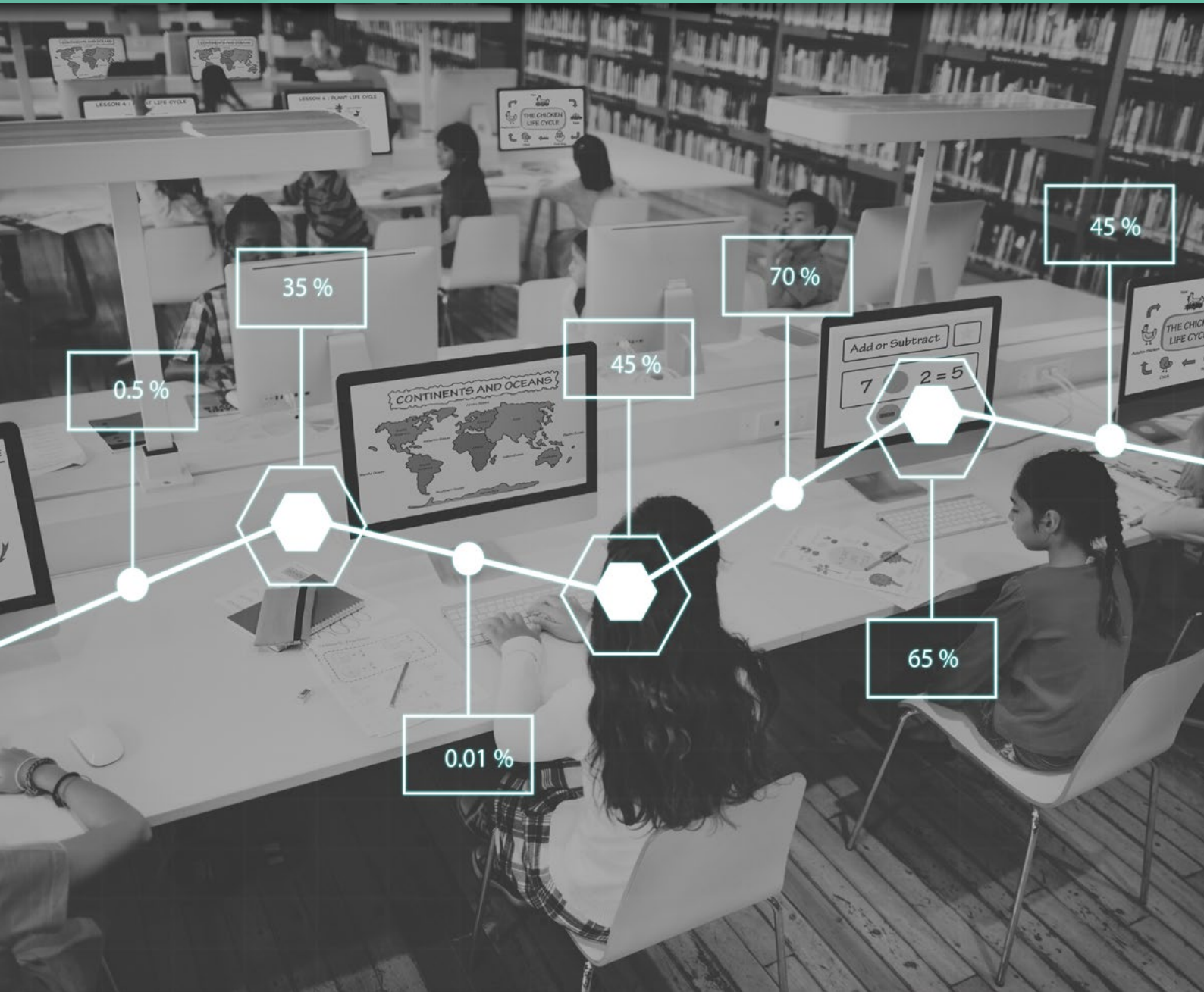
