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Focus:
Using Data for Action

Community and School Use of Data for College Readiness and Postsecondary Success

By Karmen Rouland, Ph.D., Susan Shaffer and Phoebe Schlanger

Editor’s Note: The IDRA EAC-South provides technical assistance and training to build capacity of local educators to serve their diverse student populations. The IDRA EAC-South is one of four regional equity assistance centers and serves Region II, which covers Washington, D.C., and 11 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. IDRA is working with staff at the Southern Education Foundation and the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium to develop local capacity in the region among the 2,341 school districts and 29,632 schools with over 1 million educators and 16 million students. More information is available at <http://www.idra.org/eac-south/>.

We collect data on students in all aspects of learning and teaching and throughout all parts of school operations. Data can indicate what teachers are teaching and what students are learning and can inform how we can improve teaching and other factors that influence learning.

But *collecting* data does not always translate into *using* data. When data uncover low performance in schools, we hesitate to analyze it for underlying causes of achievement problems.

Educational equity gaps for all students persist, and an uncertainty looms about whether students are on-track for graduation and college entry. According to the most recent America’s Promise Alliance report, the national high school graduation rate is 83.2 percent (DePaoli, et al., 2017), an increase over the last five years. The remaining 16.8 percent, however, represent millions of students who do not graduate. In addition, gaps in graduation rates remain for students of color, students with disabilities, English learners and low-income students (DePaoli, et al., 2017).

We recommend using data to uncover truths about students’ academic performance and college trajectory, keeping in mind the following principles.

- **Principle 1: Measuring Equity Matters.** Analyze the issues from an equity perspective by disaggregating data and examining outcomes for subgroups of students. Create SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) and an action plan to monitor strategies to improve or sustain them.
- **Principle 2: Honest Data Inquiry Matters.** Acknowledge hard truths regarding outcomes. Members of the data team, including parents and community members, should work together to discuss reasons for the undesirable results by using the strategies and tools discussed in this article.
- **Principle 3: Parents and Community Members’ Participation Matters.** Parents and community members can become data gatherers and analysts as they conduct surveys,

(cont. on Page 2)

“We must connect school outcomes – graduation and college readiness – with who and what produces those outcomes – connecting actionable knowledge to support engaged citizens, accountable leadership and enlightened public policy that leverages change.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President and CEO

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interviews and online research. Partnerships with parents and community organizations can help increase access to programs and strategies for improvements in student outcomes (Steinberg & Almeida, 2010).

Research suggests that students who are on track academically at the end of their ninth grade year are three times more likely to graduate from high school than students who are off track (Allensworth, 2013). Factors associated with being on track for graduation and postsecondary success are credit accumulation and course performance, attendance, and behavior (Hazel, et al., 2014; Hoover & Cozzens, 2016; Steinberg & Almeida, 2010).

Students need access to educators who have high expectations for their academic success and rigorous curriculum in order to develop skills, such as comprehension, computation and critical thinking, necessary for postsecondary success (Hazel, et al., 2014).

This article walks through three strategies for using data to help ensure that students are on track for high school completion, college entry, and college completion and success. The strategies include the following.

Prepare: Organize a team, determine the data you need and locate the data

The first step of any data-driven decision-making model is to organize a team that will be responsible for collecting and analyzing data. Data teams can take on many configurations: grade-level teachers, a mix of teachers and administrators, and/or guidance counselors, other support staff, parents and community members (Peery, 2011).

The school or district's student information system (SIS) or statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) are reliable sources of student data. For data on college enrollment and persistence,

teams can use the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the National Student Clearinghouse data.

Most districts or states create data dashboards and data tools for educators to report patterns on certain topics. To ensure that educators have a robust picture of each student's experience, data teams must collect data from several categories, such as student demographics, student learning, student behavior, school climate and school organization (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; White, 2011). For each category, teams must collect quantitative and qualitative data. The chart on Page 7 contains examples of each data category.

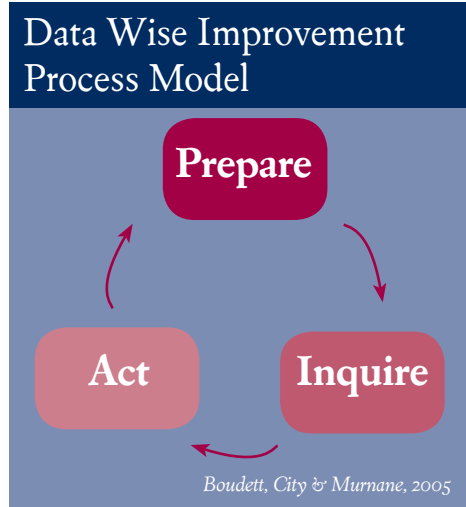
Once they have collected the data, teams should create a data inventory chart and ensure that the team has access to the data. Several examples of data inventory charts and other protocols may be found online at <https://datawise.gse.harvard.edu/courses-and-materials>.

