Making DATA Work: A Process for Conducting Action Research

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Abstract

This conceptual model introduces a process to help school counselors use data to drive decision making and offers examples to implement the process. A step-by-step process is offered to help school counselors and school counselor supervisors address educational issues, close achievement gaps, and demonstrate program effectiveness. To illustrate the model, stakeholders use accountability strategies that address academic achievement issues, empower school counselors to be change agents, and build relationships with teachers and administrators is described.

Making DATA Work: A Process for Conducting Action Research

Professional school counselors' commitment to use accountability strategies to close opportunity and achievement gaps for students in all settings, urban, rural, and suburban, has resulted in increased demand to collect, analyze, and use data as a decision-making tool (Brooks-McNamara & Pederson, 2006; Colbert & Kulikowich, 2006; Dollarhide, 2003; House & Hayes, 2002; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Sears, 1999). One of the current issues facing school counselors is how to demonstrate and gain the skills needed to contribute to the central educational issues facing schools: how to help *all* students achieve to high standards. To that end counselor educators, (Colbert & Kuilikowich, 2006; Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Kaffenberger & Young, 2007; Poynton & Baker, 2007; Ponyton & Carey, 2006; Rowell, 2006; Dahir & Stone, 2003) have offered methods to assist counselors in the use of data. Making DATA Work is a simple four-step process that will help school counselors use accountability strategies to address educational issues at their sites. The word DATA in the title of the process model is an acronym for Design, Ask, Track, and Announce.

Educational reform requires that all educators are involved in educational research. The practitioner level of educational research, action research, has gained acceptance and credibility as the best way to understand educational issues at the local level (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007) and has become a meaningful form of applied research (Guiffrida, Douthit, Lynch, & Mackie, 2011; Sagor, 1992; Whiston, 2002). Action research uses the process of scientific method of fact-finding connected to practice (Gillies, 1993; Whiston, 1996). Action research originated in the education field

and requires that the practitioner "systematically develop a question, gather data and analyze the data to improve practice" (Gilles, Wilson, & Elias, 2010, p. 91). Calls for school counselors to apply action research in their work have been described in the literature (Gilles, 1993; Pine, 1981; Zinck & Littrell, 2000). Nuttal and Ivy (1978) identified four types of action research: (a) diagnostic, understanding an issue; (b) participant, understanding a perspective; (c) empirical, evaluating a program or intervention; and (d) experimental, evaluating a program or intervention using a control group.

Rowell (2005) asserted there is an increased need for action research to be used as a method for school counselors to link theory with practice and to be a collaborative research tool that provides school counselors with outcome data. While there is a need for school counselors to conduct more rigorous research to contribute to understanding what interventions have an impact on student achievement, there is also an acknowledgement that school counselors can make valuable contributions to research by conducting action research and systematically evaluating the interventions being used by school counselors (Dimmitt, 2009; Whiston & Sexton, 1998). Dimmitt (2009) suggested that professional school counselors use a variety of evaluation procedures: needs assessments to gather information about the types of interventions or programs that are needed; formative evaluation to check the initial and on-going impact of the interventions; implementation evaluation to assess how the intervention was put into practice; and outcome evaluation to measure the impact of the intervention. Developing regular procedures to evaluate interventions and programs at each stage will assure that interventions are making a difference for all students.

The purpose of this article is to describe *Making DATA Work,* a four-step method developed in 2007, and published by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The method supports the implementation of the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* and complements all components (ASCA, 2005; ASCA, 2012). The Making DATA Work (MDW) model is regularly used to train school counselors and district supervisors at local, district, state, and national levels. Increasingly, school counselor preparation programs have reported using it to teach action research.

