

Using Data to Support Students Experiencing Trauma

Educators and support staff at all levels can explore and use data to support students experiencing trauma. Individual and aggregate data can help identify students at risk for traumatic stress; students’ relevant strengths and needs; and school and community contexts that may impact students’ well-being. Ultimately, this information can influence programming to foster more supportive and positive school environments. In this handout, we present different types of data available (at both individual and aggregate levels), who potentially can use the data, and how the data can be used.

What data are available?

There are **different types of individual and aggregate data available** and remembering the **ABCDSSS** can help. It is important to note that data need to be examined holistically, considering the larger context and other types of data available. For example, students experiencing trauma at home may not exhibit any academic or behavioral issues if the school environment and staff are supportive.

Data type	Information	Data source examples
A cademic	Traumatic stress may impact students’ learning and academic progress and outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and national assessments • Grade point average (GPA) • Formative assessments • Teacher surveys
B ehavior	Students experiencing trauma may exhibit externalizing (e.g., disruptive behaviors) or internalizing (e.g., withdrawal) behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Disciplinary referrals • School nurse visits • Teacher/staff observations
C ommunity	Students may experience ongoing traumatic events in their lives outside of the school environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community crime rates • Community overdose data • Census data (e.g., poverty)
D emographic	Students have different experiences, needs, and strengths based on their backgrounds, circumstances, and identities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race/ethnicity • Free or reduced-price lunch status • English Learner (EL) status • Foster care status • Homelessness
S urvey & screening	Traumatic stress may be associated with various mental health and behavioral concerns and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth risk behavior surveys • Mental health screeners • Student engagement surveys
S chool	School climate and culture may impact students’ safety and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate surveys • Graduation and dropout rates • Focus groups with families, students, and staff

Data type	Information	Data source examples
Staff	Staff availability, capacity, and well-being may impact staff-student relationships and students' experiences at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff questionnaires on attitudes and knowledge about trauma • Staff demographics and assignments • Staff well-being surveys

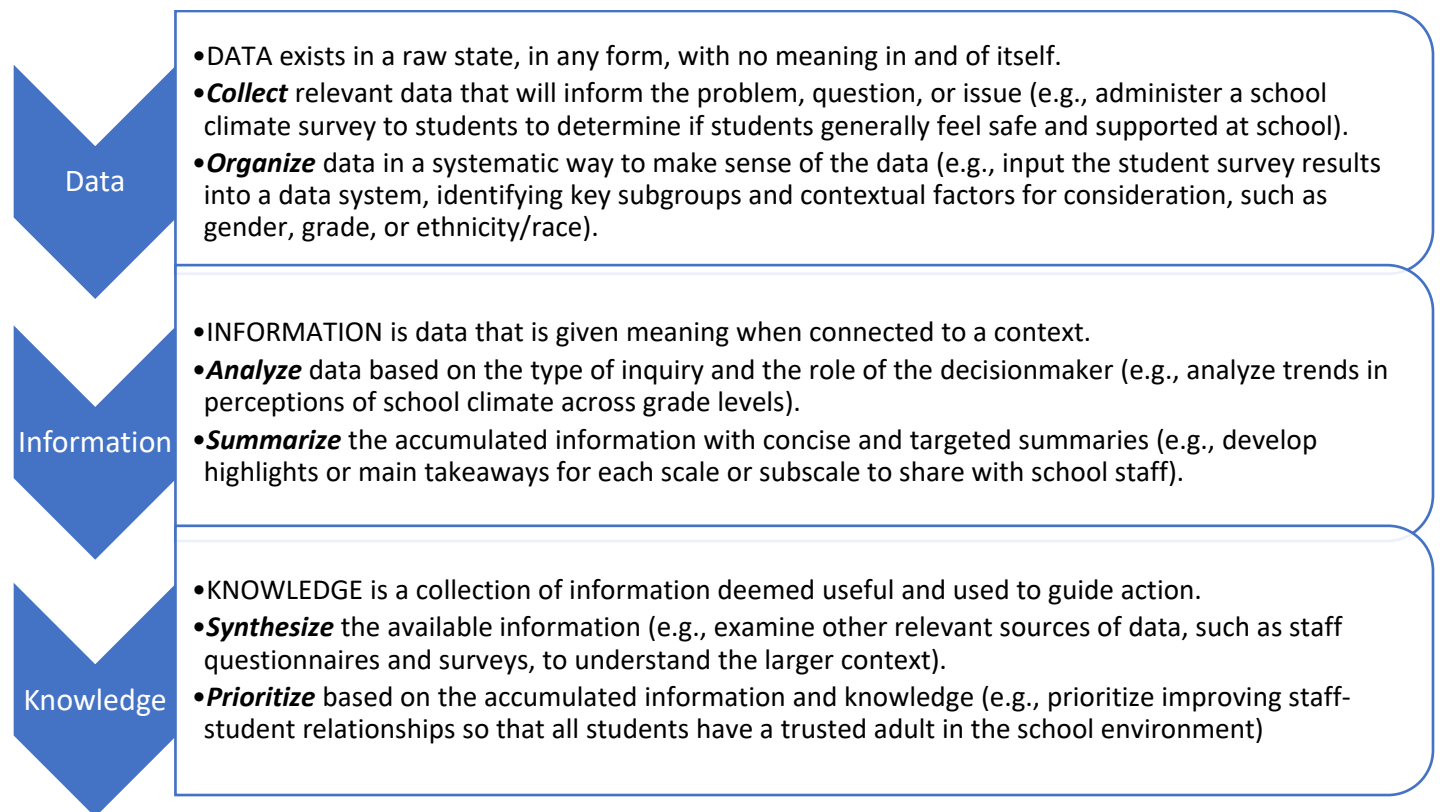
Who will use the data and why?