Inquire: Dig deep and ask questions of student data

After creating and cataloguing data inventories, data teams should take a deep-dive to analyze data and conduct a root cause analysis to determine cause and effect relationships. One task is to conduct a SWOT analysis, where educators reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with student data pertaining to the question, "Are my students on track for high school completion, college entry, and college completion/success?" If students are not on track for timely high school graduation, ask why.

Data teams can conduct SWOT analyses for individual students, student cohorts and student subgroups examining factors related to high school graduation and college-going. Evaluating

(cont. on Page 7)



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Data to Measure an Effective Instructional Context for Secondary Level Newcomers and English Learners

by Kristin Grayson, Ph.D.,

Teachers and administrators may feel overwhelmed by the use and analysis of data for English learners (ELs) as is required by the federal guidelines under Title III of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*. Yet collecting and conducting data analysis is essential for EL success and is based on strong and seminal research in second language acquisition. Using data is even more critical when students are secondary level newcomers and English learners with interrupted schooling.

When considering how to collect and use data, the *Casteñeda v. Pickard* decision of the Fifth Circuit Court, 1981, provides an excellent framework (Thomas & Collier, 1997). As described in the DOJ-OCR Dear Colleague Letter (2015), this ruling states that public school districts' language programs need to satisfy three requirements.

- (1) "The educational theory underlying the language assistance program is recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is considered a legitimate experimental strategy;
- (2) "The program and practices used by the school system are reasonably calculated to implement effectively the educational theory adopted by the school; and
- (3) "The program succeeds, after a legitimate trial, in producing results indicating that students' language barriers are actually being overcome within a reasonable period of time." (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015)

This article focuses on the data needed to support teachers and English learners who enter U.S. schools as newcomers and as students with interrupted schooling. IDRA's *Good Schools and Classrooms for Children Learning English - A Guide* (Robledo Montecel, et al., 2002) and its supplement for secondary students also provide a way to collect much of the needed data.

Research Base of an Effective Instructional Program for ELs

The language assistance program needs to be based on research that shows evidence of being successful. The language program description should be available in the district handbook and on the district website. It also should be available

for non-English speaking families in a language they understand. Regular communications about EL students and their progress in the language program should be provided to families in their home language, and this should be documented as well.

Program Implementation and Resources

Districts should document implementation with fidelity to the program model. This can be done in a variety of ways, including instructional observation of ESL and content/grade level teachers using a rubric that is designed for the program model.

Observations should be conducted several times per year in order to ensure that implementation is occurring consistently. In addition to instructional implementation, all campus staff should be surveyed to ensure that they understand the program that is in place in their campus.

It is essential that ESL and content area teachers be experienced and successful with the instructional techniques that they need to implement based on the English learners who are in their classrooms. Professional development enhances the skills of teachers and increases their self-efficacy in delivering appropriate instruction. Such ongoing professional development for all teachers involved in the instruction of English learners also needs to be documented.

ESL and other teachers additionally need to have access to resources that allow for the differentiation of instructional techniques, especially for alternatives to standard textbooks and to content appropriate texts written at different literacy levels that challenge but do not overwhelm English learners. Other resources needed may include visuals, flashcards and other manipulatives that teachers might use during instruction.

Documentation of Program and Student Progress

When looking at student data and progress, some of the most essential questions to first ask newcomer English learners concern their educational (cont. on Page 4)

It is essential that ESL and content area teachers be experienced and successful with the instructional techniques that they need to implement based on the English learners who are in their classrooms.

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experiences in their first language. Did they go to school in their home country and, if so, what grade level did they complete? What were their grades or scores? How long was their schooling interrupted before they enrolled in the first or current U.S. school?

The district should assess the students' home language. For example the LAS test or Woodcock Muñoz test is available to assess Spanish proficiency. Attainment in English and the home language combined can be assessed with the BVAT, which includes 17 languages in addition to English. Using other assessments, such as the Aprenda, can reveal achievement in core academic areas in Spanish.

Background information is critical to share with ESL and classroom teachers. Research has shown that higher language proficiency in the home language correlates with quicker attainment of English language proficiency, as shown in many quantitative studies by Wayne Thomas & Virginia Collier.

