



## Analyzing Data and Assessing Local Needs



### How to Use This Guide

This discussion guide is intended to assist California educators who wish to use the QSF **Analyzing Data and Assessing Local Needs** video in meetings or discussions.

The questions and activities can be modified to fit the chosen purpose and audience.

## Overview

Assessing local needs, or conducting a needs assessment, by systematically selecting, organizing, and analyzing demographic data, student learning data, perceptions data, and school processes data plays a crucial role in the planning cycle.

The needs assessment refines existing local priorities and/or establishes new ones that will guide the planning team to develop concrete outcomes that address the identified priorities.

## Key Topics

- The purpose of the data analysis is to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in the current context.
- The data are examined over time to identify trends.
- The areas identified for improvement should be prioritized based on identified needs.
- The priorities established during the needs assessment will guide the development of objectives and the selection of strategies to achieve the objectives.

## Reflection Questions

- Based on our review of local priorities, what data do we currently use to inform our planning for those priorities?
- What sorts of questions should we ask ourselves about these priorities?
- What additional data should we use to establish potential new priorities?
- How can we best involve our school community in analyzing data and monitoring progress?
- How do we go about establishing a highly effective data analysis team?

## Activity 1 for Group Discussion

### **Establishing a Highly-Effective Data Analysis Team**

Since principals alone cannot lead schools to overcome persistent achievement gaps, the support of a data analysis team is crucial. The data analysis team provides a dissemination point for distributed leadership responsibilities by:

- establishing and supporting school-wide efforts to improve teaching and learning,
- building collaboration among stakeholder members, and
- modeling cultural and collaboration norms that are needed from stakeholder teams.

### **Defining an Effective Data Analysis Team**

Resources related to the Engaging Stakeholders Discussion Guide contain many helpful suggestions for engaging a broad spectrum of participants from the school community to serve on a data analysis team. These same persons may be part of the school or district planning team as well, and will likely benefit from training in how to operate as a team.

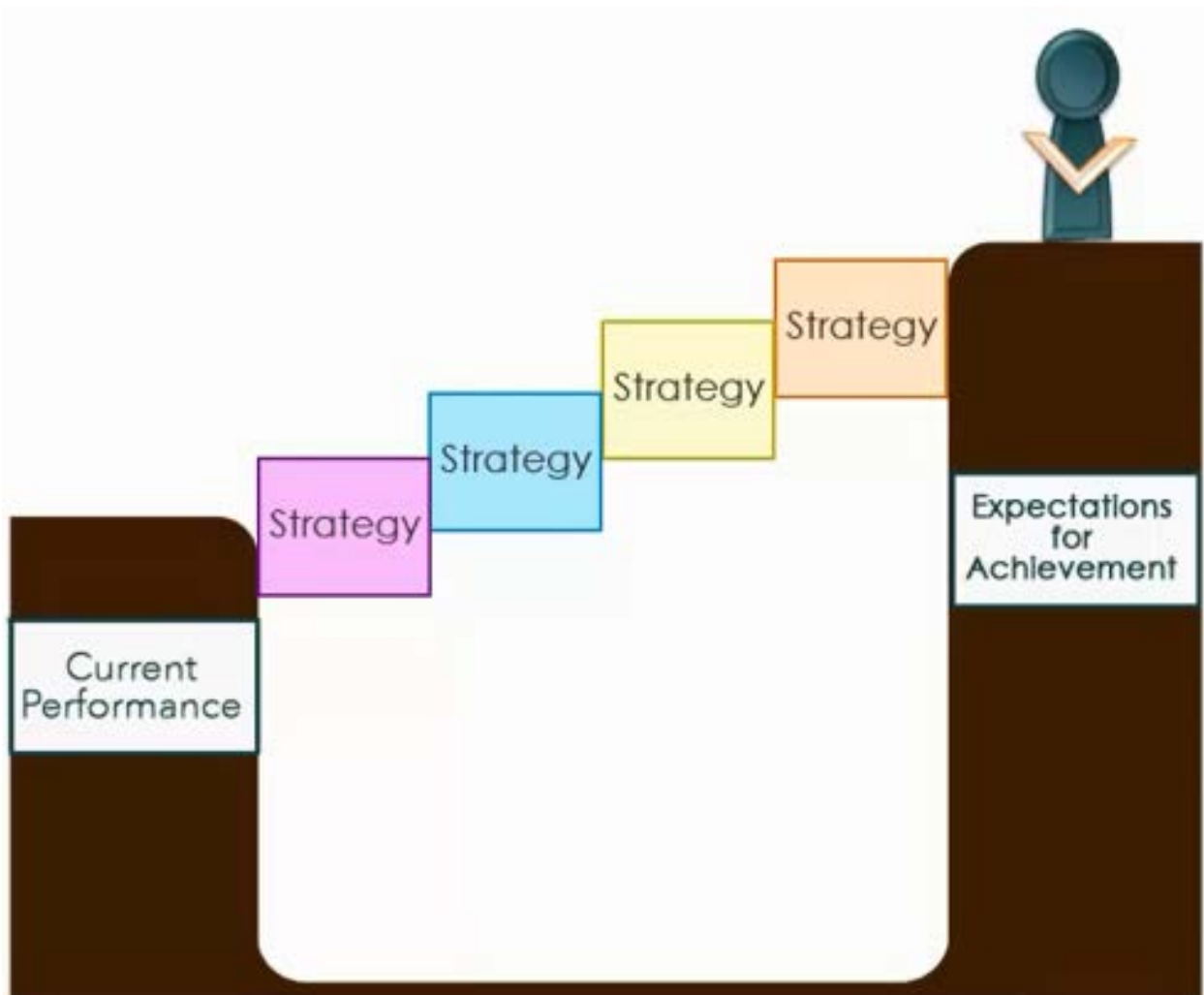
An effective data analysis team will have an agreed-upon structure and norms for team conduct. The Discussion Guide that accompanies the “Developing Effective School and District Plans” QSF video suggests the team consider the following questions to establish a workable structure:

