



## Tool 4d: Essential Questions for a High-Quality Data Overview

### **Purpose**

Once you have prepared a data overview, it is important to consider if the data will be effective in having the SBLT address the purpose of the meeting, which should be centered around the SIP. Think through the questions below to assess whether your data overview is as effective as possible. Additional data use tools and resources can be found at [mmsd.org/datause](http://mmsd.org/datause).

### **When to Use**

After you have prepared a data overview, use these questions to help decide whether the data overview is ready to share.

### **How to Use**

Consider the questions below.

*What question are we seeking to answer through this data review? In other words, what will reviewing this data help our SBLT accomplish or better understand?*

With the introduction of new online tools and increase in assessment, there is more data available than ever before, but not all of it is pertinent for every meeting. Besides type of data, consider if the data review is focused on school-wide progress, the progress of students in focus groups, or both. When your data overview is complete, you should be able to articulate the exact point of using the data overview and the actions that your SBLT can take as a result of having this data. If you have trouble with this step, take a step back & reconsider whether you have really presented the right types of data in the right way.

*Have I presented the right amount of data to help accomplish the meeting goals?*

It is often difficult to find a balance between presenting too little information to make an informed decision and presenting so much information that it is difficult to know what is important. Avoid presenting data that is confusing or only tangentially related to what you are trying to discuss; instead, aim to give your SBLT just enough information so they can make the best possible decisions. When possible, integrate qualitative and quantitative data into your overview; for example, consider adding context from walkthrough data to a presentation of student reading scores.

*Will my audience be able to understand and work with this data?*

Consider if you are meeting your audience at their level. Depending on the individuals in the room, certain types of data will require much more or much less scaffolding. When preparing your data overview, consider how much background information and support must be included.

*Is the data displayed in the best possible way?*



To make sure your data is as clear and useful as possible, consider whether graphs, tables, or narrative are the best way to tell the story. Make sure everything is labeled and make sure the layout of your data overview has as little clutter as possible. Focus on simple, readable layouts, and remember that a small investment of time in creating a good presentation of data will yield huge results when the data is easier to analyze and discuss.

*Is all of the data accurate?*

A final review of the data is an important and often-overlooked step. Incorrect data has the potential to do harm if it presents the wrong message and leads to the wrong conclusions, and even small mistakes can have large consequences. Mistakes also could make your audience question the credibility of all of the data. Look for obvious outliers or pieces of data that don't seem possible or logical, like a 20% attendance rate for a group of students you know has strong attendance or proficiency rates that are 70% higher than they have ever been before. Although expecting every presentation of data to be completely mistake-free is probably unrealistic, a final review for accuracy can make a big difference in the quality of the data overview.