Once you identify available and relevant data, consider **who** will access, analyze, or review the data and for **what purpose(s)**. The table below is adapted from the REL Mid-Atlantic's [Data-driven decisionmaking in education agencies](#) infographic.

Who will access, analyze, or review the data	For what purposes
Classroom teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the needs, strengths, progress, and performance of students • Developing and revising classroom instruction to support all students' social-emotional and behavioral well-being, including students experiencing trauma • Understanding attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge about trauma to identify areas of strength and growth
School administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the needs, strengths, progress, and performance of staff and students • Developing and revising school plans, targets, and goals to support all students' social-emotional and behavioral well-being, including students experiencing trauma • Monitoring the implementation and impact of school practices, programs, and policies
Superintendents, school boards, district staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the needs, strengths, progress, and performance of schools, staff, and students • Developing and revising district curricula, plans, targets, and goals designed to support all students' social-emotional and behavioral well-being, including students experiencing trauma • Monitoring the implementation and impact of school practices, programs, and policies
State education agency officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating the implementation and impact of programs designed to support all students' social-emotional and behavioral well-being, including students experiencing trauma • Developing and revising state curricula and goals

How can you use the data to make decisions?

Once you have identified who will use the data and for what purpose(s), consider **how to use the data** for decisionmaking. [Mandinach, Honey, and Light \(2006\)](#) presented a conceptual framework for data-driven decisionmaking in which raw **data** are transformed to **information** and ultimately to **knowledge** that can be applied in decisionmaking. The data to knowledge continuum includes six skills/actions that are crucial to each level of the process, including the following: “collect” and “organize” at the data level, “analyze” and “summarize” at the information level, and “synthesize” and “prioritize” at the knowledge level. More details are available in the paper (see pages 8–9 in particular).



References and additional resources

James Bell Associates. (2018). *Guide to data-driven decision making: Using data to inform practice and policy decisions in child welfare organizations*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.jbassoc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Guide-to-Data-Driven-Decision-Making.pdf>

- While the guide is designed primarily for child welfare agencies and professionals, other organizations that serve children and families, including schools, may find the guide to be useful in understanding the general process of data-driven decisionmaking, including identifying key questions to be answered (e.g., developing a theory of change and logic model), collecting and analyzing relevant data (e.g., ensuring high quality data), communicating results to key decisionmakers (e.g., identifying the target audience), and refining processes, organizations, or systems by assessing outcomes. The guide discusses primary (e.g., surveys, observations, interviews, focus groups) and secondary (e.g., national data systems, community crime records) data on mental health, substance use, child development, and maltreatment risk that are associated with trauma.

Mandinach, E. B., Honey, M., & Light, D. (2006, April 9). *A theoretical framework for data-driven decision making* [Paper]. AERA annual meeting, San Francisco, CA, United States.

http://cct.edc.org/sites/cct.edc.org/files/publications/DataFrame_AERA06.pdf

- This paper discusses a framework for data-driven decisionmaking across the classroom, school, and district levels. The examples provided focus mainly on academic and learning outcomes, but the paper provides an overarching conceptual model of how data can be used in different ways by education stakeholders for cross-level decisionmaking.

REL Mid-Atlantic. (n.d.). *Research review: Data-driven decision making in education agencies*.

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/pdf/Data_Use_Infographic.pdf

- This infographic provides information about using data in education, including identifying relevant and diagnostic data and who will use the data and for what purpose, and also highlights the importance of relevant and diagnostic (reliable and valid) data. The infographic focuses on data on academic and learning skills but provides helpful general guidance on meaningful and careful use of data.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. (2009). *Implementing data-informed decision making in schools: Teacher access, supports and use*.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED504191.pdf>

- This report provides information about school and district data practices and systems, district and school supports for data-informed decisionmaking, types of data available for teachers, and preparation of teachers for data use. The report discusses a range of data available to teachers, mostly focusing on academic and learning outcomes, as well as some behavioral data (e.g., attendance) that can be used with other sources of data to identify strengths and needs of students experiencing trauma.