CLASSICAL
CHARTER SCHOOLS

**VALUE OF TESTING AND USE OF DATA**

**Overview/Philosophy**

The collection and evaluation of data are critical to the daily workings and success of Classical Charter Schools (CCS). Our administrators and 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 our Executive Director captures key data points in the form of spreadsheets, charts and graphs that cover every wall. School Directors across our school sites have their own ways of capturing critical trends and facilitating team meetings with conversations centered around data. Data are collected from an array of resources including internally and externally created standards-based assessments, running records, attendance and homework completion. All are used to inform curriculum development, classroom instruction and scholar and staff support.

At CCS, a culture of data-based inquiry 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. We aim to make good use of all collected data points. 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.

**General Types of Data Collected**

Academic data are collected through a variety of sources, including practice and actual State testing, internal unit and interim assessments, and running records to assess reading growth. These evaluative and monitoring methods are crucial to ensure that no scholar "slips through the cracks" since they lead to awareness of an individual scholar's abilities or limitations and enable teachers to identify unmet and 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 what changes or adjustments need to be made to the curriculum.

Behavioral data collection captures information on scholar attendance and timeliness, number of reflections, dean interventions, and suspensions occurring across the schools. It allows faculty and administration to detect trends and deal with issues by leveraging Classical's Character Education curriculum, teach and model the six Character Pillars in that program (Citizenship, Caring, Fairness, Responsibility, Respect, Trustworthiness), and

work in partnership with families to support scholar learning and socioemotional development. Behavioral data collection also enables school staff to highlight and celebrate excellence across grades and school sites.

**Assessment Types Utilized**

New York State Tests: The annual NYS tests in ELA and Math are administered each Spring (April or May) 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 given an ELA and Math practice test in close proximity to the State Tests to allow for a 'dress rehearsal' of sorts. Teachers use the results of practice tests to construct tutoring groups, strategically prepare lessons in Textual Analysis (a subject geared toward improving scholars' abilities to analyze and think critically about texts), choose the most effective homework assignments, and find ways to target scholars' areas of struggle. Eighth grade scholars are assessed on the History and Science Regents and, beginning in 2023, fifth grade scholars will also take a Science State Test.

Interim and Unit Assessments: These tests, aligned with Common Core Learning Standards, are created by our teachers and/or curriculum team, and administered to all grades to assess scholar performance throughout the year. Unit assessments are administered at the end of each 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, replacing a unit test, and cover standards from multiple units taught throughout the year.

Running Records: Based on the belief that reading is the most valuable skill that children learn, reading levels are closely evaluated as scholars progress through the Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading program. Running Record assessments are administered to each scholar every six weeks to assess whether they are at, above, or below grade level expectations. If a scholar is below grade level expectations, they receive additional reading instruction and are tested for progress monitoring every three weeks. 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, to maximize test relevance, CCS enforces a quick turnaround of data analysis by placing deadlines on assessment grading for teachers. Interim assessments in grades 3 through 8 are graded and data is entered by the Operations Team and Instructional Coaches. This both supports teachers and facilitates alignment in grading across Network.

**Application/End Use of Data**

Our teachers directly address issues emerging from data analysis by modifying teaching methods and reteaching content and skills as needed, and by proposing revisions to the curriculum. 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 scholar 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. Some examples of data-driven intervention programs that we have in place at CCS include Reteach, Small Group Intervention, and the At-Risk Literacy Program.

Reteach is a specified block in our schedule reserved for reviewing and reteaching unmastered standards in Math. 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 ensures that scholars have mastered all information taught up to that point in the year, effectively equipping them for future learning.

Small Group Intervention is provided to scholars that are currently below grade level or demonstrating deficits in current performance expectations in Math or ELA. Intervention is planned and executed by teachers and is tailored to meet the needs of individuals within a small group of ideally no more than six scholars.

The At-Risk Literacy 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 independent reading level and specific strengths and deficits of every scholar in regard to reading accuracy and comprehension skills. Given our commitment to achieving reading proficiency, our At-Risk Learning Specialist (ARLS) focuses fully on this program, providing targeted instruction to scholars reading below their current grade level expectation. The ARLS plans and executes Guided Reading lessons that directly address deficits identified through the scholars' Running Records analysis. 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 through Classical's curricular audit process. Understanding which standards scholars had difficulty with allows teachers and Instructional Coaches to make more intentional and strategic decisions about changes to the curriculum. For example, adjusting overall lesson structure, rearranging the order that skills are taught within a unit, or changing the scope and sequence for a given subject (sequence in which units are introduced throughout the year). This also informs where to place quizzes or 'exit slips' mid-unit to ensure scholars are set up for success as they build upon standards and skills learned.

Tracking scholar behavior allows faculty and administration to work on preventing trends in future behavioral infractions and to ensure scholars and families receive supports they may need. 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 the Operations team contact families to remind them of the expectations for their children to arrive on time.

**Conclusion**

At Classical Charter Schools, we have demonstrated that the appropriate collection and use of data reinforces treatment of each scholar as an individual with unique needs. Our emphasis on data creates space for teachers to closely analyze scholar performance and use that analysis to address their needs, providing each scholar the specific attention they need to excel, both academically and behaviorally. Data collection does not render our scholars “just a number”; it is a critical practice that allows us to learn more about the children we serve and how to tailor our curriculum and instruction to help them reach their full potential.