- Who will conduct or facilitate the meetings? How will norms be established?
- Who should be on the team? Is there a need for subcommittees?
- How will the participation of the larger school community be encouraged and supported?
- How will the work be monitored, recognized, and supported? What is the system to ensure accountability?

Additionally, the team will define for itself the roles and responsibilities of its members. The table below is an example of how a data analysis team might define its work and its roles.

<b>An Effective Data Analysis Team is:</b>	<b>And What They Do:</b>
Inclusive with representation across the school community; tapping varied perspectives and expertise	Frequently communicates with the broader school community in an effort to solicit perspectives and secure 'buy-in'
A real team with clearly defined responsibilities and a shared commitment, rather than a team in name only	Uses data to identify and sets clear and measureable goals for student learning outcomes
Develops a culture of continuous improvement and serves as the model team for other school teams	Utilizes consistent structures and processes, modeling these for the broader school community
[The statements above are provided as examples. Engage participants in identifying additional descriptions to develop a common definition of what an effective data analysis team is.]	[Engage participants in identifying what an effective data analysis team does. Revisit these guidelines periodically to further fine-tune these descriptions.]

## Activity 2 for Group Discussion



### A Scenario for Developing Focus Questions

Conducting an effective needs assessment requires that the data analysis team asks the right questions to determine which data to examine in establishing or revising priorities for improving teaching and learning. Asking the wrong questions can result in investing time and effort that will not produce the desired outcomes. This scenario is provided as an example of how a team might go about determining the questions they need to ask themselves as they consider their local priorities.

In your school, several staff have become concerned that Hispanic/Latino children have uneven attendance. As a school community you have decided that one of your priorities must focus on improving attendance among this population.

1. **What is the main question your community should ask to address this issue?** For example, the main question might be: How can we improve attendance and connections to school for our Hispanic population?
2. **What are some secondary questions that emerge from discussion of this main question?** Possible questions might include:
  - a. Are we concerned about student attendance only or do we also care about parent involvement?
  - b. What data should we examine to determine trends in the absenteeism rates among this population (e.g., student attendance data)?
  - c. What information do we already have and what information do we need to collect to determine causes for this absenteeism and how prevalent these issues are? For example, reasons for not attending parent-teacher conferences could be collected through surveys, focus groups, or interviews of parents.
3. Once the focus question(s) have been determined, the data analysis team can begin the needs assessment process. Note that it is possible that the data analysis team may have more than one local priority or level of deep concern.

### Formulating Focus Questions and Determining Data Sources

This table may be used to record thoughts and ideas as the team determines focus questions and possible data sources to examine these questions.

Local Priorities	Possible Data Sources	Notes
Main question:	Possible data sources:	Notes:
Secondary Question:	Possible data sources:	Notes:
Secondary Question:	Possible data sources:	Notes:
Secondary Question:	Possible data sources:	Notes:

## Activity 3 for Group Discussion

### Developing a Process for Data Analysis

Before beginning the data analysis with the team, ensure that the raw data have been summarized or translated into easy-to-understand formats. The Resource section of this video guide suggests some ways to accomplish this by designing tables and graphs to present the data.

One way of proceeding with the data analysis is to divide the team in pairs or small groups to examine the data sets for a local priority. Provide each group with a data worksheet to record their findings.

1. Ask each group to examine the data tables or charts that address the focus area.
2. Each group fills in their observations on a Data Worksheet (example below)
3. After examining the various data sources for a focus question, each group notes their findings, noting the students that are performing well and the students that need improvement.
4. Each group summarizes their findings and posits any remaining questions.
5. The team leader then facilitates a review of all findings, noting those that recur most often, and discusses with the team how best to address the issues identified.

**Example of Data Worksheet**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Population (grade level, English Learner, etc.)</b>	<b>General Findings</b>	<b>Further Questions</b>
Ex: Student attendance (2011-2014)	Ex: Hispanic or Latino students grades K-6	Ex: Hispanic or Latino students in K-3 appear to miss school the most. Those in grades 4-6 have attendance commensurate with other student groups.	Why do Hispanic or Latino students in Grades 4-6 have better attendance records than students in grades K-3?
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Summary statement of significant finding(s):