Section A:
Using Data to Assess School Climate

Without data, you're just another person with an opinion. Without improvement, you're just a person playing with numbers. (source unknown)

Section Contents

Introduction:
Using Data to Assess School Climate

This section provides information about using data throughout the school to bring about significant change. Several tools at the end of this section can help building leaders and staff use data more effectively, whether a school is just starting out or has been using data for some time.

The table below forecasts the focus areas in this section, and offers some practical tips for building leaders to implement in their schools.

Focus Areas	Role of the Building Leader(s)
Purposes of Data	• **Have a vision of what can be improved and support staff in sharing data about areas that need improvement.** • Establish systems for using data to make effective decisions. • Support staff in using data to focus their instruction. • Establish an expectation that data-based decisions will be the norm.
Uses of Data	• **Model the use of data by talking about how data is used in your own decision-making.** • Assess the amount and kind of data available about groups of students as well as about individual students. • Identify other sources that can be helpful in the areas chosen for focus. • Establish processes to collect data beyond standardized testing. • Ask hard questions in non-threatening and supportive ways to get staff to think about how they currently use data and how to move toward data-based decision-making.
Data Systems	• **Create a data calendar that brings together the processes that data impacts**: e.g., testing, decision-making for budgeting, and planning for staff development. • Establish a system for collecting, using, and storing data. • Assure confidentiality of information when using data to make decisions.

Focus Area: Purposes of Data

"I get so many reports from the district, and we spend so much time on testing our students. I know how to use the information to address instructional issues, but our climate needs help. How can I use data to make life better around here?"

Assessment is a vital first step in making improvements in school climate; using data to guide actions provides the foundation for effective change. There are generally three reasons to collect data in a school:

1. For continuous improvement
2. To drive decision-making
3. To improve instruction

Continuous Improvement

Regardless of the type of data, engaging in continuous improvement requires that the building leaders work from an approach that includes:

- Collecting a variety of types of data to understand your current performance
- Analyzing that data by examining subgroups, looking at past performance, and identifying areas of focus for your next intervention
- Using that data in effective decision-making practices to identify strategies for interventions
- Tracking performance over time to determine the effectiveness of the strategies

Data-Based Decision-making

Data-based decision-making means using data to determine which strategy will be most effective. A list of essential data questions at the end of this section can guide building leaders and staff in data review (see page 28). Those questions fall into three categories:

1. **Patterns**
   - What are the patterns in the data?
   - Are there groups of students who are consistently scoring higher?
   - Is there a time of the year when scores increase?
   - What are the patterns among groups of students when data is disaggregated?
   - What trends are forming?

2. **Consistency**
   - Do the various sources of data paint similar pictures? If not, why?
   - Is performance across the school consistent, or do scores stand out for particular groups of students?
   - Are there obvious gaps in performance between groups of students? If so, what are the specific areas in which gaps exist?

3. **Direction**
   - Do the data indicate what strategies or specific interventions could be taken?
   - Are there subtests that would suggest specific improvements in an area?
   - Are there teachers whose test results suggest that they would be good mentors or peer coaches?
   - What might the data tell us about the need for professional development?

Instructional Focus

Each piece of data indicates the degree to which the school supports the instructional program. Students have more time and energy to focus on learning when:
- They feel valued and respected, regardless of their culture, race or background.
- Their personal interactions with each other and with adults in the building reinforce positive self-worth and efficacy.
- Organizational structures are focused on supporting the instructional program.
- They are safe and healthy.

Yes, data are used in the school for continuous improvement. Yes, data feed into and enrich the decision-making processes in the school. But, the most important perspective for building leaders to maintain as they collect, analyze, and use data is to keep the focus on increasing student achievement.

Focus Area: Use of Data

"I know I need to have data to make good decisions in my building. I have data about instruction, but I need help to know how best to collect and use data specifically about climate issues."

