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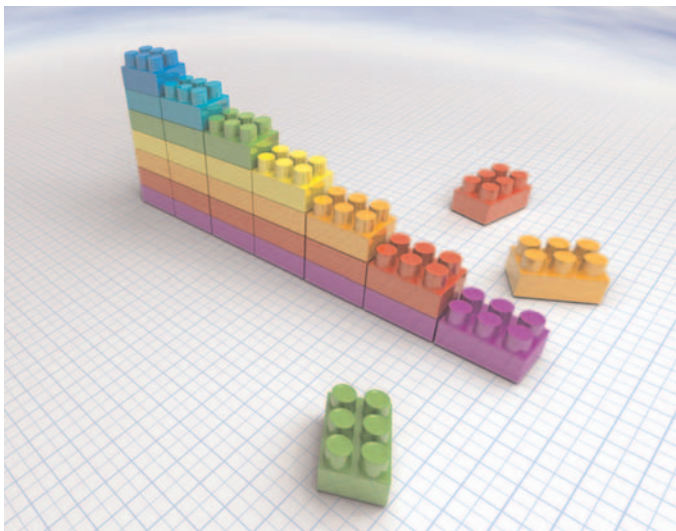
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# 13 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS™

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF TEACHER LEADERS



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## But what do you do with the data?

By Jan Matthews, Susan Trimble, and Anne Gay

Using data to redesign instruction is a means of increasing student achievement. Educators in Camden County (Ga.)

Schools have used data from benchmark testing since 1999. They hired a commercial vendor to design a benchmark test that is administered four times a year and use the data to generate subject-area reports that can be further disaggregated by grade, team, teacher, and student. To use data, teachers must accept the data, know what the numbers indicate, and be ready to change their instruction

(Wiggins, 2004). Therefore, teacher leaders in each of the 12 schools organize the test data and help teachers through the stages of growth that are inherent with data usage (Trimble, Gay & Matthews, 2005).

Camden uses three steps to get the most out of its test data:

1. Schedule intensive data sessions;
2. Prepare data for teachers to examine; and
3. Lead teachers in data analysis.

### 1. DATA SESSIONS

The first step in using data is to

### WHAT'S INSIDE

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Bill Ferriter believes there's a place for old ideas, but not in the school.

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schedule data sessions as soon as the results are ready and mark data sessions on the benchmark calendar. Benchmark data are “real-time data” — that is, they measure the learning of the students that teachers are currently teaching. The teachers need results immediately so they can revise their instruction for the same students who took the test.

Provide uninterrupted time for teachers to study their results, and do not schedule data sessions on school picture days or pep rally days. Keep in mind that the first time that teachers examine data, they will need plenty of time to digest it. Some schools in Camden set aside a half day for the first data session. In the middle level and high schools that operate on a block schedule, a single block may suffice.

Schedule by teams of teachers to enable discussion about the data among peers. Common planning periods allow teachers the collegiality to share and support each other. Elementary schools often conduct data sessions by grade level.

## 2. PREPARE THE DATA

The principal and the lead teachers must organize the data and prepare sample strategies to improve student learning before the first data session. Teachers can be resistant to changing their instructional strategies so organizing the data well is important.

### Start with the big picture

Begin by examining the data reports of the whole school, then look at the reports that disaggregate the data by grade, by teacher, and by individual student. This will help you identify overall school trends and big areas of need that relate to standards or objectives. Lead teachers are essential to this process because they know the subject areas and the teachers’ responsibilities.

### Examine team-level data

Look for categories of weakness and identify individual objectives; these are “intensive care” objectives. Compare these areas with other grades. For example, if the reports reveal that students in grade 7 struggled with elements of plot in literature, see whether students in grades 6

or 8 also scored low in that area. It helps to prepare a comparison chart of school-level highs and lows by grade levels. Once you have identified areas of need by standards, turn to the tests themselves and identify the questions where student scored poorly. Determine whether test items were confusing or poorly worded and be ready to help teachers analyze these items.

### Identify resources

Choose four or five areas of weakness and find resources that address those areas. Prepare copies of activities, web sites, and performance tasks for each teacher on the team. Keep in mind that the goal is to match intensive care objectives with additional strategies and materials. Prepare to model a new strategy. If playing a game will help teachers reteach students a specific skill, be prepared for the team to actually play the game during the session. If a web site offers a lesson that teaches the concepts in a new way, bring a computer to the meeting and guide the team of teachers through the site.

