

Identifying Desired Results

YOUR School Data Analysis through a Short Term WebQuest

NOTE: This is similar to the group WebQuest, but for your school, and with a couple of extra process steps and interesting sites to check out.

[For information about Webquests, see
http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec596/about_webquests.html]

Before using the backward design model to design a program for school improvement, we must not only examine our own individual course curriculum, but we must first explore and analyze school data. For example, as a high school chemistry teacher, I might discover school data that reveals that our student population does poorly in writing, and therefore I need to incorporate writing exercises into my lessons. I may put an emphasis on research and/or laboratory reports, and therefore rather than simply teach gas laws, I might ask for a report on one of the developers of one of the gas laws.

The Task

You have been asked to assemble data, seek patterns, and begin to determine the areas of improvement which are necessary for your school. After your quest is done, you will have gathered information on the following:

- understand the demographics of your school (socio-economic/ethnic etc)
- examine current performance on assessment exams and analyze trends (all the test scores)
- compare your performance to similar schools (comparing test scores), and
- understand the infrastructure available at your school (MBRT data on technology inventory etc)

Background

Current trends call for increasing assessment of schools via standardized testing. However, although testing is being held up as a cure for educational failing, one must be able to access and evaluate the data in order to guide your future plans. There are a number of sources of data on schools, which need to be integrated with the assessment data for this process to be worthwhile. You will perform this exercise on your school. Make sure to list it in your report.

The Process

You will draft a “position statement” presenting a snapshot of your school population based on the information gleaned from the relevant sites:

1. Obtain a map of your school’s location. A possible resource is <http://www.mapquest.com/>. Check out your address as well.
2. Understanding your target population. Possible sources for data are:
 - <http://www.census.gov/>

- <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/> (Look for demographic information)
3. Go to http://demographics.caci.com/zip_code_searches.htm. Use this information to further characterize your population. Check out your own neighborhood information.
 4. Explore school data from the MDK12 Website (<http://www.mdk12.org/>) and determine school needs via the various data and assessment tools and ways to move to improve.
 - Explore state assessment data - MSPAP or HSA
 - Analyze and interpret this data with particular view toward trends
 - Discuss possible ways to improve by making use of state content standards and goals
 5. Explore your schools and county's website, and find any relevant information.
 6. Explore data from the Maryland Business Roundtable Technology Resource Inventory Report.
 - <http://msde.aws.com/>

Conclusion

After completing this WebQuest, you will have complete demographic and performance data for your school. You will be able to assess its performance as compared to similar schools, and recommend places for focus. It is important that our resources be focused on areas where they can have the greatest impact. Make sure to keep track of particularly good locations for information, especially those that would be relevant for other schools.