

Using Data to Evaluate Interventions

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Data-driven practices are critical to effective school counseling programs. By collecting and analyzing various types of data, school counselors can design interventions which are sensitive to the specific needs of their students, promoting improvements in academic achievement, attendance, and behavior. Historically referred to as "perception data" in the first three editions of the ASCA National Model, this data has been renamed "Mindsets & Behaviors data" in the fourth edition (Hatch & Hartline, 2022, p. 82). This change emphasizes the focus on assessing students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills as outlined in the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success standards (ASCA, 2021). The three areas measured are:

Attitudes or Beliefs: This area assesses changes in students' perceptions about themselves and their abilities. For example, evaluating whether students believe they can improve their grades after participating in a motivational group session.

Skills (Competency Attainment): Here is where we measure the acquisition of specific competencies or behaviors, such as conflict resolution skills or effective study habits, aligned with the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors standards.

Knowledge: This is where we evaluate the information students have learned, like understanding graduation requirements, or the steps in the college application process.

Together, these can be remembered with the acronym ASK (Hatch & Hartline, 2022, p. 84). Measuring all three areas is important because it provides a balanced view of how counseling activities impact students, evaluated from multiple angles. Attitudes influence motivation and openness to change, skills enable students to apply what they've learned in

practical situations, and knowledge ensures they are informed and prepared with essential information. Together, these areas contribute to meaningful behavioral changes that can positively affect student outcomes (Hatch & Hartline, 2022, p. 84).

In "The Use of Data in School Counseling," the author makes a specific point to distinguish between achievement data and achievement-related data, even though the ASCA National Model's third and fourth editions no longer use these specific terms (Hatch & Hartline, 2022, p. 68). They argue that differentiating these types of data is crucial for accurately assessing the effectiveness of counseling programs.

Achievement Data: This data refers to direct measures of academic performance, such as test scores, grades, and graduation rates. This data reflects the tangible outcomes of student learning and academic success.

Achievement-Related Data: This type of data encompasses factors that indirectly influence academic performance, including attendance rates, discipline referrals, and participation in extracurricular activities.

The author believes that by distinguishing between these two types of data, school counselors can better identify and tackle the underlying factors affecting student achievement. Understanding achievement-related data helps counselors design interventions targeting specific issues like absenteeism or behavioral problems, which can subsequently lead to improvements in achievement data (Hatch & Hartline, 2022, p. 70). For instance, by implementing programs to

improve attendance (an achievement-related factor), counselors can help boost students' academic performance (achievement data).

During my internship at Desert Oasis High School, various data measures were employed to inform programming, interventions, and standards competencies. Here they are, separated into three categories:

Participation Data: We recorded who participated in counseling activities, how many students were involved, and the duration of sessions. For example, 439 students completed the AP exams, and follow-ups were planned for those who scored a 1 or 2 (Desert Oasis High School, 2024b, p. 34).

Mindsets & Behaviors Data: We utilized pre- and post-intervention assessments to measure changes in students' attitudes, skills, and knowledge. An example includes assessing students' beliefs about the benefits of using planners for academic success before and after a time management workshop.

Outcome Data: We analyzed attendance records, discipline referrals, and academic performance to measure the impact of our interventions on student outcomes. A significant concern was the 27 ninth and tenth-grade students with five or more absences and multiple failing grades (Johnston, 2024).

To improve our data practices, I recommend the following adjustments:

Implement Regular Data Analysis Sessions: This is to establish routine meetings to review current data trends, allowing the counseling team to respond promptly to emerging issues.

Disaggregate Data for Equity Insights: The goal is to break down data by subgroups such as grade level, gender, and ethnicity to identify and address potential equity concerns. Comparing Desert Oasis High School's engagement indicators with similar schools highlighted areas needing attention (Nevada Department of Education, 2024a, 2024b).

Enhance Mindsets & Behaviors Assessments: This helps to develop more detailed pre- and post-assessments aligned with the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors to effectively measure changes in attitudes, skills, and knowledge resulting from interventions (ASCA, 2021).

Strengthen Collaboration with Stakeholders: A counselor must work closely with teachers, administrators, and parents to address factors impacting student engagement and achievement. This is specifically encouraged in ASCA Ethical Standard A.3.b (ASCA, 2022, p. 3). For example, the decrease in the Student Engagement Indicator suggests a need for initiatives to improve connectedness and 'school spirit' between staff and students (Desert Oasis High School, 2024a, p. 11).

Linking data and presenting it in useful, actionable ways, can gain credibility and support for our efforts toward the success of school counseling programs. By thoroughly measuring attitudes, skills, and knowledge through mindsets and behaviors data, counselors gain valuable insights to steer their interventions with students. Distinguishing between achievement data and achievement-related data allows counselors to understand both the direct outcomes and the

contributing factors influencing student performance. “By becoming proficient in data collection, interpretation, and analysis, counselors can validate existing programs and focus additional resources where they are most needed” (Hatch & Hartline, 2022, p. 102). The key is to be thorough and diverse, with a range of data measures that can be evaluated with one’s team, to make informed adjustments. Through this process, counselors can improve their programs to better support student success.

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