### Keep records

Save all materials for the first session in one place. These materials include files of the data reports, copies of the benchmark test with answers, individual folders of test results for each teacher, and resource materials prepared for intensive care objectives.

## 3. MEET WITH THE TEACHERS

Instructional leaders must be prepared for teachers’ reactions to the data when they see them for the first time. When faced with poor test scores from students they are currently teaching, teachers initially feel frustrated and anxious; they may feel that the data indicate a judgment of their ability and performance. Teachers should receive sufficient time to vent without comments from the instructional leaders.

Instructional leaders should express congratulations for the overall excellence of the reports. If the overall scores are not excellent, they should mention areas that do show progress. To help keep the meeting on track, teachers should receive copies of the agenda, such as:

- Examine the test: 10 minutes



**Begin by examining the data reports of the whole school, then look at the reports that disaggregate the data by grade, by teacher, and by individual student. This will help you identify overall school trends and big areas of need that relate to standards or objectives.**

- Review the data: 40 minutes
- Learn a new strategy: 20 minutes
- Develop an action plan: 20 minutes

**Examine the test**

Begin the session with a review of the test. The purpose of this key step is for teachers to examine the test items for problematic wording. Distribute teacher copies of the benchmark tests with answers and objectives clearly identified. The lead teacher can point out that if the test item was ambiguous or of poor quality the student test results may be unreliable. Be prepared for teachers to attack the test. The lead teachers can help teachers vent by accepting the comments without defending or reacting negatively to such comments as “That last question seems vague to me; I bet they missed that one” and “We don’t use that word...who designed these questions anyway?” Many times teachers will say, “I didn’t teach that yet” or “I didn’t use those terms (or format) when I taught it.” Allow 10 minutes for such criticisms and then move on to examining the test results.

**Review the data**

Each teacher should receive a copy of the testing report for his or her own classes and a copy of the benchmark report showing the results for the entire grade level. Each teacher should use the reports to examine his or her students’ performance and compare it to the overall grade-level average.

Class reports can be shown in bar graph format to illustrate the level of mastery for each objective or standard for each teacher’s classes. The lead teacher should direct teachers to look at the highest and lowest bars on the graphs and the corresponding objectives or standards they represent. The teachers will often turn to the test questions that assessed these objectives and begin to ask one another how some teachers’ classes achieved the high scores in areas where other teachers’ classes received low scores.

This interaction marks the beginning of true collaboration. For example, if a class shows particularly high scores on figurative language, other teachers will probably ask that teacher how he or she taught that class and what strategy and mate-

rial he or she used. These discussions can help teachers develop ideas for reteaching. This is also a good point at which to plan to address the gaps in learning and find ways to incorporate review in the upcoming units and lesson plans in anticipation of state-mandated tests.

**Respect teachers’ privacy**

Do not give out any report that identifies another teacher individually. Teachers always want to know how they compare with their peers. This is natural but it would be unfair to show each teacher’s class results. For example, teachers who teach special education students in a collaborative classroom will have scores that might not compare fairly with classrooms that contain a number of students who participated in the gifted program.

**Learn a new strategy**

The teacher leader models a strategy, graphic organizer, game, or other instructional piece that specifically addresses one of the objectives on which students earned low scores. He or she presents web sites or other resources that teachers can use to reteach the objectives to their classes. Teachers should receive time to practice the new strategies and become comfortable with new resources before trying them in class.

**Create an action plan**

The lead teacher asks the teachers to work together to decide how to revise their instruction for specific intensive care areas. Lead teachers can help by suggesting some of the following additional strategies for revising instruction.

- **Item analysis with their students.** Teachers and students look at specific questions and answers for frequently missed items on the benchmark tests.
- **Group students by common weakness.** Teachers can identify students who share common weaknesses and group them together for instruction. During social studies class, for example, one teacher might teach a group of students who need to learn map skills while another teacher teaches a lesson in the economics of a region. For some teams, using the first 45 minutes of the day or an

**This article originally appeared in *Principal Leadership*, May 2007. Reprinted with permission of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. All rights reserved.**



instructional block as “reteach and review” time can be effective.

