

Worksheet: Using Data to Advocate

Use this worksheet with your school's report card. Ask for support to read the data if you need it! Community based organizations, school leaders, and parent advocates can support you.

Did you know? ESSA requires accessible information!

The federal law requires that all information provided by schools be "accessible" to parents and families - meaning that they need to be in a format and language that you can understand.

Understanding Information in Your School's Report Card

1. What is the story the data is telling us about the students in this school?
2. Is there information on the report card that shows your school is doing well in some areas?
3. Does the report card give information that shows where your school needs to do things better?
4. Does the report card have information about school climate or discipline, like suspension rates?
5. Does the information on the report card match what you have seen in the school personally? Do you feel like your school needs to make improvements?
6. Has your school been identified for "Support and Improvement"?



What else do you see/notice? What questions do you have?

Far From a Complete Picture

School report cards offer one picture of a school. For example, while test results can help us get a snapshot of student academic performance, student success can be (and is) measured in ways that cannot be seen in this report card.

Use this report to spark deeper understanding — to begin the conversations we need to have to better support students in the ways they most need to be supported.

Understanding data is part of "Learn and Share" in the school improvement cycle!

What to do if information is missing

School report cards are required to report certain information. For what is required and what to do if your school's report card is missing important data, check out the **Data Quality Campaign's** resources at dataqualitycampaign.org/showmethedata/



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Using Data to Make Changes

We must make decisions based on complete and accurate information. School report card data is imperfect, but it can help us begin a conversation to better understand each other and the students we are all here to support.

Questions to ask yourself:

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1. What information can I use to show my own child's experience is part of larger issues in the school?
 2. What information can I use as evidence to advocate for additional resources/support or a change in school policy?

Questions to ask your community:

1. How can we get a better picture of student achievement and success at our school?
2. What questions do we need to ask in order to understand the root causes of the student success gaps we see in this report card?
3. Is there any additional information that you are interested in knowing?
4. How can we share the information we have so that more parents, families, and community members can join us in this effort?

What data is “equity” data?

Equity data is information that helps to show how different student groups (e.g. students in special education, students of different races or family incomes) are experiencing different levels of success *as a result of less support or fewer resources*.

For example, equity data that you can find on your school's report card includes:

- Lower test scores for some groups of students (e.g. students with disabilities) than their peers, *despite equal capacity to learn*
- Higher suspension and expulsion rates for some groups of students (e.g. students of color) than their peers, *despite similar behavior*
- Differences in rates of chronic absenteeism (excused and unexcused) among student groups, *despite equal capacity to attend*
- “Per-pupil expenditures” — or, the amount of money a school spends each year per student. If this number is different for schools in the same district, that may mean that *students in some schools have access to supports and resources that other students do not*.

Where can I find even more information?

- **The Data Quality Campaign** works on making data available and understandable for all community members. Check out their resources at dataqualitycampaign.org - like their **parent and family resources**, or their **Education Data 101** for policy makers.
- **GreatSchools'** tools support **parent and family advocacy** and provide families with independent **school ratings** and information you may not find in your school's state report card. *Note that these ratings can also contain an inaccurate picture of schools.*