Using data to establish a positive school climate goes beyond the analysis of academic assessments. It is important to consider what other data to collect and how to use it. This subtopic examines:

- Individual and group data
- Sources of data
- Building-wide data systems

Individual and Group Data

Data present many perspectives:

- The "balcony" view of the entire school
- An analysis of student performance in a specific area
- A focused look at a single grade or classroom
- An individual student's performance in a particular skill on a given assessment

This telescoping effect is useful in thinking about the needs of a whole school as well as those of individuals. Group data can show overall trends and the emergence of patterns. It can show how the whole school—group or class—is performing and how the aggregate picture is changing. Group data can point to the effectiveness of systems and can help measure progress. Data about individuals is also a critical indicator.

Group Data	Individual Data
Benefits • Sees the whole school • Sees patterns in the whole – disproportionality, overall growth, etc. • Allows comparison with other groups of similar composition • Reflects the overall work and initiatives **Limitations** • May mask patterns before they emerge and limit interventions • May hide the fact that one group or individual is not performing well • Prevents view of shifts in the performance of groups or individuals that are not large enough to influence the whole	**Benefits** • Allows tracking of particular skills and performance of students who are struggling or may be excelling • Allows leaders and staff to pinpoint – down to the basic skill/competency –a student's strengths and learning needs **Limitations** • Often cannot be generalized, so it does not improve building-wide perspective • May be misleading if it falls far outside the median range

It is important to use both individual and group data to inform decision-making. This is true whether using quantitative data, such as standardized tests and surveys, or using qualitative data, such as focus groups and observation. The two types of data give radically different perspectives.

Sources of Data
Quantitative data, usually thought of as **traditional or "hard" data**, provides numbers to describe indicators or outcomes like test scores, suspension rates, etc. **Qualitative data** provides **impressions** that may offer a richer perspective when used in combination with the quantitative pieces. Both provide useful information, but neither alone can give a complete picture.

When asking people to participate in data-gathering events / opportunities, it is critical to follow up with information about what was found and how it will be used.

Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
Standardized tests and assessments Classroom tests and assignments Surveys • building-wide • parent/caregiver • staff /students Documentation • office referrals (frequency, disruption, and location) • suspensions (frequency, disruption, and location) • attendance (days of week, excuses) • tardiness (days of week, excuses) • other classroom performance • tracking visitors / volunteers • phone calls (from whom, purpose, frequency)	Focus groups (*see the tools at the end of this section for suggestions on conducting focus groups*) • parent/caregiver • staff • students Interviews • parent/caregiver • staff • students Observation • classroom • non-instructional settings

Another important distinction is about the timing of data collection.

Formative Data	Summative Data
• Collected at key points during the intervention • Indicate rate of progress toward goal • Provide short feedback loop to allow for mid-course changes in strategy	• Collected at the end of the intervention • Indicate overall progress toward the goal • Provide longer feedback loop to assess overall effectiveness of the intervention

Focus Area: Building a System for Data

"I collect and use data in my building, but I feel I am swimming in paper. There is so much data, I don't think I am getting the best use out of it, and I am not sure how the staff in my building are using it."

With so many sources of data and with the use of computers and other technologies to collect data, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the volume of information. To ensure that staff make the best use of the information that data offer, a building-wide data system should be in place. **The following are important points to remember when establishing a data system**:

Clarify Expectations	Make the use of data a building-wide expectation and model for staff.
Address "Whole" Child	Collect data about all pertinent aspects of a student's life.
Establish Procedures	Ensure that school staff collect and use data in consistent and coherent ways. Develop procedures that help them: • Collect specific kinds of data. • Use both group and individual data. • Analyze data carefully and fully. • Look at disaggregated data to see patterns and gaps. • Use data in their decision-making.
Provide Data to Committees	Refer to Section H to learn about organizational design.
Establish Common Access	Establish procedures for checking out data reports and for returning them to their appropriate places.
Develop Data Calendar	Publish the dates when standard data are to be collected (assessment dates, school-wide survey dates, etc.). Add to it the follow-up steps of analysis and inclusion in decision-making.
Clarify Roles	Clarify individual responsibilities and publish them with the data calendar.
Assure Confidentiality	Remember that school data often includes information about people's lives.
Avoid "Red Queen Syndrome"	In *Alice in Wonderland*, the Red Queen periodically swept through the story, screaming, "Off with their heads!" Remember that data is just information. When information raises red flags, avoid jumping to conclusions and making hasty decisions.

