

Roundtable: Overcoming Data Quality Challenges to Evaluation of School-based Programs

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Case Examples	Breakthrough SAP	Woodcraft Rangers	Project REACH
Program Description	Murrieta Valley Unified School District (MVUSD) Student Assistance Program in Riverside County, CA	Multiple site (60 schools) on-site K-12 after-school program across Los Angeles County, CA	Off-site after-school program in northern San Diego County, CA
Level of School Involvement/Access to School Data	High Access: Program coordinator and staff are located at one of the schools and work within the school district system	Some Access: Although the programs take place on school campuses, individual level student data are requested from the district	No Access: Academic data is necessary for funder reporting, but program staff's attempts to access school data were unsuccessful
Related Data Collection Strategies	Academic data (GPA, discipline incidences, attendance): program staff have access to school data Evaluative Surveys: program staff administer during the school day	Academic data (demographics, attendance, retention, discipline, California Standards Test Math and English scores): evaluators request from district Evaluative Surveys: program staff administer after school	Academic data (GPA, grades by subject, days absent): students bring in their report cards and staff make copies Evaluative Surveys: program staff administer during after school program
Overcoming Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop detailed protocols ▪ Consult on databases ▪ Review data early on ▪ Share findings ▪ Respect the school calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop relationships ▪ Be specific (only ask for what you need) ▪ Start early ▪ Include a line item in budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be willing to think outside of the box ▪ Use incentives ▪ Be persistent

Discussion Questions

1. What challenges have you experienced evaluating school-based programs?
2. How did you overcome these challenges?
3. Based on your experiences with school-based programs, what data collection strategies have been most effective and why?
4. What data have proved most useful in predicting or evaluating outcomes (e.g., either student level or programmatic)?

Practical Tips for Getting Quality Data in School Settings

- ✓ **Respect the school calendar**
Check the school calendar in advance. Avoid collecting data during major testing periods or right before holiday breaks.
- ✓ **Keep it short**
Students and teachers are often asked to complete multiple surveys in a year by many different programs. To improve participation, keep yours short by including only your most important questions.
- ✓ **Engage school personnel**
Create written guides for homeroom teachers and other school or program staff to help them administer the surveys. They are your go-to resource for getting the job done well. Make sure to give them your contact information and stay readily available for questions and trouble-shooting.
- ✓ **Review the data early**
Take a look at the data in the early stages to see if there are problems in how people are answering questions. There may be a problem with either the tool or data collection process. Correct any issues before they affect the final results.
- ✓ **Use incentives**
Acknowledging people with a "thank you" is one of the best incentives you can use. Tangible incentives, as allowed, also help show your survey administrators and participants that you appreciate their time and attention. Small gift cards, certificates of appreciation, and pizza parties are a few of the ones we like. If tangible incentives are not allowed, check with the school about options like extra credit for students.
- ✓ **Share Findings**
By showing school personnel and stakeholders how the findings may be of use and providing them with the necessary tools and databases, schools are more willing to collect and provide data in a timely manner.

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