- **Examine student work.** Structure a team meeting so teachers can look at the results of a lesson. They can share ideas about the reasons for the success or lack of success of that lesson.

#### Focus on the positive

These steps require teachers to move beyond the tried and true to improve their instruction. As teachers are working through these steps, school leaders must be careful not to be critical. This is not a good time to do annual evaluations. Teachers will need support and encouragement as they try

to reach students in new ways. They will also need reassurance that they won’t be penalized for attempting new strategies.

Data from benchmark tests are only useful if teachers and principals know how to use them to modify instruction. These steps can help school leaders make the most of benchmark data.

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Bill Ferriter is a 6th-grade social studies and language arts teacher at Salem Middle School, Apex, N.C.

# Avoid a tape deck tomorrow

**M**y 1995 Ford Taurus — nicknamed Turk 182 — is nothing short of Superbad! I picked up the Turk when my last car caught on fire a few years back. I had my flaming wreck towed to the nearest dealership, told a salesman to dig up the cheapest car on the lot, and bought a battleaxe!

You'll admire the utilitarian flavor of the Turk. The front seats are broken in perfectly — and as long as you don't mind unidentified food stains, you'll have the time of your life riding with me. My tape deck is also impressive, even if the only tape I own is by the Eurythmics. Push locks and crank windows complete my ride...and throw my younger cousins for a loop. "Where are the power windows?" they ask. "At the end of your arms," I reply. "They're called hands."

No matter how much friends make fun of my car, I resist trading it in. The Turk may not be whiz-bang compared to leather-seat sporting, DVD playing, keyless entering vehicles, but it's reliable times 10. It starts every morning and is of absolutely no interest to thieves. Sweet dreams are definitely made of this!

I got to thinking recently that experienced teachers are a lot like my Ford Taurus. We're ultra-reliable, taking students from point A to point B without much recognition — and just like the Taurus, we've been American workhorses forever. Pull us out of the fleet and millions will struggle.

But in a world racing towards a rapidly changing future, workhorses need some spit-and-polish to keep up! We're not preparing kids for a

tape deck tomorrow anymore. Instructional practices have to change — and they have to change fast — in order to ensure that students are ready to succeed in a world without boundaries.

And successful change depends on collaboration. Teachers must collectively engage in powerful conversations, reading professional literature, and incorporating new findings into our planning. We must study student data to deter-

mine if our efforts have been successful — and value contention, which challenges us to find a defensible consensus.

Yet we remain isolated and reluctant, relying on a collection of comfortable lessons that are rarely questioned. Without out-

side review, there is modest room for growth and no encouragement to refine our practice. This just isn't good enough — and I'm often left to wonder how to drive change while respecting the reliable.

Do teachers need additional time or professional development before investing effort into innovation? Are we poorly prepared for a collaborative workplace by stagnant undergraduate programs? Will centuries of isolation prevent the nontraditional thinking necessary for redefining education?

Don't get me wrong — I love my Ford Taurus as much as I love my favorite instructional practices. Like trusted friends, both are incredibly comfortable. But someday, my Taurus is going to quit on me. And when I step into Turk 2.0, I'll probably kick myself for not replacing the ol' girl sooner!

The same regret fills me each time I see teachers turn away from collaborative work with colleagues. ♦



**Join the conversation with Bill by visiting [www.nsd.org/blog/](http://www.nsd.org/blog/) and offering your opinion. Bill posts his provocative ideas frequently — be sure to return often.**



JoVon Rogers is an instructional coach at Riverside Elementary School in Fairfax County (Va.) Public Schools and is a National Board Certified Teacher (middle childhood generalist). You can contact her at [Jovon.Rogers@fcps.edu](mailto:Jovon.Rogers@fcps.edu).

# Make a plan, then revise it

**Q** How do you plan your work to accomplish your school's goals?

The first year, it was very difficult to write a plan because we were the very first coaches. We didn't have any model. I did create a plan, but once I started coaching and found out what the job was really about, I didn't follow a lot of that plan because it wasn't applicable to the needs of my school. The next year, I had more insight as to what the school needed and what the teachers needed and wanted. So I was a lot more successful.

