

MAKING NUMBERS COUNT

Using data to guide instruction and improve student learning

Just like doctors use data and analysis to make decisions about patient care, teachers and school leaders collect information every day about students to ensure a successful learning experience. In fact, data and analysis are key to everything that goes on inside a school facility—from how a building is designed and the

way services are provided to decisions about curriculum and technology. Educators use a variety of methods and tools to gain a better picture of what a student's needs might be. Such information helps them understand which instructional strategies are working and where more support and alternative strategies are required.



Educators reflect on whether the steps they've taken have had an impact on student learning and take steps to adjust instruction and provide feedback accordingly. This may include identifying what worked well, what didn't and what should be done differently next time the instruction takes place.



Collecting and analyzing data only becomes meaningful when combined with effective action. By using multiple data sources to understand what students know and are able to do, educators can develop goals for improvement and outline the actions that need to occur to improve student learning. This might, for example, involve creating smaller reading groups to target areas in which students might need more support.



Educators collect data all the time—from homework and projects to quizzes and informal observations to unit exams and state tests. Collecting a wide range of evidence of student learning provides educators with a rich collection of information that helps them keep tabs on how well and how much students are learning every day and every year.



Collecting data is not enough; it must be analyzed and interpreted accurately and fairly to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and examine possible reasons for patterns or trends.

In many districts, teams of colleagues in the same grade level or subject area collaborate to interpret and use data more effectively.

