

NDPC-SD Local-level School Completion Data Workbook Discussion Guide

At the Local level, the probes first address the graduation and dropout rates. First, you will want to know the trends in these rates to see whether graduation and dropout rates are improving or slipping, and whether your school achieved the state targets in these areas. It is also useful to know whether there are differences in these rates for youth with IEPs compared to youth without IEPs. If there are discrepancies in these rates, you will probably want to dig deeper and examine the factors responsible for these differences.

The Local-level Core Data worksheet generates two charts, which you can print from the Local charts tab of the workbook, showing the local-level trends in graduation and dropout rates. Ideally, there should be a positive trend in the graduation rate and a downward trend in the dropout rate. The same worksheet calculates the gap between the rates for youth with an IEP and all students. There should be a minimal, or at least a decreasing gap in the rates of the two groups of youth. If this is not the case, it is advisable to dig further into the data using the additional data and probing questions to identify areas that might be responsible for the observed trends.

Note: to ensure that valid conclusions can be reached about the three years of graduation and dropout data you entered in the worksheets, make certain that the rates you entered are comparable. For example, the formula used to calculate the two dropout rates should be the same and the data should represent the same age or grade range of students over the same period of time. Likewise, the graduation rate formula should be the same for both groups, as should the definition of “graduation” in your context.

Consider the other local-level probes for graduation and dropout. Consider any initiatives currently underway in your state and/or school. First, are they succeeding? If so, what is making them work well? If not, what needs to be changed to make them more successful? Can successful initiatives in your school be broadened to include more youth? Can resources invested in one initiative be shared with another to increase their joint impact?

Look too at the target and focus of each initiative. What group(s) of youth are able to, and do participate in each initiative? Are the initiatives aimed at all youth, a particular category of youth, or at individual youth? Does a particular initiative focus solely on youth with disabilities? If so, could the same initiative benefit all youth? Would it be practical and feasible to enlarge the scope of the initiative?

Digging deeper

The Local-level Core Data worksheet produces trend charts and gap values for the attendance rate, academic performance and discipline data, which might indicate areas that are causing problems. These charts may be printed individually by selecting a chart and using the “Print” command in Excel. Are there particular areas that show undesirable trends? Are there large gaps between the performance of youth with IEPs compared to all students? Did your school meet the state targets in all, some or none of these areas?

If your school’s graduation, dropout or attendance rates are not moving in the desired direction, continue through the local tabs in the worksheet, entering your school’s additional data for academic achievement and discipline, and work through the remaining local probe questions.

Can you identify specific grades that are having problems in English or math? Are there performance gaps between youth with IEPs and all students? If there are particular grades having difficulties, consider the academic supports your school has in place and evaluate how well these are working. Are additional supports needed, or can existing supports be extended to include the youth who are having problems?

Look also at the discipline referral rates for youth with IEPs and all youth, noting the performance gaps. Consider the behavioral supports in place and whether they need to be augmented or modified.