

What is disaggregated data?

Typically, student achievement data are reported for whole populations, or as aggregate data. It is not, however, until the data are disaggregated that patterns, trends and other important information are uncovered. Disaggregated data simply means looking at test scores by specific subgroups of students.

Here's another way to think about it...

Former United States Secretary of Labor Robert Reich used to quip that he (5 feet tall) and Shaquille O'Neal (7 feet) had an average height of 6 feet, but that the coach would be well advised to consider more than their combined average before putting Reich on the basketball team.

Here are several different ways to disaggregate data:

- ❑ Gender
- ❑ Socio-economic status
- ❑ Mobility (students moving in and out of the districts at any given time)
- ❑ Race and ethnicity
- ❑ Special education and disability
- ❑ English as a Second Language (ESL)
- ❑ Enrollment patterns in courses like physics or algebra
- ❑ Successful completion of specific course such as advanced placement

These are some of the questions you can begin to answer when you disaggregate data:

1. Is there an achievement gap in reading, math or science among different groups of students? Is the gap growing larger, smaller or staying the same?
2. Are male students performing better than female students in math? Why and how will we increase the performance of female students?
3. Are there more poor or minority students in special education classes than there are in advanced placement classes? What are the reasons behind the difference and what will we do about it?

Disaggregated data can also tell you whether student mobility, professional development for teachers, or parental involvement is affecting student performance. How? You can look at the data by classrooms in a school, by grade levels within a school or district, by schools within a district, or by the amount of training a teacher has received. The task of retrieving this information is best left in the hands of your district staff. Once you have the disaggregated data, your role as a board member is to look for larger trends and patterns.