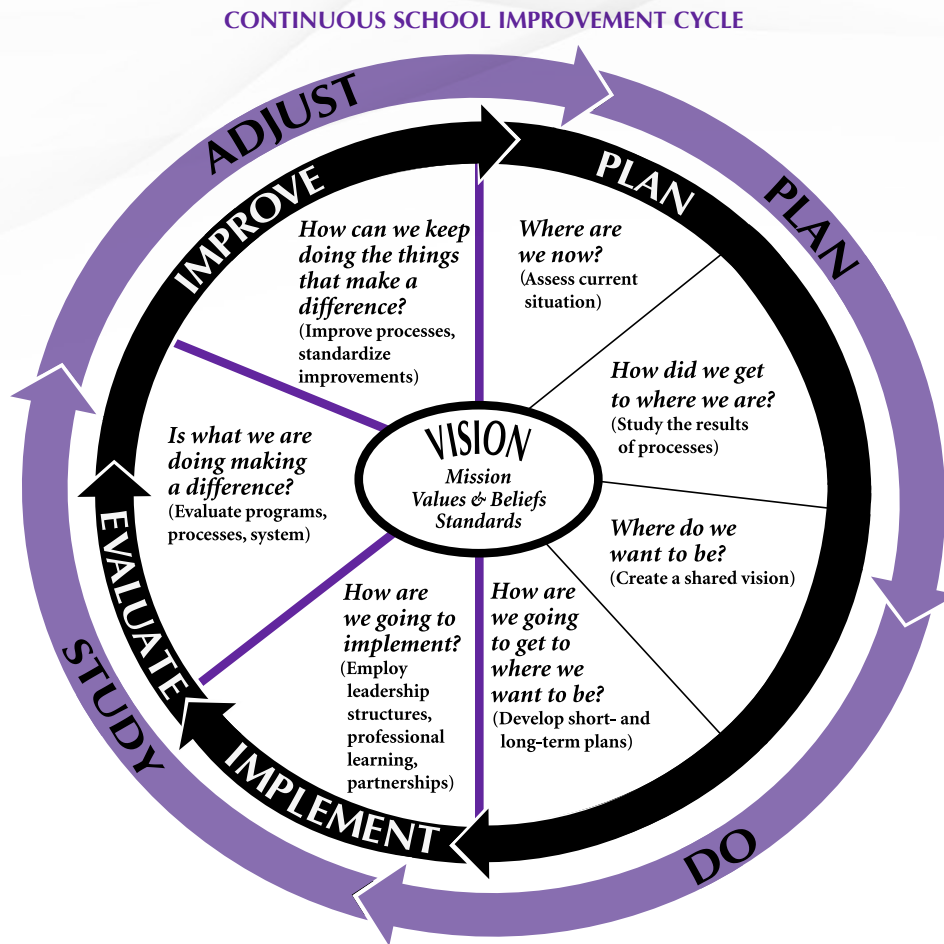


