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Pennsylvania Earns National Recognition for Efforts to Track Student Progress

HARRISBURG – A data collection system that will aid the educational progress of Pennsylvania’s students has earned national recognition, Governor Edward G. Rendell and Education Secretary Gerald L. Zahorchak announced today.

The Data Quality Campaign awarded its 2008 Leadership Award to the Governor and Zahorchak for the creation of the Pennsylvania Information Management System, or PIMS, which is a secure data collection and reporting system that allows educators to track the learning progress of every student from early childhood through higher education. Student confidentiality is maintained in this system through the use of a unique, anonymous student identifier.

“Pennsylvania should be proud of this award and the hard work that went into creating PIMS,” Governor Rendell said. “This innovative data collection effort will help ensure that educators have the tools and policymakers have the knowledge to undertake initiatives to help all Pennsylvania students succeed.”

Zahorchak said PIMS will serve as a vital tool in the commonwealth’s ongoing efforts to raise student achievement and ensure that every child in Pennsylvania – regardless of where they live or their social or economic circumstances – receives a quality education that prepares them for the challenges that lie beyond the classroom.

“This award recognizes the success we have achieved thus far, but we will continue to build on that success,” Zahorchak said. “We are expanding PIMS to the postsecondary sector to collect detailed data from all segments of higher education – community colleges, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education universities, state-related universities and private and independent universities and colleges.

“The ultimate goal is a data collection system that will enable educators to measure and analyze what is working in our elementary and secondary schools so we can better prepare students for post-secondary education,” he said.

The Data Quality Campaign, a national partnership to improve the quality, accessibility and use of data in education, recognized the award winners for their leadership and innovation in championing the vital need for quality education data. The organization accepted nominations from across the country for leaders in the field of longitudinal data systems at the local and state levels.

From a technological perspective, PIMS has brought cohesion to the data reported to the Department of Education by about 800 local education agencies that have used scores of different information systems. The data reported under PIMS includes:

- Student demographics, attendance and program participation;
- Staff demographics and assignments;
- Courses and sections offered; and
- Students enrolled in course sections.

As of last month, PIMS had collected data on more than 1.8 million Pennsylvania students, 170,000 staff members and 11.5 million course enrollments.

For more information on these efforts, visit www.pde.state.pa.us/pims.

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The Rendell administration is committed to creating a first-rate public education system, protecting our most vulnerable citizens and continuing economic investment to support our communities and businesses. To find out more about Governor Rendell's initiatives and to sign up for his weekly newsletter, visit www.governor.state.pa.us.