



# Whetting Your School's Appetite for Data

## Why go this route?

Because data is powerful! With data-driven decision making, you are able to...

- Make decisions surrounding curriculum, instruction, and assessment with greater precision and clarity.
- Measure program effectiveness, show trends, and measure student progress.
- Communicate progress and explain strategies to others.
- Determine professional development needs that impact teaching and learning.
- Plan effective school improvement and set achievable school improvement goals.
- Identify and capitalize on strengths.

Many people have the experience of collecting data for someone else, with no benefit to them. Showing people how useful data could be for themselves helps enlist them in the work of gathering the data.

## You'll know you've arrived when...

- Staff members share an experience of looking at their own data about a single question to see what it could tell them and then discuss its usefulness.
- Staff members have discussed the implications of their own data about a single question and identified a strategic plan for responding.
- Staff members agree on one kind of additional data that will be useful to them in making decisions.
- Stakeholders are willing to collect and analyze additional local school data for strategic planning.

## Construction Zone



### It's about TIME

**Data collection takes time, but it's worth it!**

**You'll need 2-3 meetings:**

- An introductory hour to start discussion and introduce the case study within this packet.
- Possibly a week to collect your own data on the same or another compelling question.
- Another hour to review results to see if there's anything to learn or confirm.

Before the "results" meeting, collecting and displaying your own first piece of data may take several weeks. Data entry itself may take several hours. An experienced Excel user can make charts in 30-60 minutes. Someone learning as (s)he goes will need more time.

**Allow additional time to:**

- Celebrate the data that reflects your successes as you use data to focus improvement efforts.
- Make use of data at all grade level and committee meetings to explore implications.



### Potential COSTS

- You might decide to hire a facilitator for your exploratory meetings.
- Printing color copies of data will require a color printer and cartridges.

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## The Process

*A step-by-step guide to “whetting appetites” for using data to drive school-wide decision-making.*

**NOTE:** Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

**1 At a staff meeting** or a school improvement team meeting, ask people for their honest first impression when they hear the word “data.”

**You can hope for answers like “curiosity” but also encourage responses like “rolling my eyes—here we go again,” or “boring” or “it’s what liars manipulate to support whatever they want.” You’ll not change any minds unless people trust enough to put their real doubts out on the table to work on. Level with them about your own skepticism as well as your hopes about data.**

**2 Lead discussion** about how data might drive school improvement efforts (choose from research articles included in this tab as a discussion starter, or tell your own story if you have one). Ask if people are willing to suspend disbelief long enough to experiment and see if some wisely-chosen data might interest them enough to be willing to collect and analyze it.

**3 Distribute a case study from INSERTS for Step 3.**

Making a transparency is suggested. Focus on only one or two of the pieces included in the packet for analysis. Start discussion with focus questions like these:

- a. What does data say about the sample school?
- b. Does the data dispel any assumptions?
- c. Based on the data, what decisions would you make if you worked at the sample school?

**4 Guide staff in making predictions** about your school’s data for that question.

**5 Record predictions** on chart paper.

**6 Collect your own data** about that single question and enter it into a database.

**This doesn’t have to be intimidating—it could be just one piece of illustrative data, not a full-blown database. See INSERT for Step 6 for tips on how to collect this first element of data in “light-handed” ways that don’t bog down in elaborate systems.**

**7 Bring your school’s data pictures (graphs, excel spreadsheet, charts, etc.) to the next meeting for discussion.**

**Ask people if there are any surprises. If so, what ideas are generated by the new picture? If not, how could the data help tell others about what we already knew intuitively?**

**8 Interpret data** into narrative statements (See INSERT A for Step 8).

**9 Use INSERT for Step 9 to see** if each statement represents a strength or a challenge.

**10 Decide** how to address and prioritize challenges. Align with or amend your School Improvement Plan. See INSERT for Step 10.

