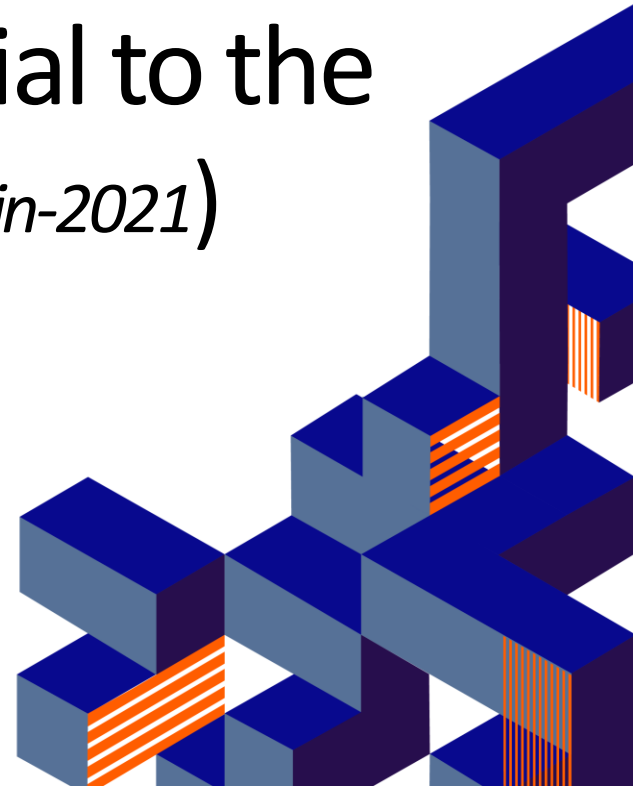# Data Governance and the Role Data Stewards Play

A tale of two disciplines and how they support each other

Data Governance/Stewardship relationship?

"Data Stewardship is crucial to the success of Data Governance (which in turn, is crucial to the success of Data Management)" (*David Plotkin-2021*)

What is Governance? And what is Stewardship?

- According to Merriam-Webster, "governance" means the act or process of governing or overseeing the control and direction of something, such as a country or an organization, essentially meaning government.
  - So, Data Governance is overseeing the organizations data.

- According to Webster's Dictionary, "Stewardship" means the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.
  - So, a Data Steward is someone responsible for managing data that is entrusted to their care.

Why is Data Important?

- Critical Resource
  - Helps education teams operate efficiently
  - Increases effectiveness
  - Drives innovation
  - Ensures regulations are followed like FERPA and helps support risk assessments.
- Helps in making informed decisions
- Helps in continuous improvements
- Increases transparency
- But it has to be clean, well managed and delivered timely…

How Critical is Data to Educational Teams?

- Let's ask ChatGPT – No statistics are readily available, but a survey by the Data Quality Campaign found that 95% of teachers use a combination of academic and non-academic data to understand student performance, and 89% rely on data to personalize learning for each student's unique needs. (*Data Quality Campaign Teacher Poll, 2018*)

- Dr. Maher also indicated in his speech at the 2025 Data Conference how critical the collected data was to achieve the three objectives that the Department of Education was charged with, coined LAW or Literacy, Absenteeism, and Workforce, and how the data will be used to assess our success in our efforts.

What is Data Governance and why care about it?

- Data Governance is, first and foremost, a data management function that ensures the quality, integrity, security, and usability of data collected (Eryurek, E., Gilad, U., Lakshmanan, V., Kibunguchy-Grant, A., & Ashdown, J. March 2021)

- Why do we care about Data Governance
  - Because we to increase the trust in the data we collect, so that the data will be
    - Accurate
    - Secure
    - High quality
    - Right for Purpose
    - With accuracy and consistency over time

Data Governance Purpose

What is the purpose of data governance?

Three main areas: Discoverability, Security, and Accountability
- Discoverability –
- Security –
- Accountability –

Governance focuses on:

Data Quality

- Ensuring data is accurate, complete, consistent, and reliable.
- Implementing standards for data entry, validation, and correction.

Data Access & Security

- Defining who can access what data and under what conditions.
- Ensuring compliance with privacy laws (e.g., FERPA in education).

Data Stewardship & Ownership

- Assigning responsibility for maintaining and managing data.
- Defining roles like data stewards, custodians, and owners.

