

Chapter 4

USING DATA TO RECOGNIZE SUCCESS, IDENTIFY CHALLENGES, AND DRIVE DECISIONS

For local school board members/trustees, being "data savvy" not only contributes to understanding successes and challenges, but it can also provide the basis for making critical decisions such as the allocation of funds or the continuation of programs. Therefore, ongoing professional development providing individual experience with data is desirable and necessary.

The Benefits of Data Review

The Task Force on Student Achievement found numerous ways that data review enables board members/trustees to meet their responsibilities. For example, the practice—

- Measures district progress toward goals in all areas of student achievement, including academics, character development and citizenship.
- Focuses board policies on student achievement
- Deepens community understanding about the shared responsibility for student achievement
- Evaluates the effectiveness of policies and practices
- Identifies new issues or challenges
- Diagnoses problems and revisits solutions
- Identifies new solutions to problems
- Holds the superintendent, staff, students, and board accountable for results
- Provides opportunities to celebrate successes
- Results in smart, informed decisions

Today's schools enroll students with very different learning needs... By looking at data that examine how subgroups of students are performing, you quickly learn who is excelling, who is falling behind and why. Armed with this information, school board members and staff can develop a plan to ensure that no student is left behind.

– From *Improving School Board Decision Making: The Data Connection*, 2001

Factors that may be considered in data review include graduation rates; assessment scores; achievement of those with special needs including gifted-and-talented, at-risk and learning-disabled students; participation in advanced courses; awards and recognition of students and staff; post-secondary education; and scholarships.

Other indicators that may be of importance to a community include safety-related information; attendance rates; participation in extracurricular activities and community

service; graduate satisfaction (assessed through surveys); parent satisfaction; student management/discipline data; teen pregnancy rates; and the statistics on violence and vandalism reported to the New Jersey Department of Education.

Student Achievement: The Overarching Questions

Board members/trustees can determine the effectiveness of the district's academic program by maintaining a consistent focus on student achievement. The Task Force on Student Achievement suggests the following "overarching" questions:

- *How are all students achieving?*
- *Are students achieving at predicted growth rates?*
- *When compared to similar schools, how are students progressing at each grade level? At each school?*
- *How are those students who have attended our district's schools for all or most of their education progressing?*

(For students who have attended school in the district for all or most of their education, disaggregate the data according to all students and subgroups, including economically disadvantaged, racial/ethnic, gender, special education/disability, English language learners, high-mobility, and enrollment in Advanced Placement courses and classes such as physics and algebra.)

- *How are students who previously attended school in other districts progressing?*
(Disaggregate the data for students who transferred from other districts and have been in the district less than two to three years.)

Data Sources

The Task Force on Student Achievement found a variety of sources that provide information to enable local school leaders to track student performance.

Achieve NJ

The AchieveNJ educator evaluation system establishes two indicators of student achievement:

- **Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)**, which measure how much a student improves his or her state test performance from one year to the next as compared to students across the state with a similar test score history.

"Student Growth Percentiles," N.J. Department of Education. Accessed March 18, 2017 at www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/percentile.shtml;

- **Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)**, long-term academic goals in non-tested areas for groups of students, which are set by teachers in consultation with their supervisors.

"Student Growth Objectives: Overview," N.J. Department of Education. Accessed March 18, 2017 at www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/objectives.shtml.

School Performance Report

The New Jersey Department of Education’s School Performance Report provides comprehensive data by school and district on student achievement, student management, and expenditures. This report enables board members/trustees to review data from district schools and “peer group,” or similar, schools throughout the state. By enabling comparisons with schools that face similar challenges, it provides board members/trustees with guidance to evaluate the progress of the schools they oversee.

“New Jersey School Performance Report,” N.J. Department of Education. Accessed March 18, 2017 at <https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/pr/>.

Assessment Results

Analysis of summative assessment results, such as those for PARCC, can inform decisions involving individual student needs; curricula, textbooks and related instructional materials; and teacher effectiveness. PARCC reports permit comparison of district data to that of other PARCC states, districts or schools. More important, PARCC provides test item analysis for every question for every student. This information can enable teachers and parents to identify a child’s specific academic strengths and challenges and to develop the instructional plans to address those challenges.

