

Four sources of data - evidence of need

Evidence of the need to improve can be collected from four sources and, whenever possible, it is good practice to strengthen the evidence base by using more than one source.

1. Student academic achievement
2. Stakeholder perceptions
3. Systems and procedures
4. Community demography

Student academic achievement data

There are three main categories of student academic assessment.

1. Assessment for learning or formative assessment

This is used by the teacher to determine what students already know and need to know for a particular unit of work or skill set. It is used before the intended learning begins and throughout the learning to guide which strategies and approaches should be used by the teacher and student at any given time. It can be in the form of quizzes, tasks, samples of work, interviews, and incidental questioning. Assessment for learning is often used by teachers to group students according to their ability or readiness to learn.

2. Assessment as learning

This is used by the student to learn about themselves as learners and become aware of how they learn. Learning how to learn is an essential requisite for self-directed independent learning. It involves the skills of self-assessment, setting goals, action planning, and recognising success. It can be guided by high-order thinking skills, checklists of learning strategies, peer and teacher feedback, and a learning environment where risk-taking is valued.

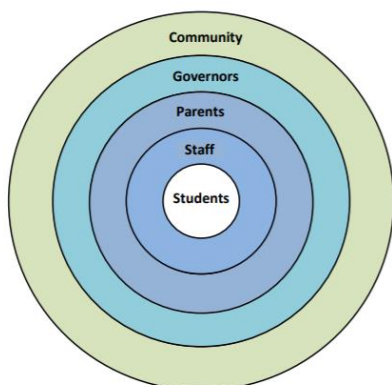
3. Assessment of learning or summative assessment

This is usually done at the end of a task or unit of work and is designed to provide evidence of achievement to the students, parents, and other educators. It can be in the form of student portfolios, teacher portfolios, student productions and presentations, and formal tests or examinations. It is often used to equip students for student-led reporting sessions to their families.

The assessment **of** learning or summative assessment results are the source of data that is mostly used to provide evidence for the need to improve learning and teaching. However, the assessment **for** learning results can also be very useful. National and international assessment platforms can also provide global data to indicate concerns that require intervention.

Stakeholder perceptions data

The stakeholders in education are depicted as follows.



N.B.: The 'Governors' category includes the school board or council, and any other higher-level bodies impacting the school, such as an accreditation body.

Because it is difficult to gain perception data from stakeholders outside the school community, the data is limited to that from students, staff and families. The data can be gathered using anonymous surveys, individual interviews, and small group discussions or debates. The use of several of these methods adds increased validity to the results.

For perception data to be valid, a significant proportion of the school's student, staff or parent population must be represented in the surveys,

interviews, discussions or debates. Small samples cannot be considered as being useful indicators of general opinion.

An example of a survey prompt for parents is: Teachers at our school motivate my child to want to learn. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (where 1 is 'I don't know', 2 is 'I strongly disagree', and 7 is 'I strongly agree')

Systems and procedures data

Systems that record useful data to identify improvement needs include the following.

- Staff and student **absence and lateness data**, including reasons for absences linked to workplace issues. This can indicate levels of commitment and morale, welfare and support needs and the relevance of approaches to learning and facilitation.
- Staff **performance management data** that indicate professional development needs, budget priorities, succession planning and team structures. Learning walks can also inform needs.
- Budget **expenditure data** can indicate priority asset replacement needs, equity of resource allocations, and where efficiencies in spending can be made.
- **Student behaviour records** can indicate welfare needs, the relevance of approaches to learning and facilitation, overcrowding issues, and student morale levels.
- **Accident and incident registers** can indicate unsafe facilities, unsafe practices, security issues, and 'hot spots' needing increased attention.
- Regular **audits** of the curriculum coverage, the condition and suitability of resources, building and playground hazards, and financial management can also indicate priority improvement needs.

The data from systems and procedures is a good prompt to seek or delve more deeply into other data sources to help verify an indicated concern or need.

Community demography data

Demography is the science of social statistics. It analyses the make-up of the population. A targeted study of the community's demographics can reveal the strengths and challenges of the community, including the school students and staff members. It can indicate what to consider when planning how to address the needs of the improvement project when developing the action plan.

Demography data includes such aspects as

- Staff qualifications and training
- Staff experience, expertise and talents
- Staff gender ratios
- Student projected enrolment trends
- Student ethnicity and language backgrounds
- Student special education needs, including disability, impairment, gifted and talented needs
- Student gender ratios
- The socio-economic status of families
- The distances students travel from home to school and access to transport
- The family compositions, such as single parent or extended family contexts
- The education attainment levels of parents
- Parent occupations
- The availability of parents to be involved in school programs
- The expertise and talents of parents and other community members
- The people and networks of influence within the community
- The provision of community resources, such as a library, museum, health & recreation facilities, and significant employers