**An Overview of Data in Schools**

This document is intended for senior and middle leaders.

Schools collect data in many forms. Bernhardt (2003) describes four data categories that cover the sort of data schools collect:

1. Demographic – information about the student such as ethnicity, gender, attendance, ESOL status, special needs;
2. Perceptions – the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the school’s key players including perceptions of the learning environment, the school’s values, and student, parent and teacher attitudes;
3. Student Learning – measures such as teacher observations of ability, unit assessment results, e-asTTle and PAT scores, NCEA results;
4. School Processes – details on record of the school profile (including decile, roll numbers, proportion of different ethnicities, and details about the teaching force such as years of experience, transience, etc.), courses offered, how students are allocated to classes, programmes in which the school is participating, and home-school relationships.

Ronka et al. (2010) state that data are underpinned by the three foundations of quality, capacity and culture.

**To be effective data must be:**

* Accessible.
* Timely.
* Relevant.
* Longitudinal.
* Up to date.
* Used!

**Data can help to:**

* Promote inquiry and generate questions into how well students/the school are doing.
* Confirm or refute hypotheses (bust myths) that we may have (about students and their learning).
* Clarify the gap between where we are and where we want to be.
* Identify the underlying causes of those gaps.
* Understand the impact of various initiatives the school has undertaken.
* Provide information about effective/ineffective practices, and help decide whether to retain/eliminate these.
* Provide evidence that can be used to continuously improve the school as a learning organisation.
* Give an indication of whether resources (personnel, materials, finances) are being used wisely.
* Show if the school/departmental goals/objectives are being met.
* Assess needs to help target services on the important issues/problems.

**Student achievement data are:**

* Used by senior leaders to set annual achievement targets which are reported annually to the Ministry of Education by year level and ethnicity. This reporting shows trends and patterns of achievement for these students in relation to the whole year level cohort.
* Analysed regularly by year level deans, heads of learning and senior leaders to identify trends for various groups, to monitor progress towards individual and whole cohort targets, to identify which students are slipping behind or require extension and areas for targeted intervention.
* Used by individual subject teachers as a feature of teaching as inquiry similarly to identify trends in patterns of achievement as well as determining which students are achieving and which are not, and who needs more targeted support/extension.
* Used by students as they self-manage and monitor their own progress towards their study and career goals.
* Used by parents when discussing their child’s progress with the student and teacher.
* Used by academic counsellors to support students’ monitoring of progress toward goals.

**References:**

Bernhardt, V.L. (2003). *Using Data to Improve Student Achievement in Elementary Schools*. USA, New York: Eye on Education.

Ronka, D., Geier, R. & Marciniak, M. (2010). *A Practical Framework for Building a Data-Driven District or School: How a Focus on Data Quality, Capacity and Culture Supports Data-Driven Action to Improve Student Outcomes*. A PCG Education White Paper. Public Consulting Group.