The MDW process helps school counselors use accountability strategies to monitor student progress, close achievement gaps, evaluate services and programs, and demonstrate school counseling program effectiveness (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). To illustrate, the authors provide an example of how the MDW model has been applied to help professional school counselors use accountability strategies that address academic achievement issues, empower school counselors to be change agents, and build relationships with teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

Making DATA Work: The Process

Design: Identifying the action research question. The Design component involves identifying an action research question that aids in framing the action research question or goal. For example, determining what educational issues to address can begin with conversations about student inequalities, beliefs about student learning, examining student enrollment patterns in rigorous classes, reviewing high incidences of student behavioral offenses, or investigating student absences (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Haycock, 2001; Marzano, 2010). Although there may be a plethora of

ways to identify a burning question, five ways to examine data elements are offered. The first technique is to categorically list current academic, person/social, and career domain services and interventions provided to all students (See Brainstorm Activity, Appendix A). Using the brainstorming activity can help school counselors provide a cursory review of their comprehensive services, determine gaps in their program delivery, and consider ways to improve interventions (Clark & Stone, 2000; Young & Kaffenberger, 2009).

Examining the school data report profile is a second technique to analyze academic gaps by ethnicity, gender, age, and grade level by reviewing the data over time. By reviewing changes in student demographics, enrollment patterns, or disciplinary referrals, the school counselor can identify data about how school counseling services are addressing academic and opportunity gaps for all students. Targeting a specific school improvement plan (SIP) goal, is a third way, to ensure that the action research question aligns with the school's instructional accountability goals.

The fourth suggestion involves conducting the ASCA National Model school counseling program assessment (ASCA, 2012, pp 59 -62). The fifth and final step in identifying the action research question is to engage in a goal setting activity (See Goal Setting Activity, Appendix B). After completion of the brainstorming activity, examination of the school report data, and review of the school improvement plan, the goal setting activity will assist the school counselor in focusing on the strengths, challenges, and resources before identifying the action research question.

There are two types of action research questions to consider. One type of question seeks to understand the educational issue underlying the achievement or

opportunity gap. Questions such as, "What are the factors contributing to declining student achievement," or "What are student perceptions of the bullying issue at our school?" will help the school counselor identify targeted interventions. The second type of question aims to evaluate a program or intervention. Examples of this type of question: "Will small group counseling for identified 4th grade students increase state testing scores?" or "Does the mentoring program increase student attendance and grades?"

Upon identification of the question, it is suggested that consideration be given to how answering the question advances student success. What exactly do you want to know? What are the educational implications? Does the question align with the school's mission statement? The best questions are simple, yet precise. Sample questions are: Why are state proficiency reading scores lowest among 3rd grade boys? Is the after school mentoring program effective? What factors contribute to low parental engagement? (See Making DATA Work Worksheet, Appendix C.)

Ask: Planning the action research. The Ask component determines how to answer the "burning question" and may involve a variety of data collection methods or in some cases, examining data that already exist. The term "data" in this process refers to the kind of information needed to address the identified issue (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). An important aspect of the Ask component is to determine what kind of data to examine or collect. In actuality, the majority of data needed to measure improvement in student achievement, attendance, and behavior is available within school report cards or district student information data systems. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) suggest that educators can obtain information themselves with minimum input from others, directly

from the subjects, or from knowledgeable sources. Identifying the number of students at risk for academic failure, examining enrollment patterns, or categorizing disciplinary referrals by gender is important information that can drive comprehensive school counseling programs. However, transforming the action research into meaningful data with systemic implications may require collection of perception data through the development of questionnaires, facilitation of focus groups, or collecting pre and post data from interventions such as small groups, classroom guidance lessons, or parent workshops (Carey, Harrity, & Dimmit, 2005; Kruegar, 1994).

Finally, it is important to determine if additional data are needed, what procedures will be followed, permission needed, and timeline to follow. It is suggested that professional school counselors review data-collection procedures with district administrators to ascertain how and if permissions are required. Informal permission, gained by sharing research goals with stakeholders will increase buy-in. Even with prior permission, informal notification to parents outlining intervention details may be necessary. Formal permission may include obtaining parental and IRB permission to survey or interview students.