Governance focuses on:

Metadata Management

- Ensuring data is well-documented, including definitions, sources, and usage guidelines.
- Helping users understand what data represents and how to use it correctly.
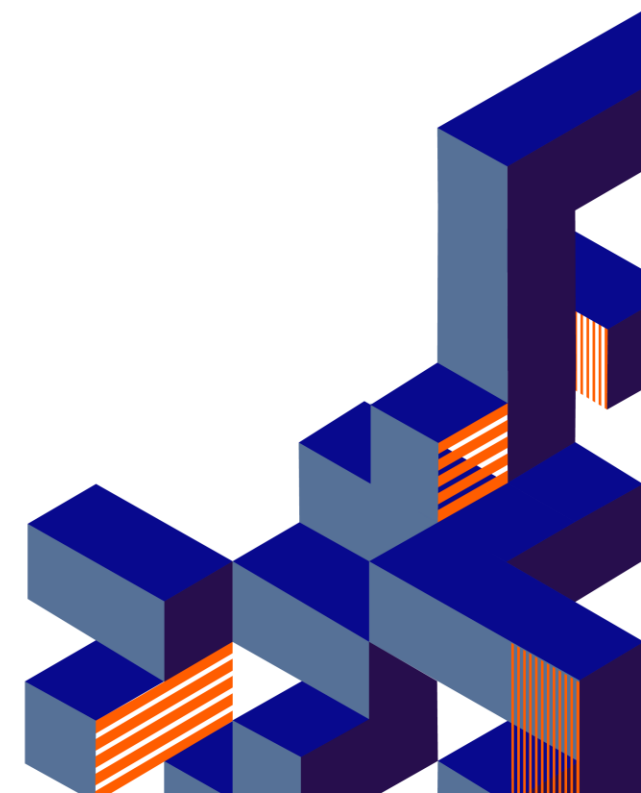
Data Standardization & Consistency

- Creating common definitions and formats across systems.
- Ensuring consistent reporting across schools, districts, and state agencies.

Compliance & Risk Management

- Ensuring adherence to laws, policies, and ethical standards.
- Reducing risks associated with incorrect or unauthorized data use.

Data Integration & Interoperability

- Ensuring different systems can share and use data effectively.
- Creating linkages between student, teacher, and school performance data.

Data Stewardship Purpose

- Data Stewardship's purpose is to ensure that data is accurate, consistent, accessible, and trustworthy.

- A Data Steward is:

  1. Interested in data quality and fixing bad data from entering or tainting the data.

  2- Interested in standardization, so data is named and formatted across multiple systems (like zip code)

  3- Interested in supporting governance framework and policies that support compliance (FERPA for example)

  4- Interested in where the data comes from and what changes happen to the data

  5. Interested in improving quality over time, building trust in the data, ensuring the data has value, and being used to make better decisions.

Governance vs. Stewardship

Data Governance vs. Data Stewardship

- **Data Governance** provides the **strategy and rules** for managing data across an organization. It answers *what should be done* with data.
- **Data Stewardship** provides the **day-to-day execution** of those rules. It answers *how it should be done*.

- Think of **data governance** as the framework that sets policies and **data stewardship** as the hands-on role that ensures those policies are followed.

Governance vs. Stewardship

Key Areas Where Data Stewardship Supports Data Governance:

- **Data Quality** – Governance sets standards (e.g., all student IDs must be unique). Stewardship enforces them (e.g., checking for duplicates, fixing errors).

- **Data Access & Security** – Governance determines who should access what data. Stewards ensure permissions are correctly applied.

- **Compliance & Policy Adherence** – Governance sets policies for legal and ethical data use. Stewards monitor and ensure compliance.

- **Issue Resolution** – When data inconsistencies arise, stewards investigate and correct them to align with governance policies.

- **Metadata Management** – Governance defines what metadata should be captured. Stewards ensure it's properly recorded and maintained.

Governance vs. Stewardship last word..

Data Governance is all about Rules / Policy

Data Stewardship is all about Data Quality

Reference:

- Data Stewardship – An Actionable Guide to Effective Data Management and Data Governance, David Plotkin-2021

- Data Quality Campaign (Data Quality Campaign (Teachers See the Power of Data – But Don't Have Enough Time to Use It - Data Quality Campaign))

- Eryurek, E., Gilad, U., Lakshmanan, V., Kibunguchy-Grant, A., & Ashdown, J. Data governance : the definitive guide. In (1st edition ed., pp. 1 book (300 pages)).

- Plotkin, D. Data stewardship : an actionable guide to effective data management and data governance (Second edition. ed.).

Questions?

Or send your questions to

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