SEL Data Reflection Protocol

This tool, adapted from the ATLAS Looking at Data Protocol from the National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center (nsrfharmony.org), presents a structured reflection process for SEL teams and other school stakeholders to observe trends and discuss ideas for continuous improvement of SEL implementation. It emphasizes the importance of examining data with an equity lens and elevating a range of perspectives when interpreting data.

This tool includes:

- A facilitator's guide
- A participant handout
- Suggested prompts for equity-minded data reflection

Why is equity a critical lens for data reflection?

Looking at collected data as a team is an indispensable part of the continuous improvement cycle. Reflecting on data produces new insights, which in turn inform new actions to support systemic SEL implementation. While data can provide many insights, it does not easily show the full reality and lived experience of those it represents. Without an equity lens, conversations about data often lead to 'one-size-fits-all' solutions that obscure biases and ignore differences in environment, identity, and culture. Data reflection should inform decision-making that promotes equitable outcomes for all members of the school community.

For example, if an SEL team is reviewing data from a feedback survey after a family outreach event to inform their strategy for engaging families in SEL implementation, they would need to consider questions like "Do the parents who responded to this survey represent the larger community of families in our school? Who was left out of this survey and how can we gather their perspectives?" or "Do we see a difference in survey responses based on home language/race/education level/age of children/academic achievement of children? What can we learn from those differences about the way we are engaging families?" Without questions that push the team to apply an equity lens, there is a risk of overlooking how aspects of identity such as gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background contribute to the story the data is telling.

Things to do before using the SEL Data Reflection Protocol

Prepare the data: Data gathered through the continuous improvement process need to be summarized in charts, graphs, or short reports. Schools may be able to rely on district support to provide summaries and visualization of data. In other cases, the SEL team will need members who have skills for visualizing data. To bring equity into the conversation, see if there are ways to organize the data by subgroups (e.g., race, socioeconomic level, gender) that may highlight inequities.

Prepare questions that prompt reflection on equity: Issues of equity are not always apparent in data. Use the final page in this tool, Additional Prompts for Equity-Minded Data Reflection, to find examples of questions that can help push the group to consider additional factors and perspectives when making decisions that will impact the school community. These questions should be thoughtfully interspersed throughout the protocol.

Think about equity of voice: An equity lens should be applied not only to the interpretation of data but also to the team dynamic. Consider what group agreements and/or methods of sharing will best ensure that all members of the team have an equitable opportunity to share their perspective. Facilitators should prepare to call this out explicitly and reorient the conversation if it becomes inequitable. Further, when interpreting data, it is important to consider which voices are not at the table, what blind spots this may create, and whether to seek out more perspectives.

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SEL Data Reflection Protocol —Facilitator's Guide

At the start of the meeting:

- Designate a team member to take notes during the meeting.
- Establish norms for discussion or revisit existing norms and how they apply to this discussion.
- Preview the steps below so team members know what to expect. Be sure to explain the difference between describing the data objectively (step 1) and offering interpretations about the data later on.

1. Facts: Describe the data. (3-5 minutes)

The team member who prepared the data gives a brief statement of the data and avoids explaining what she or he concludes about the data.

Ask: ***What do you see?***

Team members describe what they see in the data in a neutral way, avoiding interpretations, judgement, or conclusions. If there is little or inequitable engagement, you can use the following techniques:

- Have team members take notes independently about what they see and then share out.
- Have team members discuss what they see in small groups and then share out.
- Use follow-up prompts:
    - *Look at parts of the data that relate to the students you work with. What do you see?*
    - *Are there any noticeable differences among the populations represented in the data? Similarities?*
    - *Are there any clarifications you need about how the data is presented?*

If judgments or interpretations arise, prompt the team to describe the evidence that supports their argument. Use the following prompts to redirect interpretations:

- *That sounds like an interpretation. Be sure to write that down so we can discuss it later.*
- *Remember, let's try to read the data objectively first so the discussion about interpretations can be well-informed.*
- *We want to wait to make interpretations until we've established what everyone can agree on about this data.*

Compile the team's observations on chart paper, a whiteboard, or anywhere that is visible to the whole team. The notetaker should record the team's observations as well.

2. Omissions: What information is missing in this data? (3-5 minutes)

Ask: ***What additional information could help us interpret this data?***

As needed, use one or more of the following prompts to stimulate discussion:

- *Who is not represented in this data?*
- *Whose experiences or perspectives should we learn more about to understand this data (e.g., students)?*
- *Do certain voices represented have more influence at our school than others?*
- *What personal biases should we be mindful about before we move into the interpretation stage?*
- *What additional context (such as race, gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic level) should frame how we interpret and make decisions using this data?*

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3. Interpretations: What does the data suggest? (5-10 minutes)

During this section of the protocol, the team tries to make sense of what the data says about SEL implementation and infer what is or isn't working and why. Encourage the team to think creatively and try to generate as many different interpretations as possible. When appropriate, surface themes from the discussion in step 2 or pose a question to prompt reflection about equity.