Once the process, perception, and outcome data needed to address the action research question has been identified, then data collection strategies using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods can be used. Quantitative data such as questionnaires are recommended to determine the impact of change through pre and post-test measures. For example, administering a pre-test at the beginning and a post-test at the end of classroom guidance lessons, parent workshops, small groups, and related

services can assess perception of learning and demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention.

When designing a questionnaire consider face validity that demonstrates a clear purpose of what is needed to know and understand, with the fewest number of statements or questions appropriate for the intended age group. Using Likert scaling (e.g., strongly disagree to strongly agree) is generally easy to understand and lends itself to summative numerical responses and descriptive data that are useful during the Track component. There are a variety of possible response scales (e.g., 0-4, 1-5, 1-7, and 1-9). The odd-numbered scales have middle value that can be labeled neutral or undecided; however, forced-choice response scale with an even number of responses has no middle neutral or undecided choice. This situation forces respondents to choose whether they lean more towards the agree or disagree end of the scale for each item. The use of parallel positive language helps to increase clarity. For example, "I enjoy attending school would be a positive statement as opposed as to "I do not enjoy attending school" as a negative statement. Including "check all that apply" and "open-ended" statements add dimension to the questionnaire. Check all that apply statements allow respondents to select a variety of responses that relate to them and open-ended statements give voice to their personal experiences characterized in their own words.

Developing a qualitative design process can utilize a variety of data collection methods such as interviewing. There are two common kinds of interviewing practices, individual and focus group interviews. Individual interviews, as do focus groups, vary according to purpose and are most effective when studying opinions, perceptions, and practices (Schwandt, 1997). Focus groups lend appropriateness for predicting and

analyzing collective opinions and ask specific questions about a topic. Bringing a small group of school counseling stakeholders together to conduct a focused discussion is an effective and efficient way to understand the perspective of students, teachers, parents, and faculty. If focus groups are used as the technique for interviewing, it is recommended that procedures are established prior with an interview guide and the size limited to 2-10 members (Krueger, 1994).

The final aspects of the Ask component are to align the data collection procedures with the instructional calendar, determine how to access participants, when results are needed, pinpoint obstacles to implementation, and collect the data. Completion of this process segues into the Track component.

Track: Analyzing the data. The third step in the process focuses on organizing the data collected so that the question can be answered and the data can be shared with others. In some ways, this is the most difficult step. School counselors may regularly collect pre- post test data or program evaluations but may not be familiar with simple procedures for collating or disaggregating the data. Google docs (docs. google.com) offers free access to data collection and reporting tools. In addition, free programs such as EZanalyze (EZanalyze.com) can be used to organize the data and make sense of it (Poynton & Baker, 2007). Data collected by EZanalyze can be exported to an Excel spreadsheet for easy conversion to a chart. Before using software such as EZanalyze it is recommended that school counselors consider the type of statistics that will be useful and result in data that can be reported to stakeholders.

Collecting and reviewing the data is the first step, however, it is critical that the school counselor find some quick and simple strategies to aggregate the data into

meaningful units. There are three simple statistical procedures that can be used: percent, percent change, and averages. Percentages report what part of a group accomplished a task. Graduation rates, attendance and test scores are examples of percent. Percentages are calculated by dividing the part by the whole. For example if 147 students out of a class of 200 graduated the graduation rate would be 73.5%. Percentages are useful as comparison statistics over time. Percentage change describes the impact of an intervention overtime. For example, 500 students graduate in the current school year and 475 graduated the previous year. The graduation rate increase is 5.2%. The third statistic that is useful to professional school counselors is averages. The average demonstrates the score that represents how the group as a whole responded. Averages are useful as comparison data, pre and post-test scores, and reporting perception data, and what has been accomplished. To make sense of the data and to simplify illustration, use computer chart conversion functions such as Chart Wizard.