Section I: Tool Guide

Tool: Assessing Data Use

This survey can be completed by all staff or by a particular group. It provides a snapshot of how school staff uses data to drive instruction and to select strategies to address behavior and attendance. Use this in teams or small groups, discuss the questions and ask each person to participate with his or her own perceptions and experience. Use the outcomes to identify needed supports to maintain a focus on data in the building.

1. What data do you examine on a regular basis?

2. How do you use data to inform your teaching? (Please be as specific as possible.)

3. Fill out the table below, using the following scale:
   5 = Always   2 = Seldom
   4 = Frequently   1 = Never
   3 = Occasionally

Area of Focus	Rating
I/we use data from the Minnesota Department of Education.	
I/we use data from Discovery.	
I/we use data from the OCR website.	
I/we use data from REA.	
I/we use formative assessments.	
I/we use a computer-based grading program.	
Our school has developed sustainable systems for disseminating, reviewing, and analyzing data.	

4. How do you currently use data from these data sources? Check all that apply and give examples for each.

   _____ To drive my instructional practice

   _____ To adapt department or small learning community curriculum and instruction

   _____ To identify trends by testing strands

   _____ To identify issues of disproportionality (*e.g. suspensions, attendance, and test results)*

_____To monitor individual student progress

_____To monitor student group progress

_____To assess individual student academic strengths and weaknesses

_____To assess student group academic strengths and weaknesses

_____To track student behavior (*suspensions, out of class referrals, etc.)*

_____To track student attendance and number of times tardy

5. What data do you use to understand whether or not students are engaged in your classroom?

6. How do you solicit feedback from students about their experiences in this school and in individual programs or classrooms?

7. How do you solicit feedback from parents and caregivers about their experiences in school and with individual teachers and staff?

8. How do you use data to talk with students and their families about student progress?

9. How often do teams, departments, SLCs, etc., meet to analyze data and to plan for modifications based on the data analysis?

10. What other ways could you, your team, or your school use data more effectively?

Discussion Questions
1. Do you/your team/department have a structure and process for measuring student success based on a range of indicators, including academic, behavior, and attendance? What does that structure look like? How do you use this information in your practice?

2. In your classroom, how do you know when your students are learning? What data do you use to assess their learning?

3. How often do you talk with groups of students about how they are doing academically? Behaviorally? How do you share this information with students? How do you measure improvement?

4. How do you hear from students about what they are learning in the classroom? How do you collect this feedback? How do you use it?

5. How often do you meet with other teachers about professional issues? What do you discuss? What data do you bring to these discussions?

Tool: Data that Guide School Teams and Committees

This table provides a listing of possible committees that may be at work in a school. (See also Operational Systems in Section H.) The data listed could help guide their decisions.

If your primary responsibility is….	….then these data could inform your decisions.
Administration	• Demographics • Behavior referrals • Suspensions • Staff and student surveys • Academic achievement
Curriculum and Instruction Committee	• Test scores by strand • CBM scores
Academic Support Staff	• Test scores • CBM scores
AYP / SIP Team Member	*MCA test scores*
Behavior Committee Member	*Behavior referrals and suspensions*
Behavior Support Staff	*Behavior referrals*
Climate Committee	• Behavior referrals • Suspensions • Staff and student surveys
Family Involvement Committee	*Family surveys*
Problem Solving Team Member	• Worksheet 1 for completion • Worksheet 2
Student Support Staff	• SEPP • ESY
Teaching Staff	• Test scores (group and individual data) • CBM scores (group and individual data) • Suspensions • Referrals • Attendance

Tool: Administrative Data Protocol

This table provides examples of data sets that help teams and committees identify data sources, who is responsible for evaluating the data, where to obtain data, how to disaggregate data, what questions to ask, how often to review the data, and who else should receive the information.