This also is based on the seminal theoretical work of Jim Cummins and the Common Underlying Proficiency hypothesis (CUP) (1979). What is learned in one language can easily be transferred to another language. It is important to understand students' literacy level in their home language and how reading is learned in that language.

By law, each English learner annually takes an English language proficiency test, which results in scores for listening, speaking, reading and writing in English as well as a composite score. The scores are important for secondary teachers to understand, particularly the scores in reading and writing. These scores inform teachers about what students can currently do and what they can be expected to achieve to move forward. Based on the (i + 1) comprehensible input hypothesis of Stephen Krashen, this explains that students can only comprehend and perform at one level higher than their current level of proficiency (1956).

English proficiency can only be attained over time. For secondary English learners, the time it takes to gain proficiency is based on many individual factors as well as similarities and differences of the home language to English and the sociocultural context in their school and community (Thomas & Collier, 1997). English proficiency data should be viewed using long-term longitudinal analysis that focuses on the long-term parity implied in the *Casteñeda v. Pickard* court case.



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If secondary English learners are behind in reading and writing in English, teachers should focus on giving students comprehensible input (for the appropriate content) at their own level of instruction with a wide range of vocabulary usage. Vocabulary in context and as chunks of words, rather than words in isolation, will help newcomers and English learners with interrupted schooling, as described in psychologist's George A. Miller initial works about language, short-term memory and cognitive functions (1956).

Stephen Krashen's reading and writing hypotheses supports this approach for helping secondary students learn to read (1982). The more students read something at their literacy level and that is of interest to them, the more progress they will make in reading and vocabulary building. In turn, the better readers that students are, the better writers they will become, and this in turn will engage their cognitive functioning.

Funding and/or the lack of funding for language programs remains a critical issue for successful programs. While EL data collection and analysis may seem overwhelming, it is necessary that

it be based on seminal research, as well as case law and policies that can help districts achieve the intent of the *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court decision of 1974. This ruling indicates that a lack of supplemental language assistance violates the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964.

Today, districts can gather and analyze the data of the language assistance that they are providing to show that it is a supplemental language program that helps English learners succeed in progress and attainment of English proficiency and academic achievement.

The IDRA EAC-South is helping districts in the U.S. South articulate and improve their language assistance programs and is ready to help your district.

Kristin Grayson, Ph.D., is an IDRA education associate. Comments and questions may be directed to her via email at kristin.grayson@idra.org.



See references for this article at
<http://budurl.com/IDRAj17b>

Student Data Tracking – Taking a Closer Look at Privacy

by Mark Barnett

According to the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), one-third of all K-12 students in the United States are issued devices like laptops or tablets to use in school (Frida, et al., 2017). Almost all of these devices require a user account from Google, Microsoft or Apple in order to use the device. Are schools, students and families aware of data that are being tracked with these accounts and what technology companies are doing with the data?

Before digging into data tracking, let's review some laws that are in place that are meant to protect the rights and privacy of student data. The *Family Educational Rights of Privacy Act* is a federal law that forbids schools from disclosing student information without parent consent. It is enforced by the U.S. Department of Education, which can cut off federal funding to noncompliant schools. The law also protects information about students' online activity when they are using school-issued devices when the information is tied to personally identifiable information.

The *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* (COPPA) is a federal law that requires companies to obtain verifiable parent consent before collecting personal information from children under 13 for commercial purposes. COPPA is enforced by the Federal Trade Commission.

To confuse matters even more, some states have their own laws that restrict how companies can use data for advertising, or they define personally identifiable information differently than other states which can create loopholes that allow companies to selectively collect student data.

Because the laws around student data privacy aren't clearly defined, companies like Google, Microsoft and Apple are free to collect far more information on kids than is necessary and to store this information indefinitely. According the EFF's report, *Spying on Students: School-Issued Devices and Student Privacy*, companies are collecting excessive data on "user names and date of birth and can include browsing history, search terms, location data, contact lists and behavioral information (Frida, et al., 2017). Technology providers are spying on students – and school dis-

tricts, which often provide inadequate privacy policies or no privacy policy at all, are unwittingly helping them do it" (p.5).

Do companies really need this kind of data on students? EFF investigators found that the Google Chromebook by default "records every Internet site students visit, every search term they use, the results they click on, videos they look for and watch on YouTube, and their saved passwords" (p.2). Google doesn't first obtain permission from students or their parents, and since some schools *require* students to use Chromebooks, many parents are unable to prevent Google's data collection or are even aware that it is happening.