The qualitative data collected via questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups can also be aggregated so that the meaning of the data can be understood. Begin by transcribing all of the data (e.g., open-ended questionnaire responses) and group the data according to similar responses. As themes or categories emerge, label them. The number of responses in each category can be reported (e.g., 30 students out of 100) respondents said they had been bullied in school. The qualitative data can also be used to give voice to students' responses and represent large categories of the data collected (e.g., One student said, "I have been bullied since the second grade and adults don't help me.").

Announce: Sharing the data. The Announce component is used once data are collected and analyzed in a purposeful way; it is time to consider the implications and recommendations that result from the data. Sharing data with stakeholders can increase school counseling program support and validate how school counseling services close achievement and opportunity gaps. For example, data can be used to modify current services provided to increase post-secondary informational knowledge for students and parents or initiate conversations about race and social justice issues that are barriers to student success.

The most important consideration is how to share and present the findings to stakeholders. MDW proposes using a one page executive format to summarize findings called a Data Report Form. The form is used to organize data that were collected and analyzed and to share findings with stakeholders (See Appendix C). The one-page worksheet follows the four-step format including the reason the data were collected (Design); data-collection strategies (Ask); findings (Track); and recommendations or implications of the data (Announce). (Refer to the middle school example illustrated in Appendix D).

Making DATA Work: A Narrative Example

The Collaborative Process

The collaboration described in this article was initiated to motivate high school counselors in a large urban school district with a diverse population and myriad of educational challenges to use accountability tools that train counselors to be instructional leaders and to engage the school counseling department in action research (Clark & Stone, 2000; Dimmit, 2009; Kaffenberger & Davis, 2009). The initial discussion

between the high school's counseling administrator, the consultant, a counselor educator from a local university, and the district's school counseling administrator centered around how the counselor educator and district administrator might initiate a collaborative relationship with the school counseling team (House & Hayes, 2002; Kaffenberger, Murphy, & Bemak, 2006; Schwallie-Giddis, Maat, & Park, 2003). Prior to the meeting, the director received a report detailing a decline in the number of graduates applying and entering post-secondary institutions. Consequently, the director was initially interested in having the school counseling administrator and counselor educator help the counselors use accountability strategies to increase post-secondary applications. The goals of the first meeting with the professional school counselors were to briefly introduce the ASCA Model, describe accountability strategies, and engage the counselors in a collaborative process to address a research question (ASCA, 2012; Brooks-McNamara & Pederson, 2006; Colbert & Kuilikowich, 2006; Martin, 2002).

Design. Rather than focus on the declining number of students applying to college, at the forefront of counselors' minds was the disproportionate number of students identified at the end of the first grading period with either a D or F. Approximately 48% of the student population were identified as in danger of failing at least one subject with either a D or F. Therefore, the focus during the initial discussion was on identifying contributing factors that contribute to academic failure during the first grading period and how the school counselors might systemically reduce the number of students on the D/F list. Thus, the action research question simply became," What factors are contributing to approximately half the students in the school on the D/F list?" The counselors hoped that addressing the question of academic failure would ultimately

correlate with the declining number of graduates applying to and entering post-secondary institutions.

The identification and consensus around a "burning question" motivated the counselors to engage in the collaborative process through subsequent meetings with the counselor educator and district administrator. First, was the task of brainstorming causal factors that led to students earning failing grades. In-depth dialogue revealed the shared belief that while multiple barriers may impede student learning, the professional school counselors believed students were capable and deserved the opportunity to achieve and that they did not have the data they needed to understand the factors that resulted in such a high percentage of students on the D/Fs list (Clark & Stone, 2000; Haycock, 2001; Herr, 2002). Although the counseling department was involved in a wide range of student-focused programs, such as individual counseling for failing students and encouraging after school tutorial services, the reality was that the professional school counselors did not have data to confirm that their interventions were increasing student performance (Bauman, 2004; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Haycock, 2001).

Ask. The next step required the professional school counselors to determine, how to answer the question and to consider what data collection methods would be required. While the counselors could gather data about which students, and how many were on the D/F list, they realized that they did not know *why* the students were on the D/F list. Disaggregated data provided additional demographic data but underlying factors remained elusive. For example, the data reveal that many of the students listed had appeared on previous D/F lists. The professional school counselors determined that

in order to understand the cause of student failure they needed to gain the students' perspective.