Data Type	Source	Disaggregate by	Essential Questions	When	Report to
Attendance	Discovery	• Grade level and classroom • Ethnicity/ELL/status in database • A, B, C, D percentage of students each category • Excused/unexcused absences	✓ Identify noticeable patterns in the data. ✓ What differences do you see among student groups? ✓ Are A and B categories getting larger while C and D categories get smaller? Name interventions that work.	1st week of each month	
Demographics	SIR/OCR	• Numbers at each grade by race/ethnicity/special education/gender • Race/Ethnicity of whole school • Mobility rates • Free/Reduced Lunch • ELL numbers • Homeless/Highly Mobile	✓ What is the composition of student and staff? What are implications for academic achievement and climate? ✓ How do we look in comparison to the district and state? ✓ What is the mobility rate? What implications may occur and how will we address these? ✓ How does the demographic data relate to all other data sets?	Late September	Whole school
Test Scores • NALT • MCA • BST • TEAE	OCR/MDE	• Strand score data at each grade level • Growth at each grade level • Ethnic groups • Comparison to district and state • Number of students at each proficiency level at each grade • AYP status	✓ What are the trends by grade level? How will we address them? ✓ What are the trends by strands? How will we address them? ✓ What populations need extra support? ✓ What specific strategies should be used to bring the school to safe harbor or above? ✓ What should be the staff development focus?	Late September (changes in population from Spring) As test results arrive	Work with resource team (primary holder of test information), curriculum and instruction, academic teams, and grade levels
Referrals	OCR Discovery	• Grade level and team • Individual teacher • Location • Day of week and time of day • Reason for referral • Grade, ethnicity, ELL and special ed status • Individual students	✓ What teams, grade levels or individual teachers would benefit from intervention? ✓ Do students or teachers with high referral rates receive extra support? ✓ Is the referral rate different/proportional for certain ethnic groups? ✓ Does the current system support student/cultural needs? What changes will need for this to occur? ✓ Are there individual students that have disabilities that need to be addressed? Are these students discrepant from their peers?	2nd week of each month	Individual and group data academic teams, positive school climate committee, and behavior support team Individual student data with student support, individual teachers, and problem solving

Data Type	Source	Disaggregate by	Essential Questions	When	Report to
Suspensions	OCR	• Grade • Reason – mandatory vs. non-mandatory • Location/Teacher • Individual students • Ethnicity/ELL/special ed status • ATOD suspensions	✓ Are students receiving suspensions for non-mandatory offenses (per CWDP)? What percentage of suspensions are non-mandatory? ✓ Are suspension rates proportional between all ethnicities, ELL and special ed? ✓ Compare this year's rate to last year's. Compare by month. What trends do you notice? How do you account for this? ✓ Have parents of student with 10 or more suspensions been contacted regarding a mental health screening? ✓ What plans do you follow for intake? ✓ Is an FBA written for special ed students approaching 10 days of suspension? ✓ Of the students with 2 or more suspensions, are there behavior related adaptations regarding CWDP?	3rd week of each month	Individual and group data with positive school climate committee Individual data with student support and individual teachers
WS #1 & 2	OCR	• Completion rate for students performing under 25th%ile • Completion rate for students scoring over 36 on behavior screener • Evidence of goals written and tracked	✓ Are worksheets filled out on a timely basis? ✓ Are goals written in measurable form? ✓ Is there evidence of follow through on worksheet interventions?	October, February and May	
Staff and Student Survey	SIR District	• Patterns and differences between ethnic groups, male & female students and teachers perceptions vs. student perceptions • Areas of concern	✓ Are there specific areas of concern that need to be addressed? How would they best be addressed? Who or what committee should address these concerns?	As survey results arrive, review in fall	Positive school climate committee, family involvement staff
CBM	Sullivan	• Growth by grade level • Growth by classroom	✓ Is there growth at each grade level? Are additional interventions needed for any grade?	3 times year	
Other: • Extended School Year • Special Ed Placement Policy • Admin Transfers	District Reports		✓ Is due process followed to the letter? ✓ Has the student retained information over breaks? ✓ (Admin Transfers) Could this student benefit from special ed? ✓ What patterns are occurring in Administrative Transfers? Are there interventions/preventive strategies that could be employed?	As needed for summer school placement	District as needed

