

Data Analysis

Although there are many different protocols for data analysis, we encourage using the following framework as the foundation for every data discussion. This framework allows a collaborative team to make sense of the data and leads to five specific actions to improve teaching and learning.

1. Identify the data source. This might be the most recent unit test, common formative assessment, or external assessment. The key is that the data source accurately represents the current state of student performance and links to the faculty agreed-on guaranteed and viable curriculum.
2. Sort the data by individual student, identifying students who are not proficient and students who are very successful.
3. Identify common themes among successful students and among unsuccessful students. For example, are the least successful students absent more than 10 percent of the time? Do the least successful students fail to complete homework? Are these students participating in tutoring opportunities? Are there home factors associated with the most and least successful students?
4. Sort the data by individual teacher. Focus on a treasure hunt, not a witch hunt. That is, identify spikes in student success. If student characteristics are similar for each class (for example, special education students or English learners), then the differences in student performance are more likely the result of differences in teaching practices. Identify differences in classroom activities, teacher feedback, homework practices, grading policies, and other factors associated with the most successful classes. Celebrate these successes and make plans to replicate them.
5. Identify challenges and commitments for the next meeting. Data analysis inevitably reveals gaps between intended learning and actual student performance. When these challenges are associated with specific gaps in student knowledge and skills, then teachers can make specific commitments to fill those gaps, reassess student performance, and report the results at the next meeting.