In order to answer their research question, 'What factors are contributing to half the students in the school on the D/F list?' and gain the students' perspective, the school counselors developed a student questionnaire designed to elicit qualitative and quantitative responses (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). Domains were developed using combination multiple-choice statements that instructed students to circle all that apply and open-ended fill in the blank questions. The questionnaire asked a variety of questions with the goal of understanding how students explained their low and failing grades.

The questionnaires were distributed and returned to counselors during four large group 45-minute meetings, called achievement seminars which were scheduled during the last period of the school day. Students with one or more D or F were invited to participate in the achievement seminar that was facilitated by the grade level administrator and school counselors. The purpose of the achievement seminars was to educate students about their individual transcripts, explain factors that contribute to a grade point average (GPA), describe graduation requirements, connect GPAs to post-secondary options, and to motivate them to improve their grades. Students who had previously improved their grades were also asked to speak to the group about why grades matter and why they chose to improve their grades. The school counselors gave students a copy of their transcript and discussed how to interpret it. At the end of the seminar, students were asked to complete the questionnaire. Since all D/F students

were invited to the seminar, 100% of the questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 100%.

The questionnaires produced rich and informative data that motivated the school counselors. The results were shared with the principal, other administrators and the entire faculty. The administrative response was astonishment and triggered a second questionnaire relating to teachers' perception about students on the D/F list. Consequently, the counselors developed and distributed a parallel questionnaire to the faculty. The questionnaire was distributed at the end of a faculty meeting.

Track. Initial responses from both questionnaires were shared with the administration and the faculty (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). The findings created a favorable dialogue among the administration, the teachers and the school counselors. It was evident that the vision of improving student achievement was shared among the staff. For example, teachers responded favorably to the students' suggestion that if teachers explained concepts more than once and spoke more slowly, their grades would improve. One of the findings from the faculty questionnaire was that teachers believed that student motivation was the primary reason for student failure. The faculty began a dialogue about student motivation and achievement. The faculty was frankly surprised that, rather than blame teachers for their failure, students identified their poor work habits and made useful suggestions about how teachers could help them to improve their grades (e.g., talk slower.) As a result, a dialogue among faculty, administrators, and counselors around how to increase motivation and respond to student suggestions about what would help teachers begin to reflect on changes they

could make to improve student achievement. Most importantly, was the recognition of the school counselors' role as instructional leaders and collaborators.

Announce. The final step was to share the data with others and make decisions about how to use the data to address the original question, "What factors are contributing to approximately half the students in the school on the D/F list?" The action research undertaken by the school and counseling department created an atmosphere of curiosity and problem solving about the issues of student achievement. Several outcomes resulted: (a) increased faculty discussions about effective strategies for teaching Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students and students with low grades; (b) improved student achievement; (c) local, state, and national presentations; and (d) additional research initiatives.

Because all parties were ready to identify and reduce the barriers contributing to student failure, new teaching strategies were implemented. For example, the lack of student motivation and slowing the pace of instruction appeared to be common responses from students. To address the concern of the pace and comprehension during class time, one department of teachers modified their teaching strategies (Marzano, 2010).

To address the lack of student motivation, the administration hired a national consultant to facilitate several in-services with the administration, instructional staff, and counselors. The staff was praised for their efforts to solidify their learning community, close achievement gaps, and motivate all students to reach higher standards. Strategies such as building on existing action research projects and increasing project-based learning were recommended.

The school counseling leadership and collaborative efforts with teachers and administrators produced unexpected results. Each subsequent quarter resulted in a 2% decrease in the number of students on the D/F list. Data also yielded a 7.5% increase in the number of seniors applying to post-secondary educational institutions for that school year.