5 Tips for Achieving Excellence – It's All About Data!



“When schools use a framework for continuous school improvement, along with comprehensive data analysis, they understand how they are getting their results—what is working and what is not working.”



Commit to Using Data

1

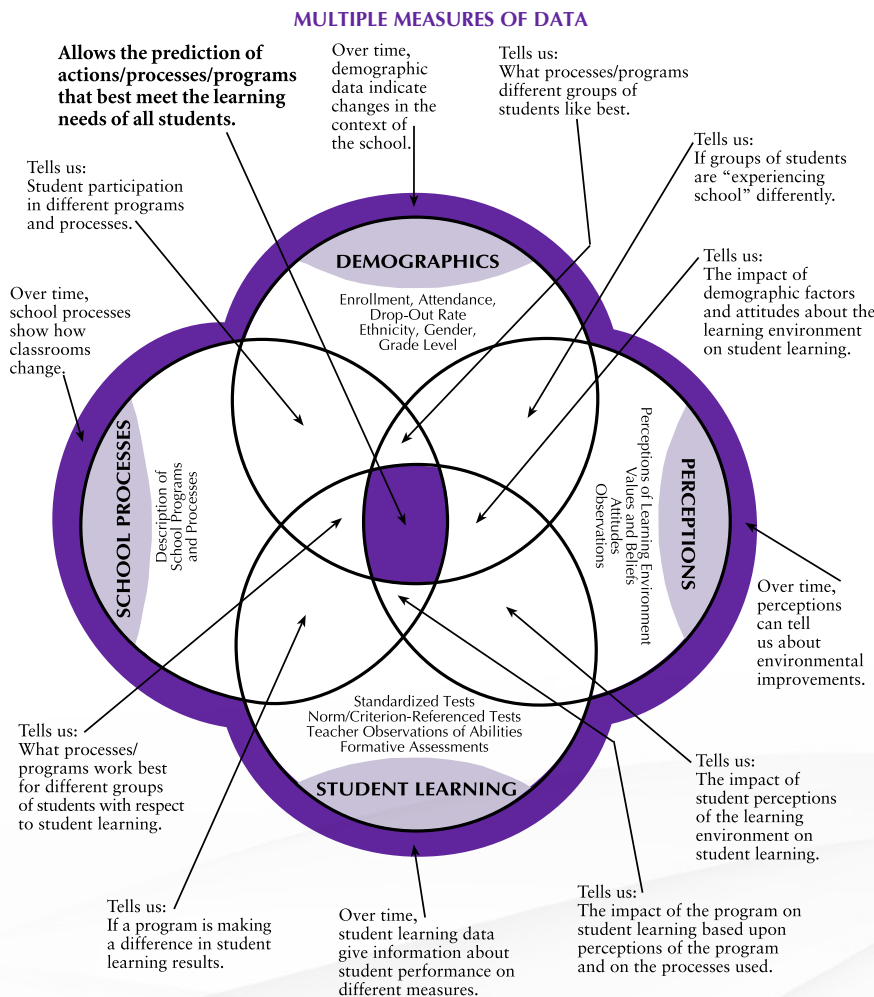
Determine what is working in your school and what isn't—improve the learning environment for teachers and students. Don't just focus on the gaps in student achievement, create the future of your school!

Without a commitment to continuous school improvement, schools tend to rely on external measures of compliance. When the focus becomes how students are performing in one area of study or their performance based on an exam, there is a shift away from improving the school to impact the achievement of all students. When schools focus solely on “filling the gaps” in education, they lose out on opportunities to innovate and to strive for more than the status quo. Instead, utilize a framework for continuous school improvement so that you can: plan to implement a school vision, improve all processes, and evaluate their effectiveness.

Gather Data

Collect data in these 4 areas: demographics, perceptions, student learning, and school processes. This will help answer these crucial questions: Who are we? How do we do business? How are our students doing? What are our processes?

1. **Demographics:** The question of who a school is serving can be addressed through analysis of longitudinal demographic data. This allows staff to see how their student population has changed and what its new needs may be.
2. **Perceptions:** Data collected regarding perceptions of the school by students, teachers, and parents allow staff to understand how culture and climate improve student learning.
3. **Student Learning:** This can be measured through instruction-infused and formative and summative assessment—all data that can be analyzed by staff to determine growth over time of individual students, teachers, grades, and the school, as a whole.
4. **School Processes:** Processes are measured by listing and analyzing processes and programs that show what measures school staff have undertaken and how they have led to student achievement. The school’s programs and processes can then be analyzed for effectiveness and implementation integrity.



3

Create a Data Literate Staff

Make sure to organize and present data in a way that teachers and staff can understand and transform into action in ways that foster the school's larger vision.

Teachers know how to interpret numbers—instead of talking to them about numbers, share the numbers with them! Teachers, better than anyone, will understand what their students need—IF they are presented with data that are easy to comprehend. Make sure to provide your teachers with data, set up support systems so that they can collaborate with colleagues, and discuss effective strategies and their implementation. Most importantly, establish a leadership that holds the process and the people accountable.

4

Implement a Shared Vision

Create a shared vision for the future of your school. Spell out how the continuous school improvement plan will move your school toward where you want it to be!

A school is defined by its mission, vision, goals, and student expectations. Through professional learning, partnerships, and professional collaboration, a shared vision can be successfully implemented. The continuous school improvement vision needs to lay out how staff members of a school will teach, assess, and treat one another.

Effective plans draw on the shared school vision, are inclusive of all staff members, support staff, focus on the actions of teachers and administrators—rather than students—and incorporate ways to oversee the implementation of the larger school vision.

5

Become a Learning Organization

Learning organizations are organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.

Achieve more than compliance—strive to achieve the learning results that you truly desire! Commit to excellence.

For more tips about how to use data to improve the schools in your district, check out this forthcoming title by Victoria Bernhardt, *Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement, 4th Edition*.

The above has been adapted from: Bernhardt, Victoria. *Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement, 4th Edition*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