It's important to do an informal assessment of the school and its needs — start with the data and where the school needs to go. Look at the school plan to see what's in place already so that you're not duplicating something or trying to launch something very new when teachers have 100 other things to do. Sit with the principal. Joellen Killion has a book that we have used as a bible — *Taking the Lead: New Roles for*

*Teachers and School-Based Coaches* (NSDC, 2006). We looked at those roles and decided which ones we thought we would be taking at which points in time.

Creating a plan, or a contract, with the principal is definitely important because it gives you an idea where you're going and is an opportunity to dialogue with your principal, to see if where you think you need to be going is where your principal sees you, because ultimately she is the leader of the school.

Try to come up with a structure in the beginning, and then revise it as you go along. If you plan on using the data — and not just the tests, but what you've collected in terms of what teachers need, what students need — then you have to have a vision of where you want to go. You need to know where you're going from the very start.

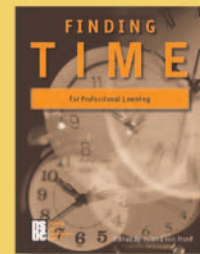
Coaching is like any other job. You don't know until you actually get in there. It doesn't matter how many books you read or what anybody tells you, you have to see for yourself. ♦



## Finding Time for Professional Learning

Edited by Valerie von Frank

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Joellen Killion is deputy executive director of National Staff Development Council.

# COACHES HELP MINE THE DATA

**D**ata-driven decisions and actions target identified needs and fit more appropriately within the context in which they are implemented. Teacher leaders acting as data coaches create a culture that values data as information for improved professional practice. When those data relate to student learning, coaches have five key responsibilities to help teachers use data effectively. They include:

- Creating a safe, blame-free environment for data analysis;
- Teaching data access and organization;
- Teaching analysis and interpretation of data from multiple sources;
- Engaging teachers in data analysis and interpretation to determine student and teacher needs; and
- Designing an action plan that incorporates professional learning to improve student achievement based on data analysis.

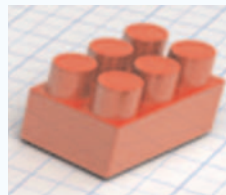
## Creating a safe environment

When the culture of a school in which teachers work provides a safe, blame-free environment for data use, teachers more eagerly seek data to inform their practice. The key to creating safety in data analysis is keeping individual teacher data private, beginning with developing teachers' skills in understanding and analyzing data, and setting norms that include keeping the focus on student learning. A safe environment keeps the focus on issues rather than people, engages people in an appreciative inquiry approach rather than a deficit approach to a situation, and results in a plan of action that energizes and motivates people. Teachers can identify and analyze what is working for their students by focusing on what is working, seeking to understand the reasons for the success, and replicating those practices. Key

questions coaches and teachers ask are:

What's working? How do we know? What makes it work? Teachers will have an easier time confronting the realities of student learning gaps and how to address them if they are comfortable with the data and trust the process and the facilitator.

Facilitation of data analysis promotes safety. The facilitator works with the team of teachers to



## DATA-DRIVEN

Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

set norms and uses a protocol, or a guideline, for the data conversation. The protocol makes the process known to all. A data analysis protocol such as the one on p. 8 offers a set of guiding questions for looking at student data whether those data are from state tests, common district assessments, or classroom assessments.

## Teaching data access and organization

The accessibility and format of data make a difference in how easy they are to use. When data coaches help teachers know how to access data and organize them into user-friendly formats, teachers are likely to use data more readily. The opposite is true too. When teachers can't access data easily from their classroom or school computers or when they wait weeks to receive data reports, they are likely to avoid using data. Data coaches can begin by teaching how to access data and how to request various forms of reports. In the process, the coach provides tips on which reports will answer specific questions.

**For more information about NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, see [www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm)**



**Teaching data analysis and interpretation**

Data coaches help teachers know how to analyze and interpret data. Essentially, the coach prepares teachers to engage in analysis by ensuring that they have fundamental knowledge. Questions such as the ones below can be used to prepare teachers for analyzing any data set.

1. What is this assessment measuring?
2. What are the characteristics of the students involved in the assessment?
3. What type of assessment was used?
4. What type of conclusions can be drawn from this type of assessment?
5. How many students were assessed?