The *Spying on Students* report points to a serious problem that parents and families are the least informed about student data privacy and practices. A survey conducted by the EFF found that among respondents: "45 percent reported that their schools or districts did not provide parents with written disclosure about ed-tech and data collection, and 31 percent were not sure if such disclosure was provided. Further, 32 percent of all respondents reported that their schools or districts did not offer opt-out – that is, non-technological classroom alternatives for families who did not want students using certain technology – and 37 percent were not sure if opt-out was available" (p.10).

What Can You Do to Protect Your Student's Data and Privacy?

The EFF has outlined some steps that students, educators, leaders, policymakers and companies can take to keep the privacy of student data a priority that is transparent and respects the privacy of students and their families.

- Read software terms of service,
- Ask schools about data privacy practices,
- Provide digital literacy training to teachers,
- Always inform and obtain parent consent,
- Ask for software alternatives,
- Use encryptions when possible, and
- Demand transparency on data privacy.

Read the full EFF report and see more recommendations at www.eff.org/wp/school-issued-devices-and-student-privacy.

Other Resources to Learn about Student Data Privacy

See the following resources for more information.

- U.S Department of Education Privacy Technical Assistance Center: <http://ptac.ed.gov>
- FERPA/Sherpa education privacy resource center: ferpasherpa.org
- The Data Quality Campaign, a leading voice on education data policy and use: dataqualitycampaign.org
- Electronic Frontier Foundation, student privacy campaign: www.eff.org/issues/student-privacy

Resources

Frida Alim, F., & N. Cardozo, G. Gebhart, K. Gullo, A. Kalia. (April 13, 2017). *Spying on Students: School-Issued Devices and Student Privacy* (San Francisco, Calif.: Electronic Frontier Foundation).

Mark Barnett is IDRA's Chief IT Strategist. Comments and questions may be directed to him via email at mark.barnett@idra.org.



Six Young Tutors Win 2017 National Essay Contest Awards IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Tutors Share Stories of the Program's Impact on Their Lives

"Last year, I had a rough year: constantly on campus suspension, referrals, verbally disrespecting teachers... Ever since I started this Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I feel like I am a different person." – eighth-grader Jimena Guerrero

Six students received prizes in a national competition among participants in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, a nationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program of the Intercultural Development Research Association. Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors wrote about how the program helped them do better in school and how they had helped their tutees to do better.

There were competitions at both the middle school and high school levels in the United States. Winners from each competition are being awarded \$200 for first place, \$150 for second place and \$100 for third place along with commemorative certificates and trophies.

First Place High School Winner **Ana Luisa Valenzuela**

12th Grade, Odessa High School, Texas



In her essay, Ana Luisa Valenzuela wrote: "I didn't realize that I would be a role model for these kids... I believe that I learned more from my tutee than he learned from me. He may have learned his ABCs and his numbers, but I learned way more than that. I learned that every child needs a 'backbone' to support him or her... I became that backbone for some of those kids who didn't have anyone. These kids came to me with a smile and a hug every day. And that is something that cost nothing, yet means everything... This world is a very cruel and cold place, and if we do not spread kindness, love and joy, we will become cold too. We must help each other because if not, no one else will."

Second Place High School Winner **Anahi Ayala**

12th Grade, Odessa High School, Texas

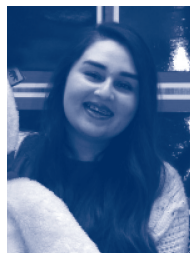
"The day I joined the Coca-Cola Valued Youth



Program was the day my thoughts for my future became clear," wrote Anahi Ayala. "It was the day I became a tutor and met my tutee. My tutee struggled through the first semester of school trying his hardest to learn his alphabet and how to sound out words. Toward the last week before break, he did the most amazing thing: he read a sentence all by himself! To anyone else this may seem like it's not a big deal, but to me, it was like climbing to the top of the mountain. The emotions I felt when he was reading filled me with glee. It hit me that I was part of the reason he knows how to read... After all the struggling I put myself through on finding the right career, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth helped me realize that teaching is my future profession."

Third Place High School Winner **Esmeray Olivás**

12th Grade, Odessa High School, Texas



Esmeray Olivás wrote in her essay: "I began to want the best, to strive for more, to practice kindness, to be slow to anger, to experience achievement together – not only for myself but for others... It's when we become a captive audience to our passion that we can become active and volunteer for something else other than ourselves. This is what the definition of true love. I learned patience, kindness and selflessness through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and working with my tutee. I encourage everyone to create an open mind, helping hands and a willing heart. Together, we can be known as the generation that learned how to love."