Tool: Positive School Climate/Behavior Committee Data Protocol

This table provides examples of data sets that help teams and committees identify data sources, who is responsible for evaluating the data, where to obtain data, how to disaggregate data, what questions to ask, how often to review the data, and who else should receive the information.

Data Type	Source	Disaggregate by	Essential Questions	When	Report to
Referrals	OCR Discovery	• Grade level and team • Location • Day of week and time of day • Reason for referral • Grade, ethnicity, ELL and special ed status • Individual students	✓ Which teams, grade levels would benefit from staff development, mentoring, or intervention help? ✓ What specific interventions do students with high referral rates receive? ✓ What new students can be identified as needing extra support? What strategies will you begin for these students? ✓ Is the referral rate different/proportional for certain ethnic groups? ✓ What days, times or locations that would benefit from increased coverage or additional preventive measures?	Every 3rd meeting	Administration Staff Academic Teams Resource
Suspensions	OCR	• Grade • Reason – mandatory vs. non-mandatory • Individual students • Ethnicity/ELL/special ed status	✓ Are students receiving suspensions for non-mandatory offenses? What are some ways to address this? ✓ Are suspension rates proportional between all ethnicities, ELL and special ed status? ✓ Are we doing enough preventive measures? Where could we do more?	Every 3rd meeting	Administration Staff Academic Teams Resource
Staff and Student Survey	SIR District	• Patterns and differences between ethnic groups, male & female students and teachers perceptions vs. student perceptions • Areas of concern	✓ What specific areas of concern need to be addressed? How would they best be addressed? Who or what committee should address these concerns?	Late fall, as survey results arrive	

Tool: Academic Teams Data Protocol

This table provides examples of data sets that help teams and committees identify data sources, who is responsible for evaluating the data, where to obtain data, how to disaggregate data, what questions to ask, how often to review the data, and who else should receive the information.

Data Type	Source	Disaggregate by	Essential Questions	When	Report to
Test Scores • NALT • MCA • BST • TEAE	OCR/MDE	• Strands score data at each grade level • Growth at each grade level • Ethnic groups • Comparison to district and state • Number of students at each proficiency level at each grade • AYP status	✓ What are the trends by grade level? How will we address these trends? ✓ What are the trends by strands? How will we address these trends? ✓ What populations need extra support? What specific types of support should we provide? How will we monitor success?	Late September (changes in population from Spring) As test results arrive	
Referrals	OCR Discovery	• Grade level and team • Individual Teacher • Location • Day of week and time of day • Reason for referral • Grade, ethnicity, ELL and special ed status • Individual students	✓ Are there teams, grade levels or individual teachers that would benefit from staff development, mentoring, and/or intervention help? ✓ Are students with high referral rates receiving extra support? What type of support? Who is giving this support? How is it being monitored for success? ✓ Is the referral rate different/proportional for certain ethnic groups? ✓ Are there days, times or locations that would benefit from increased coverage or additional preventive measures?	1st week of each month	
WS #1 & 2	OCR	• Completion rate for students performing under 25 %ile • Completion rate for students scoring over 36 on behavior screener • Evidence of goals written and tracked	✓ Are worksheets being filled out on a timely basis? ✓ Are goals written in measurable form? ✓ Is there evidence of follow through on worksheet interventions?	October, February and May	Problem Solving (When WS 1 interventions have not worked) Resource staff working with student
CBM	Sullivan	• Growth by grade level	✓ Is there adequate growth at each grade level? Are additional interventions needed for any grade?	3 times year	

