Name:

Date:

Period:

Instructions: Read the article and answer the questions below with complete thoughts.

1. Define and explain each form of data collection (from the classroom, cumulative files, standardized tests)
2. Explain which of the three works best for your learning style.
3. Explain which of the three you believe works best for the majority of high school students.
4. Explain how these methods can be used in the elementary classroom. In the event that a method does not work specifically in an elementary classroom explain how a teacher might need to modify the data collection method.

3 Ways Student Data Can Inform Your Teaching

Gather and use valuable student data to inform your classroom practice.

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The number one job of a teacher is to be faithful to authentic student learning. Unfortunately, our profession is overly fixated on results from one test, from one day, given near the end of the school year. Yes, that standardized testing data can be useful; however, we teachers spend the entire year collecting all sorts of immediate and valuable information about students that informs and influences *how* we teach, as well as *where* and *what* we review, readjust, and reteach.

Here’s how teachers collect student data and some of the ways we use it.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

**1. FROM THE CLASSROOM**

**Formative Assessments:** Low-stakes assessments are really the most important and useful student data. [**Exit slips**](http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/exit-slips-30760.html), brief quizzes, and [**thumbs up/thumbs down**](http://teachingthroughthearts.blogspot.com/2011/07/formative-assessment-thumbs-up-thumbs.html)are a few of my favorite ways to gather information on where students are and where we need to go next.

**Observations:** The beauty of having a constructivist, student-directed classroom? The kids are comfortable with you walking around and sitting with them in their groups—your “guide on the side” role. In other words, they don’t freeze up when you step away from the podium or your regular spot by the whiteboard. This freedom allows you to be a fly on the wall, gathering data on individual students: How well are they making sense of the content? Interacting with others? Are they struggling with a learning activity? Such data from observations then leads us to adjust pacing for the whole class or scaffold for those students who are still struggling.

**Projects, Essays, and Exams:** Summative assessments, such as literary analysis essays or end-of-unit science exams, allow us to measure the growth of individual and whole-group learning. If a large number of students don’t do well on a high-stakes assessment, we need to reflect back on the teaching and make necessary adjustments in the future.

**2. FROM CUMULATIVE FILES**

It’s difficult to find the time to read students’ files, but if you haven’t before, trust me, it’s well worth it. Much information is found in these files. From trekking to the counseling office after school, sitting down with a cup of coffee, and reading through the files of students I had questions about (beyond the data in hand), I’ve discovered critical information. Here are some notable examples:

* A girl who often missed class was homeless, living in the family car
* Several students who had been identified as gifted were inaccurately placed in my general education English class
* A boy struggling to fit in had been recently diagnosed with schizophrenia
* More than a dozen students who never wore eyeglasses in class (or contacts—I checked) had prescriptions

From a child’s cumulative files, you can sometimes see a dramatic grade change at a specific point during their school journey. Perhaps prior to eighth grade, the child had been an A student and then started earning Ds and Fs. You can express concern about this, sharing the data with them. The students may then share a reason with you: Their parents divorced, or they moved to a new city/community. One student told me that she just gave up on school when her dad went to prison.

You then have an opportunity to be empathetic, acknowledge their hardship, and set some goals together for them to improve academically. I’ve also used this data to refer students for further counseling services or advocate for additional support for them.

**3. FROM STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES**

Taking a look at previous standardized test scores for your current students is beneficial in several ways. A disclaimer: Just as one grade does not determine all that a student is or isn’t, neither does one test score. Use standardized testing results along with other data (e.g., in-class assignments and observations) when making instructional decisions. That said, here are some suggestions for using standardized test data:

**Share Testing Results With Students Individually:** After doing this, set some obtainable, realistic goals for each of them to work toward before the next test. (By the way, I don’t agree with making this data public for other students to see, as was done [**at one Orange County, California, high school**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/06/school-issues-illegal-student-ids_n_998753.html).)

**Use the Data to Decide Student Grouping and Differentiation:**Standardized test data reveals how your students performed: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. This could help inform how you choose student groups, create seating charts, and differentiate for individuals. For example, if I have a student who has historically scored below basic and exhibits other signs of a struggling student, I like to place her in the front of the class so that I can easily access her when she needs extra support. If you have a large number of students who scored advanced in your third period class, and a large number of students who scored basic in period two, this may give insight into why period three is moving more quickly and more deeply through content. You can adjust the learning and support accordingly.

**Get Curious About Contradictions and Take Action:** How about that ace student who didn’t do so well on the standardized test? Possibly a nervous test-taker? Or it could simply be low motivation, since many students never hear about their standardized test results from previous years? Prior to a test, a brief pep talk or quick review of strategies for lowering test anxiety could be all they need. Also, there is much information to be gained from having individual conversations with students who have these contradictions between their standardized test scores and their classroom grades and performance.