

Digging Deeper into Content Areas: District/School and Teacher Level Questions

As an individual teacher, a school or district administrator, and/or a member of a school-wide team, how do I use PVAAS data, along with other data, to analyze professional practices and engage in continuous improvement?

The Digging Deeper into Content Areas documents are available in the three core subjects, ELA, Math, and Science. These documents are designed to help teachers and administrators move from the initial step of identifying strengths, weaknesses, and patterns in data to determining the “root cause”—or the “why”—in order to plan for improvement and enhancements leading to continuous growth for all students.

These documents include questions at the Grade 3-5 level, the Grade 6-8 level, and for Keystones (Keystone Literature, Algebra I, and Biology). By looking at various contributing factors, these *Digging Deeper* documents go beyond the general questioning we might ask ourselves to the pertinent variables that must be addressed in analyzing data in this specific content area. Because data only tells us “what” is going on, not “why,” digging more deeply into a core subject area has great potential for improving student results!

It is widely acknowledged that self-reflection is key to improving one’s practices. However, teachers may ask, “What exactly should I reflect ON?” or, “What can I learn from the data?” or, “I analyzed the data, now what?” The teacher specific questions can help guide that process. Likewise, the questions may help administrators, both at the district and the school level, as well as school-wide teams to determine why they may be seeing patterns in school-wide data.

Using these questions effectively has the potential to take what might be a random process to a level of organization that encourages strategic discussion and probing in the specific core subject area being examined.

How to Use this Resource

1. Review the entire document first to become familiar with the format and the scope of questions offered for discussion and probing.
2. Decide whether you are beginning with the district/school level questions or the teacher level questions.
 - a. Note: If you are a district level administrator, there are questions included that allow for a systems-level perspective. Many of these questions fall in the *School-Curriculum* section, as that area is typically addressed as an entire system.
3. Determine if there is one area on which you need to focus (Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, or Organization), or if the issues may be dispersed across the four areas.
4. Carefully read and reflect on the areas you are targeting and star/flag those questions that you (or the data team) believes to be worth further “digging,” discussion, and reflection.
5. Consider other data and determine the EVIDENCE to support your reflection and analyses.
6. Choose one or more areas for goal setting and focus to apply to the current group of students in your classroom or school.

Remember, this is not a checklist or sequenced in any specific order to be simply handed to the school-wide team or individual teacher. Rather, it is a listing of issues to explore more deeply. The document requires discussion about evidence of practice and honest reflection, along with careful selection of where to start and how deeply to probe. The focus and starting point is dependent on the school’s current status and needs, as well as the needs of individual teachers. Each question is to be considered and answered with solid evidence.