Ask: ***What does the data suggest?***

As needed, follow up with:

- *What root causes might best account for what we see in the data?*
- *Think about the students you work with. What does this data mean for them?*
- *In what ways do the actions of school staff members or our organizational routines impact this data?*

If engagement is low or inequitable, use the following techniques:

- Have team members journal independently about their interpretations and then share out.
- Have team members discuss interpretations in small groups and then share out.
- After providing think time, pass a 'talking piece' around the table. When a team member has the talking piece, they may offer a question, a comment, or they may pass. During the passing of the talking piece, team members do not respond directly to one another.

4. Implications for Practice (10-15 minutes)

Ask: ***How might this data inform our approach to schoolwide SEL?***

As needed, follow up with:

- *What are the ways we can innovate to address what we see in the data to be more effective and equitable?*
- *Does the data suggest that any of our practices are ineffective? How could they be changed?*
- *What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your practice? About teaching and learning in general?*

5. Articulating Next Steps (3-5 minutes)

Ask: ***What are our team's next steps to promote continuous improvement?***

As needed, follow up with:

- *Who else needs to see this data? How will we share it?*
- *What else do we need to know before taking action on this data? How will we gather that information?*
- *What are we going to stop doing/start doing/keep doing as a result of this data? How will we communicate that to our staff and stakeholders?*

The team collaboratively develops next steps for taking action, assigns ownership, and sets a timeline for each. Within 24 hours, use the meeting notes to send a summary to all team members.

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SEL Data Reflection Protocol – Participant Handout

1. Facts: Describe the data (3-5 minutes)

- Describe—do not interpret or judge.
- Focus on observations of 'Who,' 'What,' 'Where,' and 'When.'
- Notice differences/disparities across the data.

2. Omissions: What information is missing in this data? (3-5 minutes)

- Consider the lived experience behind this data. What additional context would be helpful to the team in interpreting and acting on this data?
- What additional information would give us insight?
- Whose voices and experiences are not represented?
- What biases or blind spots might exist within our team as we interpret this data?
- How could students help us make sense of this data?

3. Interpretations: What does the data suggest? (5-10 minutes)

- Look for the bright spots and think about what may be contributing to success.
- Consider root causes.
- Connect the data to your personal observation and experience without blaming or naming individuals.
- Interpretations should be framed with an equity mindset.

4. Implications for Practice (10-15 minutes)

- What are ways we can innovate to be more effective and equitable?
- Does the data suggest that any of our practices are ineffective? How could they be changed?
- What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your practice? About teaching and learning in general?
- What ambitious yet feasible actions could our team take?

5. Next Steps (3-5 minutes)

- Team next steps (think communication, further inquiry, and possible adjustments to SEL implementation)
- My personal next steps

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Additional Prompts for Equity-Minded Data Reflection

These questions can stimulate equity-centered discussion throughout the data reflection protocol, particularly in steps 2-4 of the facilitator's guide. Select questions that best fit the type of data the team will be reviewing or brainstorm original questions using these as a model. Come to the data reflection with 2-3 questions and look for opportunities to ask them while the team is working through the protocol.

School Climate Survey Data

- *How are staff and students perceiving school climate differently?*
- *What do we know about the perceptions of newcomers to our school?*
- *How does our school's climate compare to how you remember your schooling experience?*
- *Are some groups experiencing school climate differently than others? How can we find out?*
- *How does our approach to school climate reflect the cultures and identies of our students and families?*
- *How can we elevate student voice as we define next steps?*

Student Achievement Data

- *Does this data give a full picture of students' abilities? What else would complete the picture?*
- *Is there anything about this assessment that disadvantages some students?*
- *Do the students value the knowledge they are assessed on? How can we find out?*
- *Do over/ underachieving students have any demographic similarities?*
- *What would your students say about this data? Their parents?*
- *What kinds of academic interventions are we offering? Are these interventions being accessed in an equitable way?*

Discipline or Attendance Data

- *What could be the root cause of our attendance issues?*
- *When you were in school, did you have attendance and/or disciplinary issues? What factors were at play for you?*
- *How do you think students with chronic attendance issues perceive school climate?*
- *Is disciplinary action applied equitably across all demographic groups?*
- *Do students believe discipline is applied equitably? How can we find out?*
- *How might biases and assumptions be harming our students who have more disciplinary issues?*

Family/Community Engagement Data

- *Is our parent engagement equitable? Who are we not reaching?*
- *If you lived in this community and were deciding whether to have your child attend here, what would make you feel welcome?*
- *What biases or assumptions may be causing staff to engage more or less with families?*
- *What assumptions do we tend to make about parents who are difficult to contact? What other explanations could there be?*
- *What lived experiences impact a family or community member's interest in engaging with our school?*
- *Do we have relationships with other important institutions in this community? How could these relationships make us more effective?*

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