



CLASSICAL

CHARTER SCHOOLS

VALUE OF TESTING AND USE OF DATA

Overview/Philosophy

The collection and evaluation of data are critical to the daily workings of SBCCS. Administrators as well as the academic staff consider data an essential part of planning and decision-making. The importance of data is showcased in our War Room, a faculty meeting space where spreadsheets, charts and graphs cover every wall. Data are collected from an array of resources, including criterion-referenced (State tests); norm-referenced (DIBELS and the TerraNova); and various proprietary assessments of student progress. All are used to inform curriculum development, classroom instruction and scholar support.

At SBCCS, a culture of data-based inquiry and reference means teachers and administrators communicate regularly and frequently about potential improvements in curriculum and instruction to better address scholars' needs. Various aspects of scholar development are regularly measured, from behavior to academics. And we strive to ensure that none of the data we collect is superfluous. Ultimately, we believe that more effective teaching and better learning are worth the time taken to collect data through testing and other means and the success of our re-teach and intervention programs supports this belief.

The following is a detailed explanation of the various types of data collected, methods of collection, analysis and application.

General Types of Data Collected

Academic data are collected via a variety of sources. As noted above, this includes practice and actual State testing, practice and actual; DIBELS, TerraNova assessments; interim progress assessments; and other running records. These evaluative and monitoring methods are crucial to ensure that no scholar "slips through the cracks" since they leads to awareness of an individual student's abilities or limitations and enable teachers to identify unmet, often unarticulated, needs. With this information, teachers are able to determine which skills scholars have mastered and which skills require further reinforcement. It allows them to make targeted decisions about which skills require re-teaching, who will receive academic intervention (individual(s) or an entire class), and changes or adjustments to the curriculum.

Behavioral data collection allows faculty and administration to detect scholar behavior trends (related to "impeccable character/good citizens" mission) and to deal with issues by leveraging SBCCS' Character Education curriculum and enforcing the six character pillars in that program.

Specific Testing Systems Utilized

New York State Tests: The annual NYS tests in ELA and Math are administered each April for grades 3 through 8. These required assessments give us the ability to compare our scholars' performance to that of others in the state, city and district. In addition, each grade is periodically given practice state tests from previous years the results of which teachers use to construct tutoring groups; create lessons in textual analysis (a topic geared towards improving ELA test performance); choose the most effective homework assignments; and find ways to target scholars' areas of struggle. Fourth and eighth grade scholars also take the State Science tests in June.

DIBELS: This is a norm-referenced assessment of reading -- considered to be the most important skill we teach. DIBELS is administered from kindergarten through second grade and taken at the beginning, middle and end of each school year (August, January and June, respectively). Data collected from DIBELS can be used to compare scholars' performance to that of others across the country. DIBELS also allows teachers to track scholar progress in reading throughout the year.

TerraNova: This is a norm-referenced assessment in the core subjects; it is taken in June by grades kindergarten through second. Scholars are tested on Language Arts (reading comprehension and grammar) and Math. Like DIBELS, TerraNova data can be compared to student performance data nationwide.

Interim and Unit Assessments: These tests, aligned with Common Core Learning Standards, are administered to all grades and created by our teachers to assess scholar performance throughout the year. Unit assessments are administered at the end of each lesson unit to evaluate how well scholars have understood and internalized the standards-based skills addressed during that unit. Interim assessments are cumulative exams in reading and math that take place three times a year and cover standards from multiple units taught throughout the year.

Running Records: Based on the belief that reading is the most valuable skill scholars learn, each is closely tracked as scholars progress through the Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading program. A Running Record is administered to each scholar seven times a year and his or her reading skills are assessed and recorded as above, on or below grade level. Scholars who are below grade level receive extra guided reading sessions. Those who are 3 or more levels below are placed in our At-Risk Program, an intensive reading program that has been shown to successfully bring students up to grade level.

Over time, data, particularly test results, can lose value and become stale. A test that is graded three weeks after being administered yields less actionable information than a test graded the same day. Therefore in order to maximize test relevance, SBCCS enforces a quick turnaround of data analysis and places responsibility with the Operations Team rather than the teaching staff. The Operations Team, responsible for grading and inputting data into custom trackers unique to the assessment, is able to complete grading in less than 24 hours, allowing teachers to take immediate action and also, of course, allows them to dedicate more time to teaching.

Application/End Use of Data

Teachers directly address issues emerging from data analysis by revising curriculum, re-teaching schedules and/or teaching methods. Curriculum is never considered permanently fixed, but rather the output of an

adaptive, deeply thought out process that evolves content and flow as indicated by student data assessment analysis. In addition, intervening measures are taken to ensure that scholars ultimately master any information that was not sufficiently understood or retained from the initial teaching unit exposure. This could be as simple as reminding individual scholars to avoid careless errors or as involved as re-teaching the concept to an entire class. Two examples of data-driven intervention programs that we have in place at SBCCS are Reteach and the At-Risk Program.

Reteach is a specified block in our schedule reserved for reviewing and reteaching unmastered standards. After analyzing an assessment, teachers determine which standards and scholars need to be retaught (sometimes this is an entire class or grade). Teachers then reteach and reassess scholars on the standard a second time, making sure that scholars master the standard. Reteach lessons can involve more practice, a different method of teaching, or reinforcing underlying base skills, depending on how scholars performed on the assessments. The importance of reteach lies in the cumulative nature of education. Without a strong foundation of tools and skills with which to tackle more complex challenges, scholars will find it increasingly difficult to master new material. Thus, reteach insures that scholars have mastered all information taught up to that point in the year, effectively equipping them for future learning.

The At-Risk Program is a clear example of the importance that we place on reading skills and effectively reacting to measurement data. Running records allow teachers to identify the reading level of every scholar and to provide extra additional guided instruction to those achieving below grade level. Given our commitment to achieving reading proficiency, our At-Risk Learning Specialist focuses fully on this program. Guided reading leads to skill improvement resulting in increased confidence and the desire to read independently.

As noted above, scholar assessment data also has a direct impact on curriculum, which is constantly being re-evaluated and revised to fit scholars' needs. Teachers may decide to incorporate different teaching strategies in a lesson plan, rearrange the order that skills are taught with a unit plan, or change the scope and sequence (sequence in which units are introduced throughout the year). Understanding which standards scholars had difficulty with allows teachers to place quizzes that assess scholar understanding of the unit (aka "exit slips") in the curriculum and optimize rigor levels.

Tracking scholar behavior allows faculty and administration to work on preventing trends in future behavioral infractions. One example of this is the use of data to maximize student attendance. Rather than wait until increasing tardies significantly inhibit learning, Deans, teachers and Operations team contact parents to remind them of the expectations for their children to arrive on time.

Conclusion

Some say placing a high emphasis on data and statistics turns a scholar into "just a number." However, at SBCCS, we have demonstrated that the appropriate collection and use of data reinforces treatment of each scholar as an individual with unique needs. SBCCS addresses each of those needs, providing each scholar with the specific attention he or she needs to excel, both academically and behaviorally.