First Place Middle School Winner

Jimena Guerrero

8th Grade, Zamora Middle School, San Antonio, Texas



"Ever since I started this Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I feel like I am a different person," wrote Jimena Guerrero. "Last year, I had a rough year: constantly on campus suspension, referrals, verbally disrespecting teachers, and I would go along with my 'friends' making bad choices... I'm trying to teach my first grade tutee reading skills but also life lessons through my experiences. I hope to teach him how to respect teachers and older people and also to treat others the way you would want to be treated. I just wanted to take advantage of the fact that, as a tutor, I can teach him all I can... This program has not only helped me choose what I want to do when I get older, but it also has taught me how to communicate with younger students, and it has taught me many life lessons I will use in the future."

Second Place Middle School Winner

Jennifer Vela

7th Grade, Domingo Treviño Middle School, La Joya, Texas



Jennifer Vela wrote: "I was a shy, depressed girl, that didn't talk to a lot of people, and never looked on the good side of things. That all changed when I got in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and started to tutor. I had a reason to laugh, I could finally see the good things and it was all because of my tutees... I then realized I was a role model (cont. on Page 7)

(Six Young Tutors Win 2017 National Essay Contest Awards, continued from Page 6)

to my tutees. I was someone they looked up to... I became a better person, more responsible, respectful, passionate, understanding, and my perspective changed... I could not have asked for a better gift than having the ability to change the lives of these children."

**Third Place Middle School Winner
Lilibeth Berlanga**

7th Grade, Memorial Middle School, La Joya, Texas



In her essay, Lilibeth Berlanga, wrote: "Tutoring others is rewarding because someone else is learning from you what has been taught to you. I have had a lot of fun with them. They are good tutees, and I love them. Sometimes they don't pay attention to me, but I know that it is part of my job to be patient and guide them back to listening to me. My mom is very proud of me because I help other kids in need. This alone has made me want to come to school every day. Before, I used to miss a lot of

Learn More about the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Website: Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – Learn more about the program and how to bring it to your school

Video: Dropout Prevention that Works – Quick overview of how the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program impacts students and schools. [01:30 min.]

Winning Essays: Full text of the six winning essays

<http://budurl.com/IDRAVYP>

school because I had no motive to go. I would get frustrated by how I was being taught and didn't understand my teachers. Now, that I am in this program, I have valued more the efforts my teachers are making in teaching me."

Honorable mentions were awarded to students in schools that submitted multiple student essays; these students had the highest score at their campus. Also, while not yet in middle school, fifth grade tutors in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program at PS94 Kings College School in New

York City wrote their own essays.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by IDRA, is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program. Since its inception in 1984, the program has kept more than 34,100 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. According to the Valued Youth creed, all students are valuable, none is expendable. The lives of more than 671,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by the program.

(Community and School Use of Data for College Readiness and Postsecondary Success, continued from Page 2)

this data creates knowledge through comparisons, relationships, patterns and trends, and it reveals inequities.

Act: Create an action plan and monitor implementation of selected strategies

During the third and final phase of a "Data Wise Improvement Process," data teams create action plans and develop a monitoring plan (Boudett, et al., 2005). Teams should incorporate SMART goals discussed above to ensure that strategies to improve or sustain outcomes are implemented with fidelity. In the action plan, list the task or action, responsible parties, targeted date for completion, and resources needed.

For many years, the research on data use and literacy tended to focus on the use of data for instructional improvement (Grissom, et al., 2017; New, 2016). While important (Boudett, et al., 2005), the goal of education is not just the completion of high school. As educators, we must prepare students to be college and career-ready. The policies and standards in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and the *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) make this imperative.

Resources

Allensworth, E. (2013). "The Use of Ninth-Grade Early Warning Indicators to Improve Chicago Schools." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 18(1), 68-83.
Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2010). *Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to*

Sample Data Elements

Data Category	Data Element(s)
Student Demographics	Race-ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, grade level, age
Student Learning	Grades/GPA, course selection, assessment data
Student Behavior	Discipline infractions, attendance data, student engagement, college application completion, PSAT/SAT/ACT test-taking data
School Climate	Student connectedness to teachers, culture of equity in the school, support for students, rules/consequences
School Organization	Course offerings, school policies (student code of conduct, attendance policy, credit earning policies)

Improve Instruction (San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass).
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