The collaborative process and the findings of this school counseling department's action research were also shared with the state counseling organization, at district counseling workshops, and to administrative teams. Feedback from participants at these meetings validated the work of this team and requests for learning about the process came from administrators and other counseling departments.

As a result of the first year of data collection and analysis, new strategies were employed to address attendance issues. Professional school counselors worked in collaborative teams to implement different strategies that increase student attendance. Data were collected throughout the year for each of the strategies and program effectiveness evaluated at the end of the year. What the professional school counselors learned was that data gathering and data analyses are ongoing, and necessary to make data-driven decisions about programs that support academic achievement for all students (Dimmit, 2009; Marzano, 2003).

Recommendations for Professional School Counselors and District Supervisors

As professional school counselors begin, or increase, the use of data and accountability strategies to understand educational issues, monitor student achievement, evaluate the impact of interventions and programs, and demonstrate their effectiveness, the following suggestions are offered and considered beneficial for school

counselors and district supervisors. They are: (a) conduct a self-assessment of current accountability skills; (b) identify data collection goals; (c) plan the action research data project; (d) collaborate with others; and, (e) share data with stakeholders.

Conduct a self-assessment of accountability skills. It is recommended that professional school counselors and district school counseling supervisors regularly assess their use of data. Here are a series of questions to consider: Do you examine school and district data regularly to make decisions about your programs and interventions? Are your school counseling interventions aligned with the instructional and school counseling mission statements? Do you consider the school improvement plan when making decisions about school counseling program and interventions? Do you collect pre and post-test data for all school counseling programs and interventions? Do you identify measurable and attainable program goals? Do you conduct a program assessment?

Professional school counselors may need training to help them effectively use data. The first step in this process is to de-mystify the use of data (Dimmitt et al., 2007; Martin, 2002; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Kaffenberger & Young, 2007). Helping professional school counselors see that much of the data needed to understand and tackle difficult educational issues already exists. Demographic behavioral, achievement, and assessment data are readily accessible and with the use of computer technology can be disaggregated by grade, gender, race/ethnicity, class and teacher. Additional data can be gathered by use of pre and post-tests, questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups. Computer tools such as Microsoft Excel, Chart Wizard, and Google docs can be used to organize and present the data. Professional school counselors with no training

in data management strategies benefit from having time to practice these skills and guidance in how to make charts to share data with stakeholders (Poynton & Baker, 2007; Poynton & Carey, 2006). Within school counseling teams or programs there may be school counselors with higher levels of comfort with data use willing to share their expertise.

Identify program goals. Begin by identifying program goals based on school data aligned with the mission of the school and the school improvement plan. Choosing the right goal or question involves choosing a question that represents a barrier to student achievement (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). Answering the question chosen by the professional school counselors in this article, "What factors are contributing to half the students in the school on the D/F list?" is based on the goal of increasing student achievement. Setting goals involves identifying a targeted group of students and a specific statement of the goal to be achieved in specific measurable terms. An example of a program goal: One hundred percent of students with one or more D or F at the end of the first grading period will increase their GPA by 25% at the end of the school year.

Plan the data project. After the goal is identified, the first step is to determine how the goal will be achieved. What data will be needed to help the professional school counselors identify interventions that will increase student achievement? School counselors will need to consider whether the necessary data already exists and how it can be obtained (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Some of the data that answered the question described in this article was readily available: who had received D/Fs, in what grade and in what courses. Other data needed to be collected. The student perspective on the factors contributing to poor grades could only be attained by surveying the students. In

order to answer the question it was decided that surveying the teachers to gain their perspective would also be important, as well as, the student perspective. Once data collection procedures are identified, a timeline needs to be set to assure that the goal will be met. Facilitating regular meetings to discuss the process and preliminary findings is essential to keeping the school counselors motivated.

Collaborate with others*.* As professional school counselors begin to use data it is recommended that they reach out to colleagues, other school counselors in neighboring schools; district supervisors; and local counselor education programs (Stone & Clark, 2001). Working with others will not only share the workload but will increase buy-in and strengthen the data collection procedures and professional relationships.