Tool: Problem Solving Team Protocol

The school's problem solving team uses data to identify students who need additional academics and/or behavior support. This data matrix outlines the sources of data that the team uses, shows how to disaggregate the data sources, and asks essential questions that should be addressed at a meeting to support the student.

Data Type	Source	Disaggregate by	Essential Questions	When	Report to

Test Scores
   NALT
   MCA
   BST
   TEAE
	OCR/MDE	Individual students moving to WS #2 or 3	• What interventions should be implemented and measured?
			 • Who will measure the progress?
			 • When will we meet on this student next?
				During meetings about students	Staff working with each student

Referrals	OCR Discovery	Individual students moving to WS #2 or 3	• What interventions should be implemented and measured? • Who will measure the progress? • When will we meet on this student next?	During meetings about students	Staff working with each student
Suspensions	OCR	Individual students moving to WS #2 or 3	• What interventions should be implemented and measured? • Who will measure the progress? • When will we meet on this student next?	During meetings about students	Staff working with each student
WS #1 & 2	OCR	*On Worksheet 1:* • Completion rate for students performing under 25th percentile • Completion rate for students scoring over 36 on behavior screener *Worksheet 1 and 2:* • Evidence of goals written and tracked	• Are worksheets being filled out on-line on a timely basis? • Are goals written in measurable form? • Is there evidence of follow through on worksheet interventions? • Is problem solving data being reported to the district on a timely basis? Who is responsible for this activity?	Fall	Individual teachers needing to fill out worksheets

Tool: Holding a Focus Group

This resource provides a step-by-step guide for planning and conducting focus groups. Share with staff who collect data from parents/caregivers, students, and other groups to improve climate.

Conducting a focus group is one strategy for obtaining qualitative data. Through the use of open-ended questions, focus groups can provide:

- Qualitative, in-depth information to assess and evaluate services and strategies and test new ideas
- A more personalized, direct, and interactive method of gathering information, opinions, perspective, feelings and ideas from students, parents, staff or other stakeholders
- An opportunity to meet with people who are part of a similar group, or a group specifically designed to represent different perspectives

Information from focus groups should be used in conjunction with other qualitative and quantitative data, such as surveys, observations, and individual interviews to get a complete picture of a specific issue or concern. If possible, use multiple focus groups to gather information to assist with planning.

Focus groups should *not* be used to:

- Confirm a preconceived hypothesis
- Reach consensus, provide recommendations, or decide among alternatives

Preparing for a Focus Group

Focus Group Goals

- Identify one or two major objectives of the focus group.
- Determine what information is wanted.
- Carefully develop five to six questions (examples provided on the following pages).
- Plan the meeting agenda (instructions follow).

Facilitator Selection

- Ideally, this person should be skilled in facilitation techniques.
- The facilitator should be free of any vested interest in the topic being discussed. If this isn't the case, participants may not be as candid in their responses.
- The facilitator should not be someone who is an "expert" on the topic being discussed as that may result in the facilitator instructing the participants what to think about the topic.
- If conducting a focus group of non-English speaking participants, make sure the facilitator can speak the participants' native language.

