



## PRACTICAL MEASURES make data timely and useful

BY ANDREW BRANNEGAN AND SOLA TAKAHASHI

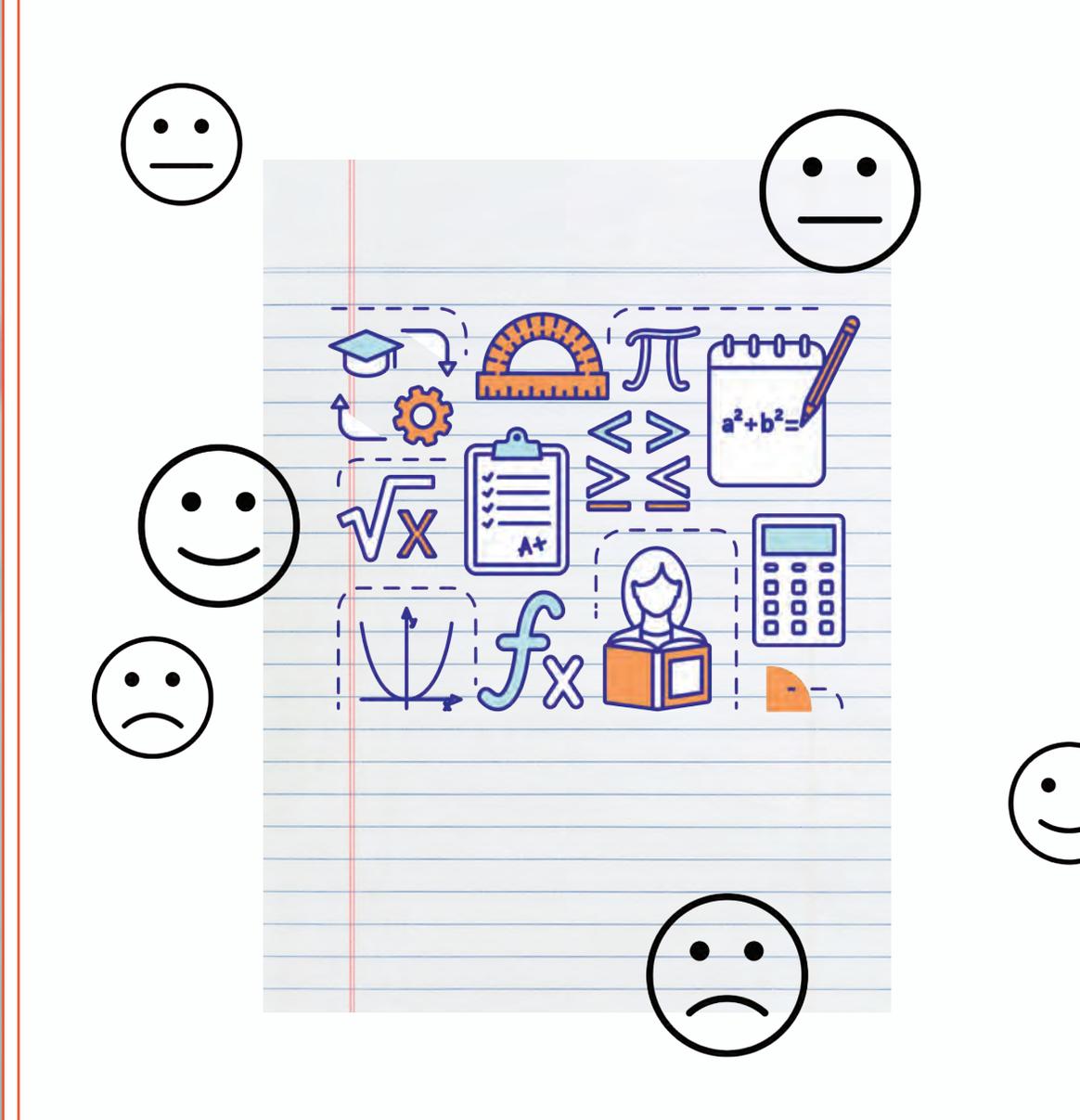
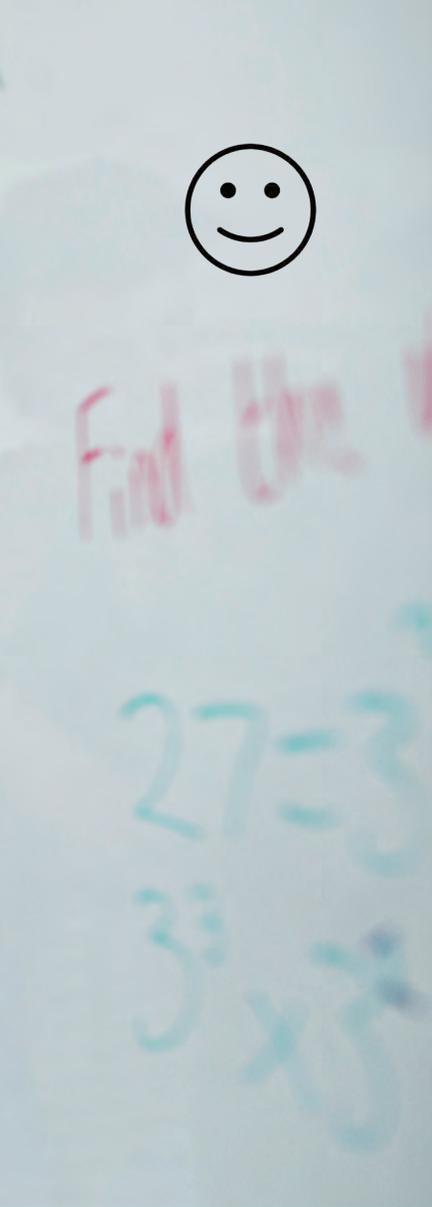
**E**ducators have long been awash in a sea of standardized test score data, with the understanding that their engagement with these data will lead to improvement in teaching and learning. But, in practice, these data have often been

too infrequent, too lagging, and too distant from day-to-day practice to inform actionable next steps.

