

Identifying Desired Results School Data Analysis through a Short Term WebQuest

[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 and your School Improvement Team (SIT) have been asked to assemble data, seek patterns, and begin to determine the areas of improvement which are necessary for your school. You should

- understand the demographics of your school,
- examine current performance on assessment exams and analyze trends,
- compare your performance to similar schools, and
- understand the infrastructure available at your school.

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. For this exercise, we will be focusing on one particular school, Argyle Middle School in Montgomery County.

The Process

1. Break up into teams of 3-4 members and assign tasks
2. Each member will explore background information and tasks assigned
3. The group members will come back for debriefing and will draft a “position statement” based on the information gleaned from the relevant sites:
 - Understanding your target population. Possible sources for data are:
 - <http://www.census.gov/>
 - <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/> (Look for demographic information)
 - 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. You may be able to link to some of the information from the Argyle website.

- Explore state assessment data - MSPAP
- Analyze and interpret this data with particular view toward trends
- Discuss possible ways to improve by making use of state content standards and goals
- Explore data from the Maryland Business Roundtable Technology Resource Inventory Report.
 - <http://msde.aws.com/>

Conclusion

After completing this WebQuest, the members of your group, and the class as a whole, will come to a consensus regarding points of focus for Argyle Middle School. Make sure to keep track of particularly good locations for information, especially those that would be relevant for other schools.