<u>Participant Selection and Invitations</u>
- Identify the type(s) of people who can give the information needed (parents, teachers, families of color, female students, etc.).
- The ideal size of a group is eight to ten participants, but usually it is a good idea to have 10–12 signed up in case of cancellations/no-shows.
- Contact potential attendees via telephone, mail or email to invite them to participate. Be clear about the purpose of the focus group.
- Send participants a follow-up invitation at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. The invitation should include a proposed agenda, session time and list of questions the group will discuss. Indicate that you will share a written report of the meeting with them following the session(s).
- Offer transportation and child care if needed.
- Call each participant two or three days in advance of the meeting as a reminder.

<u>Questions</u>
- Develop questions. Focus groups should last no longer than one and a half hours; five to six questions are the most that can be asked in this amount of time.
- Start by explaining what problem or need will be addressed by the answers given to a particular question.

Plan the Focus Group
- *Scheduling*: Meetings should be no longer than one and a half hours. Find a time that is most convenient for the attendees (e.g., evenings for working parents, during lunch for students).
- *Location*: Hold meeting in a room that can accommodate a circle of chairs or a seating configuration that allows all participants to see each other. Provide nametags and beverages.
- *Ground Rules*: Ask participants to 1) stay focused on the question being asked; 2) offer comments but let other participants speak equally; 3) get closure on questions.
- *Agenda*: Include a welcome, review of agenda, review of goal(s) of the meeting, review of ground rules, introductions, questions and answers, wrap-up.
- *Membership*: Focus groups usually consist of eight to ten members from a similar group. Select members who do not know each other for best results.
- *Record-keeping*: Record the session with a tape or video recorder, or ask a co-facilitator to take notes. Do not rely on memory.

Facilitate the Focus Group
- Check the tape or video recorder to make certain it is working.
- The facilitator's role is to encourage the group members to provide useful answers to the questions that have been developed.
- Inform participants prior to beginning that they can opt out if they are uncomfortable.
- Begin the session by introducing yourself and any co-facilitator(s).
- Explain the agenda and how the focus group will be recorded.
- Follow the agenda closely, using the exact wording of the questions. Group members can be given a few moments to write answers, then discuss, or facilitator can move immediately to discussion.

- After answers are obtained, summarize what has been heard before moving to the next question.
- Ensure equal participation. If someone is dominating the meeting, call on others. Consider using a roundtable approach, giving each person a minute to answer the question at hand.
- At the end of the focus group thank participants for coming and remind them that they will receive a copy of the report from the meeting. Adjourn the meeting on time.

Immediately After the Focus Group
- Review notes and clarify and/or fill them out as fully as possible.
- Write down any further observations such as the level of participation, if there were surprises, or if anything unusual happened.
- Contact participants; thank them for their time and explain how information will be used.

How to Process Focus Group Information
- Review notes by recorder(s) and summarize for distribution to team members within one to two weeks following the meeting. A quick turnaround in transcribing notes is especially important if more focus groups will be held. This allows any kinks or issues to be resolved before the subsequent focus groups are held.
- Discuss findings and interpretations. Disagreements should be discussed while the meeting is still fresh in everyone's mind.
- Make decisions about process and timelines for using findings based on previously identified purpose and goals (for example, now that we have heard from parents regarding our school's environment, we will, by the first of next month, have a "welcome to our school" sign placed on the front desk, train all staff on how to improve their communication with parents, etc.).

Source: "Focus Groups: An Effective Marketing Research Tool for Social Service Agencies," Lead author: Susan Webster, 1992 and "Basics of conducting focus groups," Carter McNamara Ph.D, Library Catalog, Authenticity Consulting Home Page/MAP Home Page.

Tool: Focus Group Questions About School Climate

Parents

Impressions
- How do you feel when you come to this school?
- What has been your experience when interacting with teachers? Administrators?

Expectations & Support
- How well is this school doing in meeting the academic needs of your child?
- How is your child helped at school when there are problems?

Communication
- How does the school tell you about how your child is doing at school?
- Do you feel like you get enough information about your child? After-school programs?
- What is the best way for you to get information (written, email, phone call)?

Family Involvement
- What do you do to support your child's education?
- What community resources in your school do you find useful (recreation, tutoring, etc.)?