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## Getting more mileage from working with data

How digging in with data benefits your school in regard to the following initiatives:

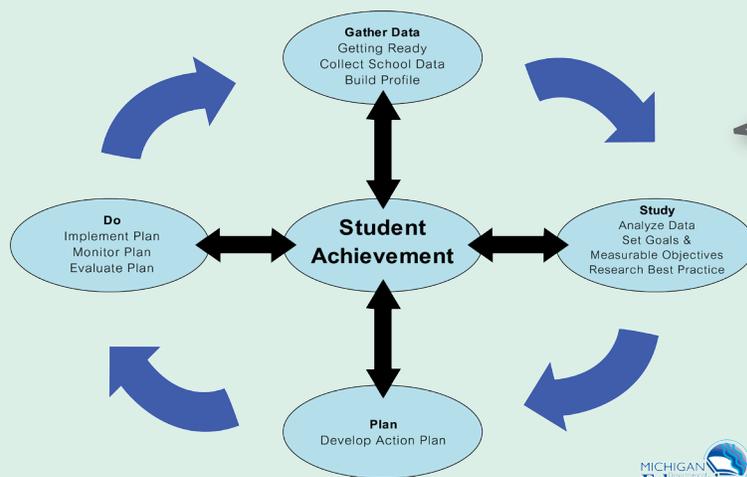
### Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

- Teaching staff can use Excel and other data management tools to meet the requirement of using data to make decisions. It will also facilitate teachers' use of formative data to guide and individualize instruction.

### State Accreditation System

- Creation of school data bases will allow for local collection and management of state assessment, standardized, district and local summative and formative test results, so a school can track individual student and class data. This will allow a school to analyze information related to the data profile.

### Michigan Continuous School Improvement Process (Mi-CSI) Michigan School Improvement Framework



This packet can assist you through all four phases of the continuous school improvement planning process.



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## Resources

### Books, Articles, Websites

#### **“Data-Driven Decisions”**

Articles by Theodore B. Creighton, Raymond Yeagley, Philip A. Streifer, Francis Barnes, Marilyn Miller and George A. Goens. *The School Administrator*, April 2001.

This issue of *The School Administrator* includes a number of articles on data-driven decision-making. *The School Administrator* is available online at <http://www.aasa.org>

#### **“No Excuses for Low Learning—School Proves Poverty, Diversity Aren’t Barriers to Achievement”**

Joan Richardson. *Results*, National Staff Development Council, February 2002.

This article describes how the use of data in decision-making helped a school move to the top tier of California’s Academic Performance Index surpassing well-known affluent suburbs.

#### **The School Portfolio Toolkit**

Victoria Bernhardt. *Eye on Education*, 2002.

Bernhardt’s workbook leads the reader through an eight-step process to build a school’s own data portfolio.

#### **At Your Fingertips –Using Everyday Data to Improve Schools**

Karen Levesque, Denise Bradby, Kristi Rossi and Peter Teitelbaum. MPR Associates Inc. and American Association of School Administrators and National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1998.

#### **Getting Excited About Data: How to Combine People, Passion and Proof**

Edie L. Holcomb. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 1999.

This book outlines a process for showing how well a school or district meets its primary goal: sustained student learning.

#### **Using Data To Improve Student Achievement**

Deb Wahlstrom. Chesapeake, VA: Successline Publications, 1999.

Wahlstrom’s thinking is invaluable in explaining how to collect, organize, analyze and use data for practical decision-making.

#### **Data4SS Data for Student Success**

<http://data4ss.org/>

This site contains a wealth of information and resources for helping schools build a culture of using data.

#### **MI School Data**

<http://www.mischooldata.org/>

MI School Data is your window to a wealth of data on Michigan’s public school education system.

### People

Intermediate School Districts/RESAs can serve as a resource.

#### **For more information, contact**

Michigan Department of Education

Office of Education  
Improvement and Innovation  
517-241-3147

School Improvement Unit  
517-373-8480

Curriculum and Instruction Unit  
517-241-4285

Office of Assessment  
and Accountability  
517-373-0048

Office of Early Childhood  
and Family Services  
517-241-3592

Office of Field Services  
517-373-3921

Office of Professional Preparation  
and Teacher Certification  
517-373-6505

Office of Special Education  
and Early Intervention Services  
517-373-9433

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