Share data with stakeholders*.* As data are collected and analysis begins, it is important to begin sharing the findings with stakeholders. By sharing preliminary findings, stakeholders such as teachers and administrators can also be engaged in the process. Once the data is analyzed prepare a one page summary that includes the question, procedures, key data findings (reported in chart form); and implications and recommendation that result from the research.

In summary, getting started with using data to make educational decisions, understand barriers to student success, and demonstrate the impact of school counseling programs can be a daunting task. The collaboration and the application of the MDW process can help professional school counselors quickly gain the accountability, data, skills, and confidence needed to provide leadership to address educational issues.

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Appendix A

Brainstorming Activity

Use the activity to list and categorize current services provided by the school counseling department.

Academic	*Personal/Social*	*Career*

Appendix B

Goal Setting Activity

Complete the goal setting activity to reflect and evaluate your services.

What are the strengths of your school, school counseling program? What is working for students?	What are the areas of concern: School wide? Students?
What resources (materials, programs, assets, people) are available to address the issues?	What is your greatest concern? What do you need to know in order to address this concern?

State your question:

Appendix C

School Counseling Program DATA Report Worksheet

Name of School: Date: School Counselor:

DESIGN	What do you want to know or understated? What is to be evaluated and why? What are the educational issues keeping students from being successful? How does your question align with the school's mission statement? What is your question? State your research question and purpose. How is it aligned to the school's mission statement?
ASK	What information or data will be needed to answer the questions? Do the data already exist? What procedures will you follow? Do you need to create data-collection instruments? What is your timeline for planning, collecting data, making sense of the data and sharing it? Describe the data collection strategies:
TRACK	What can you learn from the data? How will you collate or disaggregate the data to make them useful? How can you organize the data so you can answer your questions and others can understand the results? How will you present your findings? Would charts be helpful? Summarize the results, and use graphs/charts to capture key findings.
ANNOUNCE	What do these results mean? What are the recommendations? What are the implications? How will you use your findings? How will you present your findings and recommendations? Who will you share them with? Describe the implications and recommendations to stakeholders.

Appendix D

Middle School Example. School Counseling Program DATA Report

DESIGN	**Question:** What are the perceptions of academically unsuccessful middle school students about the climate at Misty Middle School? **Purpose:** The purpose of this action research was to find out how the school counseling program could increase support to unsuccessful students.
ASK	Questionnaires were distributed to 50 7th and 8th grade students who had two or more D/Fs on their progress report. The questionnaires asked 8 questions concerning student perceptions of the academic support they receive at school and at home.
TRACK	 **Mistry Middle Student Success Data**
ANNOUNCE	Recommendations: 1. Small group counseling for all students with one or more D/F grade. 2. Conduct pre-post assessments 3. Faculty workshops to examine the findings related to school climate. 4. Administer questionnaires to students earning A/B honor roll to compare results. 5. Continue to monitor student progress.

Biographical Information

Dr. Young is an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University. She has extensive experience in the field of education serving as a district school counselor supervisor, school counselor, school psychometrist, and special education teacher. Dr. Young's research interests are cultivating school counselor leadership, examining best school counseling practices, and using accountability strategies to ensure equitable services and success for all students. In addition to ASCA National Model presentations, she has also presented numerous workshops specific to her research interests. She is co-author of *Making DATA Work,* an ASCA workbook publication designed to train school counselors to use data to address educational issues. Dr. Young has also developed a school counselor leadership cohort model to prepare school counselors to lead data driven comprehensive school counseling programs.

Carol Kaffenberger is associate professor emerita at George Mason University. She currently serves as faculty associate at Johns Hopkins University. She teaches counselor preparation courses and supervises school counseling interns. She was an elementary school counselor for 11 years. Dr. Kaffenberger is a consultant for the Education Trust National Center for Transforming School Counseling, serves on district, state and national school counseling committees, and provides training for practicing school counselors nationally. She was the first ASCA counselor educator vice president.