Safety & Security
- Do you have safety concerns with school? If yes, where? (bus/bus stop, classroom, etc.)

Students

- How do you feel when you come to this school?
- If you don't know what to do in the classroom, whom do you ask?
- Do you feel safe on the bus ride/walk to this school?
- What would you like to change about this school?
- How is your family involved with this school? In your education?

Staff

- How do you feel about safety in this school?
- How are people of various cultures/races treated at this school?
- What are the strengths of this school?
- How can you see yourself contributing to the success of this school?
- Do you see staff working effectively with ELL students, special ed students, low-income students, and students of color?

Source: Portions from "Basics of Conducting Focus Groups," by Carter McNamara, PhD, and "Focus groups: An effective marketing research tool for social service agencies, Susan Webster, 1992).

Tool: Sample Activity to Get Group Input

Use this activity to gather qualitative data in a group setting. This informal activity can be informative and fun, and can be used with students, staff, parents, and the community.

Green Response/Red Response

Pose a question to the group.
> Example: When you think about academics at your school, what strategies do you think are working for your students and which strategies don't seem to be working as well?
> What are the advantages and disadvantages of your behavior program?

Hand out six cards, a green and a red pen to each person.

Work independently:
> Write three positives (green) and three negatives (red) that answer the question, with only one idea per card. Be as detailed as possible.

Work in pairs:
> Discuss your ideas with one other person. Add details to each card as necessary.

Collect all cards and shuffle.

Divide the group into subgroups, five to seven people in each subgroup. Hand out an equal number of green and red response cards to each group. Have the group sort the cards into categories, clusters or themes to make sense of all the ideas. Once the cards are sorted, the group labels the clusters. Make a presentation of ideas generated— one in red (for areas of needed growth) and one in green (for areas that are working and need to be sustained).

Develop an action plan to address the clusters or themes.

Identify needs and implications.

Tool: Essential Questions for Data Use

Below are essential questions to stimulate discussions among staff as they look at data.

Patterns
- Are referral rates/suspensions, etc., different for different groups of students?
- Are there days, times, or locations that would benefit from increased coverage or additional preventive measures?
- Are there specific areas of concern in the data that need to be addressed? How would they best be addressed? Who needs to be involved?
- What preventive measures are we taking and what might we do to intervene more quickly?
- What are the patterns in the disaggregated data?
- Over time, what is happening to the gap in achievement among groups of students?
- What is the composition of our student and staff populations? How do they relate to each other?

Consistency
- Are staff following the processes reflected in the data?
- Are students receiving suspensions for non-mandatory offenses?
- What other possible strategies can be used to address behavior issues?
- What are trends by grade level?
- Are staff throughout the building using data consistently?
- Are staff throughout the building implementing the interventions consistently?

Direction
- Which teams, grade levels, or individual teachers would benefit from staff development, mentoring, and/or intervention help?
- Are students with high referral rates receiving extra support? What does this look like? Is there evidence that extra support is changing behavior?
- What can we see in the data that helps us pinpoint specific strategies for intervention and/or support?
- What do we know about students who are new to the school, and what kinds of support are we offering them?
- What are the specific areas of concern and to whom can we refer for help and support in those areas?

Tool: Links to Data and Resources

Links to Essential Data Questions and Resources
This useful list of websites provides resources to support schools in building a data system. Visit them often to gather strategies, sources, and information.

State-wide School Data
http://www.incschools.com/mpls/

Office of Civil Rights
http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/Office_of_Civil_Rights_Voluntary_Compliance_Agreement.html

Discovery
http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/discoveryClassroomPlus.html

Research, Evaluation & Assessment
http://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/

School Information Reports
http://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/School_Information_Reports.html

University of Oregon, Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS)
www.pbis.org

State of Minnesota
www.education.state.mn.us

California State University, Chico
http://eff.csuchico.edu/home/