's strategic objectives. Teams collaboratively set goals, measure results using data and benchmarks, and determine key opportunities for continual improvement in employee engagement, efficiency and effectiveness—all in support of improved student learnings.

*With a commitment to leveraging data to support a carefully crafted vision for the future, we believe all education systems can achieve this vision.*

## Learn More

For a free copy of the full white paper, or for more insights into K-12 education, visit

**[FrontlineInstitute.com](https://www.frontlineinstitute.com)**

## About the Institute

The Frontline Research & Learning Institute generates data-driven research, resources and observations to support and advance the education community. The Institute's research is powered by Frontline Education data and analytics capabilities in partnership with over 12,000 K-12 organizations and several million users nationwide. The Institute's research reports and analysis are designed to provide practical insights for teachers and leaders as well as benchmarks to inform strategic decision-making within their organizations.