To improve practice, the data that educators can really benefit from are practical measures — those they can use to try out new strategies, get quick feedback, reflect and learn, make

modifications, and start the cycle again.

Practical measurement is a process through which educators capture and analyze targeted data in a light-touch way so they can reflect on their practices and consider next steps and actions. Practical measures can provide



valuable and timely information to identify systemic breakdowns, focus educators' attention on aspects of practice that matter, propel improvement efforts from one stage to the next, and build confidence in changes that have been tried and are showing promise. They provide opportunities for educators to learn what works, what doesn't work, and how to get certain ideas to work.

What makes a measure practical? Such measures are:

- Closely connected to specific aspects of practice, rather than being focused on broad outcomes;
- Easy for an educator to administer without extensive training, time, or resources; and

- Collected regularly with a quick turnaround time.

Educators in the Networks for School Improvement, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to increase positive educational outcomes for Black and Latino students and students experiencing poverty, have used practical measures to better understand and adapt their practices. On the following pages is a story of how one network uses practical measures to inform its continuous improvement efforts and see results.

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## WESTED SUPPORTS NETWORKS

Since 2020, WestEd has been working with math-focused Networks for School Improvement to support them in their use of measures to inform continuous improvement. WestEd has developed a repository of math practical measures and is collaborating with networks to develop practical measures of math teachers' professional learning and classroom equity. This project has also entailed facilitating professional learning and peer learning for network leaders on the use of measurement for improvement.

To learn more about practical measurement and see a repository of practical measures focused on middle grades math, visit [mpm.wested.org](http://mpm.wested.org).

# IDEAS

## A SIMPLE SURVEY IMPROVES A MATH INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY



### SETTING & STUDENTS

Energy Tech High School, in Queens, New York, a participant in the Instructional Network for School Improvement with New Visions for Public Schools.

9th-grade students in Erin Cramm's, Jack Kui's, and Bushra Mistry's classrooms.

### GOAL

Improve the quantity and quality of students' mathematical discourse in Algebra 1.



### STRATEGY

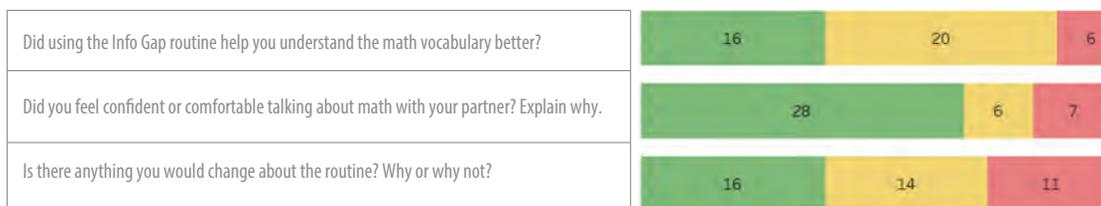
The Algebra 1 teaching team used the Info Gap routine from Illustrative Mathematics in their classrooms. In this activity, one student had a problem card and another student had a data card. Each had some information but not enough to solve the problem on their own. The problem card student asked the data card student questions to get information that could help them solve the problem. The goal was to help both students develop skills in communicating about math concepts as well as meta-cognitive and collaboration skills.

**MEASURE**

The team developed a three-question student survey to understand student experiences with the Info Gap routine, which they administered to students after the activity. They asked:

- Did using the Info Gap routine help you understand the math vocabulary better?
- Did you feel confident or comfortable talking about math with your partner? Explain why.
- Is there anything you would change about the routine? Why or why not?

For each item, students choose one of three emoji-based ratings. They were also given space to describe why they chose that rating.



■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative

**RESULTS**

After the first time conducting the activity and the survey, the team found:

- The majority of students felt neutral or negative about the protocol helping them understand vocabulary better.
- Most students responded positively about feeling confident or comfortable talking about math with their partner.
- When asked if there was anything they would change about the protocol, there was an even distribution of responses. Upon further review of the qualitative data, the teachers realized that most students felt positively about the protocol but were confused by the wording of the survey question and the emoji response options.

**CHANGE IDEAS AND NEXT STEPS**

The teaching team conducted the Info Gap activity again. This time, to address the challenge students reported with understanding the math vocabulary, the teachers added question stems for students to use in shaping their questions. For example, the problem card student was prompted to start questions with, “Can you tell me \_\_\_\_\_?” and “I need to know \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.” The data card student would be prompted with the stems, “What specific information do you need about \_\_\_\_\_?” and “Why do you need to know \_\_\_\_\_?”



The team plans to readminister the survey and analyze the data to determine if the changes to the activity made a difference in students’ understanding. They also plan to edit the third question of the survey and encourage students to provide more information in the open response so that they will gain more insight into students’ experiences.