The coach may model or engage teachers in analyzing schoolwide or district data using a protocol so teachers are familiar with the process before they work on their own data.

**Designing action plans with professional learning**

The data analysis and interpretation process includes moving from data to action. Once data are analyzed, the work continues with forming conclusions, identifying potential root causes, and developing plans of action that include goals, indicators of success, timelines for achieving the goals, and benchmarks to mark progress. For example, if teachers discover from an analysis of state tests and the district common benchmark assessments that students' problem-solving skills are below standard, then they consider five possible root causes that might contribute to the problem and which they can control. These areas are instruction, curriculum, time, teachers' content knowledge and/or pedagogy, and instructional resources. Frequently, when teachers engage in identifying root causes they will identify causes that are not within their realm of control, such as student demographics. Coaches can accelerate identification of appropriate interventions if they help teachers focus on what teachers can change to improve student academic success. Teachers might write a goal such as:

Third quarter math goal: 85% of the 5th-grade students will demonstrate proficiency in problem solving on the third quarter benchmark assessment.

Coaches, working collaboratively with teachers, identify the specific actions to incorporate

into their plan. For example, teachers may commit to learn multiple problem-solving strategies and ways to help students determine which is most appropriate to use. Then teachers may develop common lesson plans in which they integrate their new knowledge. Teachers may look at the number of opportunities they provide students to practice problem solving in both guided and independent situations. Finally, they may develop a common assessment to measure student progress midway through third quarter.

When data coaches build teachers' knowledge about data analysis and assessments, develop their competence and comfort with data analysis, and facilitate teacher professional learning and planning to move from data to action, teachers and students benefit. Teachers have the information to focus instruction more specifically on student learning needs. They can also focus their own professional learning on specific student learning needs thereby increasing its purposefulness and its results. Students are the big winners because they are the beneficiaries of refined teacher instructional practice. ♦

**DATA ANALYSIS PROTOCOL**

Analyzing data: Guiding questions

1. What areas of students' performance are at or above expectations?
2. What areas of student performance are below expectations?
3. How did various groups (e.g. gender, race, socioeconomic, disability, English proficiency) of students perform?
4. What are other data telling us about student performance in this area?
5. What confirms what we already know? What challenges what we thought?
6. What important observations seem to "pop out" from the data? Surprising observations? Unexpected observations?
7. What patterns or trends appear?
8. What similarities and differences exist across various data sources?
9. What do we observe at the school level? The grade level? The class level?
10. What are some things we have not yet explored? What other data do we want to examine?

# Motivating adolescent readers

EDUCATORS CAN USE THE LATEST RESEARCH ON READING MOTIVATION  
TO INCREASE STUDENTS' CHANCES FOR SUCCESS

by **Carla Thomas McClure**

**F**or young children, motivation to become a good reader is frequently cited as an important factor in attaining proficiency, along with access to reading materials, development of reading skills, and early success as a reader (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). Because poor readers tend to read less on their own time and therefore get less practice than good readers, they often begin falling behind early in their school careers. Some studies indicate the cycle may begin as early as 1st grade (Morgan, Fuchs, Compton, Cordray, & Fuchs, in press). To put the brakes on the cycle of early reading failure, experts recommend that educators target both reading skills and motivation.

Once students reach middle school, however, even “good readers” often seem less interested in reading. So, just as students’ academic reading assignments become more challenging, teachers are faced with a challenge of their own: how to get students to read more (a necessary part of improving reading achievement), to learn from what they read, and to sustain interest in literacy activities.

The research on reading motivation is not robust enough to provide a sure-fire solution to this dilemma. A recent study, however, offers interesting insights. The study began when a team of researchers adapted the Motivation to Read Profile for use with adolescents.

## What is the Motivation to Read Profile?

The Motivation to Read Profile was original-

### Keys to motivating teen readers

- Recognize the multiple literacies students are involved in outside of school and find ways to incorporate them into classroom instruction.
- Model your own reading enjoyment.
- Incorporate engaging activities, such as literature circles and book club, into regular instruction.
- Include reading materials of varied formats, levels, and topics.
- Incorporate elements of choice in readings and projects.