“2015-16 Sample PARCC Student Reports,” N.J. Department of Education. Accessed March 18, 2017 at <http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/parcc/scores/>.

State regulation requires chief school administrators to provide boards of education with reports on the results of annual statewide assessments. Boards of education, in turn, must provide parents, students, and citizens with the assessment results, and “provide appropriate instruction to improve skills and knowledge for students performing below the established levels of student proficiency in any content area either on the Statewide or local assessments.”

N.J.A.C .6A:8-4.3(a), New Jersey State Board of Education. Accessed March 18, 2017 at <http://www.nj.gov/education/code/current/title6a/chap8.pdf>.

Formative assessments are intended to evaluate student comprehension, learning needs and academic progress while a course or program is in progress. They can be another valuable data source.

Data Analysis

Improving School Board Decision Making: The Data Connection, a 2001 report by the National School Boards Foundation, is an exemplary resource for board members/trustees. The Task Force used the report as a reference for this chapter. It emphasizes the value of data analysis.

“By looking at data that examine how subgroups of students are performing, you quickly learn who is excelling, who is falling behind and why. Armed with this information, school

board members and staff can develop a plan to ensure that no student is left behind,” states the report.

Improving School Board Decision-Making: The Data Connection. 2001. National School Boards Foundation, Alexandria, VA. Accessed March 18, 2017 at http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/sites/default/files/resources/NSBF_Data_Guide.pdf.

Based on its review of the research and its discussions with consultants, the Task Force on Student Achievement identified questions from members of the school community—including parents, teachers and school administrators and supervisors—that can help guide a school board’s analysis of district data.

Questions from the School Community: GUIDING DATA ANALYSIS	
1. Parent Inquiries	
Did my child make a year's worth of progress in a year?	
Is my child growing appropriately toward meeting state standards?	
Is my child growing as much in math as in reading?	
Did my child grow as much this year as last year?	
2. Questions Teachers Should Consider	
Did my students make a year's worth of progress in a year?	
Did my students grow appropriately toward meeting state standards?	
How close are my students to meeting or exceeding state standards?	
What were the growth patterns of my students? Are they on track? Are they achieving at a higher rate, and do they need differentiated instruction?	
Who are the students whose growth is unusually slow and who need special attention?	
3. Factors Administrators and Supervisors Should Consider	
Did the students in our district/school make a year's worth of progress in all content areas?	
Are our students demonstrating appropriate growth to meet state standards?	
Does this school or program show as much growth as school X or program Y?	
What impact are specific programs, practices, materials and curricula having on achievement?	
Are specific teaching practices having a greater impact than others?	
What data are included in our district’s violence and vandalism report to the NJDOE?	
4. Questions Board Members Should Ask	
Are there achievement gaps in reading, math or science among different groups of students? Do achievement gaps exist in other content areas? If so, are these gaps growing larger, shrinking or staying the same?	
Are male students performing better than female students in math (or language arts literacy, science, etc.)? How will we increase the performance of female students?	
Are female students performing better than male students in math (or language arts literacy, science, etc.)? How will we increase the performance of male students?	
Are there more economically challenged or minority students in special education classes than there are in Advanced Placement classes? What are the reasons behind the difference? How will the district address it?	
What are student discipline/management trends? Are suspension rates among student subgroups comparable, or are specific subgroups overrepresented?	

RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 4 – Using Data to Recognize Success, Identify Challenges, and Drive Decisions

FOR LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS:

29. School board members/trustees should participate in professional development to understand the role and meaning of Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) and Student Growth Objectives (SGP), including their use in analyzing student achievement and evaluating the performance of educators.
30. Board member/trustees should participate in professional development regarding data review and analysis. Being data savvy is as important as ensuring that the district is financially responsible.
31. Board member/trustees should be aware of all of the data points available for review, so that they can make informed decisions on educational program recommendations.

FOR THE NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION:

32. NJSBA should establish a professional development track for board members, which includes basic, intermediate and advanced data training.
33. NJSBA should review its mandated training to ensure that an introduction to data is included.