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3 Tips for Equitable Use of Classroom Data

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3 Tips for Equitable Use of Classroom Data

By Jori Beck and Heather Whitesides

CULTURE & DIVERSITY



For most new teachers—and even veteran teachers!—data can be a four-letter word. That’s understandable. Education-based data collection practices, evaluation, and influences are often lumped together, misunderstood, and carry a negative connotation. New teachers may even have negative perceptions of testing based on their own experiences as students (Beghetto, 2005).

We want to validate educators by acknowledging the interrelatedness of data and their instruction, and convey that data are more than just standardized test scores. It is equally important to identify the students who also feel the influence of data-driven change—especially those who are chronically marginalized and underrepresented.

Data can be a “flashlight” instead of a “hammer” (Data Quality Campaign, 2017), and the data that you collect in your own classroom can be valid and relevant to your students and their instruction. We recommend three strategies for ensuring the use of culturally sustaining data collection practices in your own classroom.

1. Get to know your students.

How will you get to know your students at the beginning of the year? Check out our

resource sidebar for some activities to help you learn about the assets of your students and their families. Make sure you participate in these activities alongside your students! You can also ask parents and guardians to submit a notecard or send home a brief survey regarding what they want you to know about their child.

2. Use surveys regularly.

Surveys are an underutilized method of data collection that really deserve more attention. Schulz, Sud, and Crowe (2014) recommended using them to incorporate student voice—and your students will appreciate you soliciting their input and using it. Be sure to include both forced-response and open-ended items to let students really share their thoughts. This will facilitate further relationship building with your students and provide them with a sense of ownership in the classroom. It may even motivate them to complete work since they know that you are listening to them!

Google Forms and Polleverywhere.com are great resources for surveying your students.


3. Collaborate!

We mean this on a broader scale than just working with the teacher next door or your mentor. Some teams of teachers are already doing this by meeting regularly to evaluate test or quiz items for any potential bias based on race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or language background (Popham, 2014). Popham has identified various types of bias in assessments, including offensiveness or negatively stereotyping particular subgroups. Offensiveness occurs when women are portrayed only in positions that are less prestigious than men (such as administrative assistants).

Another type of bias is *unfair penalization*, or a student missing an answer due to content tied to gender, race, religion, and so on. This could happen, for example, if a question focuses on a pastime like skiing or international travel that may only be available to folks from a more affluent socioeconomic background.

The final type of bias that Popham described is *disparate impact*, or unfair, negative fallout on a particular subgroup. For example, if Latinx students underperform on a test compared to their White counterparts, it could be a result of disparate impact due to a lack of cultural context or experience with the wording or subject matter.

Utilizing a diverse team of reviewers to evaluate each assessment item can help to prevent the intrusion of bias. Additionally, parents and guardians might be happy to serve as “reviewers” for formative or summative assessment items, and this is a great way to develop relationships with them as well. Paris and Alim (2014) also recommend incorporating youth culture into curricula. Thus, former students may also be willing to serve as reviewers in this way, and we are sure they will have plenty of feedback for you!

Although you can’t employ such extensive collaboration for every quiz or test, getting into the routine of sending out assessment items for review can also help you learn about potential bias that might be lurking and how to be more vigilant not only in your everyday assessment practices, but also in your instruction. Don’t be afraid to have students set their own goals and reflect on these often using their data as well. They will soon learn the power of data for themselves! 

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FIRST-DAY-OF-SCHOOL SURVEYS

First-Day-of-School Surveys: Getting to Know Your Students Starts With Right Questions

moroccoenglish.com/first-day-questions

First-Day-of-School Surveys: Get to Know Students

bit.ly/FirstDaySurveys

Answers to “What do you do on the first day of school?”

bit.ly/WhatFirstDay

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTIVITIES FOR DIVERSE GROUPS OF STUDENTS

Back to School: Icebreakers for Diverse Groups of Students

bit.ly/DiverseClassroom

Me and We: We Are All Similar and Different

bit.ly/WeAreAllSimilar

Exchanging Stories—Names

edchange.org/multicultural/activities/name.html

Teacher Center: Poetry

bit.ly/PoetryBraistorm



New Teacher Advocate online:
Live links and downloadable articles available at bit.ly/NTAW19v27



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