Source: *Pitcher et al., 2007*



ly developed by the national Reading Research Center to assess the value elementary school students put on reading and their self-concept as a reader. The instrument was informed by research and theory on motivation and by analysis of existing instruments that measured reading motivation and attitudes toward reading. The Motivation to Read Profile consists of a 20-item survey and a conversational interview. The teacher reads the survey items to the class and asks students to mark their responses individually. One item, for example, asks students to complete the statement “Students who read a lot are \_\_\_\_\_.” Response choices are very interesting, interesting, not very interesting, and boring. The conversational interview includes 14 questions

## EDVANTIA™

Carla Thomas McClure is a staff writer at Edvantia ([www.edvantia.org](http://www.edvantia.org)), a nonprofit research and development organization that works with federal, state, and local education agencies to improve student achievement.

designed to help teachers gain insights into students' narrative, informational, and general reading habits and attitudes.

### How was the Profile adapted for use with adolescent readers?

After reviewing the research on adolescent literacy and learning, a team of 11 researchers revised the language and content of the original survey to include items on the use of electronic resources, the kinds of academic work students enjoy, and the reading and writing students do on their own. Interview questions were adapted to help teachers learn more about in- and out-of-school literacies and technologies.

### How did the researchers administer the new Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile?

Eleven researchers at eight sites administered the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile to 384 students who attended schools in various areas of the United States and the Caribbean. The sample comprised an ethnically diverse group of students in grades 6-12. Survey responses were collected from all 384 students, and 100 of these students were interviewed.

### What did the researchers learn?

Discrepancies between survey and interview responses led to an intriguing discovery — several teens who indicated on the survey that they didn't read much later revealed during interviews that they spent hours each week reading online content. But they didn't think such activities "counted" as reading. In general, analysis of student responses revealed a disconnect between academic and other forms of reading. Outside of school, many students use e-mails, instant messaging, chat rooms, online news sites, and other

Internet resources. At school, however, reading is mostly limited to a small pool of print resources. There, students may have little opportunity to choose what they read, engage in reading activities that seem purposeful and meaningful, discuss readings with peers, use online literacy tools, and connect academic and personal interests.

### What's the "take-home lesson" for teachers?

The researchers concluded that "using adolescents' preferred reading materials and modes of instruction" can lead to "increased motivation, and perhaps to improvements in reading outcomes." They caution against overgeneralization of their findings. Based on their study and their understanding of others' research, however, they suggest five ways to motivate teen readers (see box on p. 9).

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### Read the article

The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile, intended for use with students in Grades 6-12, is included in an article published by Sharon M. Pitcher and colleagues in the February 2007 issue of the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. The article is available online, for a small fee, from the International Reading Association at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

### Using the Motivation to Read Profile with your students

You can administer the Motivation to Read Profile to your students and use the results to plan instructional activities that will hold their interest and support their development as readers.

The original instrument, developed by Linda B. Gambrell and colleagues for students in Grades 1 through 5, is available through ERIC:

[www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/14/04/a6.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/14/04/a6.pdf)

**Source:**  
*Comprehensive School Reform Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards* by Sylvie Hale (San Francisco: WestEd, 2000).

# Data summaries

**Data type:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (e.g. enrollment, student achievement, total, attendance, student achievement reading)

**Data source/measure:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (e.g. SAT9, school records, staff survey)

**What the numbers represent:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (e.g. percentage of students below grade-level; number of students higher than 4 on district math assessment; percentage of students who say they like to read)

STUDENT CHARACTERISTIC	GRADE LEVEL												TOTAL
<b>ETHNICITY</b>													
African-American													
Asian/Pacific Islander													
Caucasian													
Hispanic													
Native American													
Other													
<b>GENDER</b>													
Male													
Female													
<b>INCOME</b>													
Low-income													
Not low-income													
<b>LANGUAGE ABILITY</b>													
Fully proficient													
Limited proficient													
Non-proficient													
English only													
<b>SPECIAL POPULATIONS</b>													
Migrant													
Title 1 Target Assist													
Special education													
Preschool													
After-school													
Other													
Other													

**Write a statement summarizing the data collected above. A data summary statement or need statement does not offer a solution nor does it describe a cause or lay blame.**

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