
A Superintendent's Guide:

Achieving Better Student Outcomes with Data

Student  EI
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So much data, so little time

Today's technology has greatly increased district leaders' opportunities to use data and analytics to improve the school environment. Data-driven decision making in education can transform school systems. With the ever growing number of data sources it is tricky to remember how to use this data to improve your school district. Use the following tips to spark some new ideas to implement at your school.

Use data to create a snapshot of the past

Look to past data to get a baseline understanding of your students. Past data indicates where students have achieved success or faced challenges. This information serves as an important benchmark as you plan goals, strategies and curriculum.

Use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data

Use a mix of data types to evaluate student performance. Using data obtained from academic performance alone misses many opportunities to get useful information about students' strengths, challenges, and preferences. Simple formative assessments can help districts get a deeper understanding of student engagement. Observing students' interpersonal and social successes can give valuable information when grouping students for collaborative work or lesson planning.

Understand what data can and can't tell you

Be careful to assess what data can be used for. Certain data can help answer one question but not another. For example, a district may notice data that reveals a particular group of students come from disadvantaged backgrounds. That may help explain why those students struggle academically in general; however, it cannot explain why a student did poorly on a particular exam. Understanding the ways in which data can and can't be used allows you to diagnose problems more accurately and then respond to them.

Expect the unexpected

Many factors outside of the school environment come into play that can influence student success. Academic data may show positive trends but other data sources, like soft skills or behavioral data, indicate issues in areas like work ethic, teamwork or bullying.

Devise new lessons based on data

All types of data can help guide lesson planning. It is important to consider skill deficiencies; how many students are proficient, basic, or below basic; and what their specific students enjoy. For example, you may query your students at the beginning of the school year and throughout the semester, based on the responses, you can develop lessons that focus on the subjects students like best and incorporate their preferred learning styles into the curriculum.

Use multiple data sources for a full story

To make well-informed decisions about your district, pulling from several sources of data is key. Some of those sources might include student writing samples, group projects, and test grades, as well as students' soft skills data. With this data, school leaders can make effective choices about skills to incorporate into a curriculum, strategic plan and more.

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**Want more ideas on the
usefulness of student
data at your district?**

Contact us today:
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