



Director Toolkit: Decision Making
Data-Informed Decision Making

Overview of Data-Informed Decision Making

With the present focus on standards and accountability, data is becoming increasingly important in maintaining high-quality early childhood programs. Early childcare centers are encouraged to collect a variety of data (information) in order to continuously improve and maintain preschool programs. Many childcare providers are asked to do this through the Department of Education Office of Early Learning, Florida Early Learning Coalitions or through national organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Data is information that is collected from a variety of sources in order to make informed educational or programmatic decisions. Collecting data can be both formal (prescribed and planned) and informal (observations, checklists and anecdotal records). This information can be attained from multiple sources and used for various purposes to support the quality improvement process.

Data collection is important in monitoring children's progress. It is important to ensure that all children are on a continuous path of improvement and on target in meeting expected growth and developmental outcomes. Collecting informal data such as observations and anecdotal information will help educators plan for the needs of the class as a whole as well as address the individual needs of a child.

Data collection supports curriculum and instructional planning and assures that a quality educational program is in place and meets the needs of all learners. Multiple sources of information, both informal and formal encourage educators to become reflective about their practice and make both curriculum and instructional adjustments based on the information collected.

A childcare center or school can use data to determine program goals and track progress toward achieving these goals leading to instructional or program changes. Ongoing professional development opportunities are critical for continuous program improvement. Professional development is meaningful when determined by reviewing and analyzing data from multiple resources to ensure educators are engaged in targeted professional learning that is designed and implemented in order to improve outcomes for children.

Data-inform decisions follows a cycle of collecting, organizing, analyzing and interpreting information. Educators need support in designing and maintaining this process. See the School Reform Initiative protocol for more information about the Data Driven Dialogue protocol.

http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/data_driven_dialogue.pdf

As programs participate in quality assessment, they learn how accurate evaluation provides needed data for reflection. This process activates a growth mindset and promotes active collaboration in continuous quality improvement. Marie Masterson, Ph.D. Director of Quality Assessment at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University.

<https://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/>