

# Tips for Leading Successful Data Conversations

In order to determine a school's goals, parents and educators must come together to look at the school's *data*, make sense of it together and use it to plan. This data can include a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures to get a picture of how the school is serving its students and community and where there are areas of success and areas for growth.

The first step to identifying goals and performance targets as a school is to have meaningful conversations about the data.

Big idea	Explanation	Notes/reflections/implications
<b>Begin with the big picture</b>	<p>Important conversations start when we use data to help us tell the story of our school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review <b>school-wide data</b> for trends, patterns and questions.</li> <li>• Then, <b>drill down</b> to look for classroom level and student level implications.</li> <li>• Choose <b>a single data source</b> to dig into more deeply.</li> </ul>	
<b>Ask questions</b>	<p>Resist the urge to offer solutions, present findings or point fingers. A community needs time to process data together to “own” it. When reviewing data with your community, ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What might this data tell us?</li> <li>• What questions does this data raise?</li> <li>• What information is missing?</li> <li>• How do we want to measure the success of our efforts?</li> <li>• Which information should we look at on an ongoing basis to gauge progress along the way?</li> </ul>	
<b>Create space for dialogue</b>	<p>Dialogue is two-way communication. Invite participants to ask questions and interact with the data. Some people have a higher comfort level with reading academic data than others. Create structured opportunities for people from all community groups to ask questions and inform the conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group participants in <b>language specific groups</b> to increase comfort and ease in communication. Provide translators when possible.</li> <li>• Give participants time to <b>review data independently</b> and in pairs before asking them to ask questions or provide input. Let them puzzle over the data themselves to make their own meaning.</li> </ul>	

These and other resources were created by the Achievement Assessments Office (AAO) at SFUSD. Call 241-6400 if you have questions or would like assistance in analyzing or sharing data at your site.

<b>Big idea</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Notes/reflections/implications</b>
<b>Focus on the changes in the data</b>	<p>Data is not static or unchanging. Focusing on change will create opportunities to celebrate shared success and highlight priority areas for change initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at the change in student performance over time on a specific measure.</li> <li>• Determine if these changes are isolated or are part of a longer and larger trend.</li> </ul>	
<b>Focus on critical comparisons</b>	<p>Data is often most interesting when looked at in comparison to other data. These comparisons can help illuminate areas of great success or great need to inform planning and goal setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at the performance of your school in comparison to the district or state average.</li> <li>• Look at the performance of one grade in comparison to another grade.</li> </ul>	
<b>Make it physical</b>	<p>Participants need to interact with the data, not just watch a PowerPoint presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass out handouts or posters.</li> <li>• Provide pens, highlighters and sticky notes so that participants can interact with the data.</li> <li>• Encourage people to write down questions about the data.</li> </ul>	
<b>Use data to plan</b>	<p>Discuss next steps for using the data that was reviewed and the outcomes of the conversations to inform school goal setting and planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define roles and responsibilities for who will be responsible for turning the data reflections into actionable plans for school improvement.</li> <li>• Plan a time to come back together to review the goals and priorities identified based on the data that was reviewed.</li> <li>• Expect that you will need to continually revise goals as new data is available.</li> </ul>	

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