

## What Matters Most: Key Practices Guide

### KEY PRACTICE 1: USE DATA WELL

*While districts, schools, and individual teachers use data and have been for some time now, there has been too much emphasis placed only on the performance of students on state assessments. While these data are important for strategic planning, they provide little ongoing guidance to teachers or administrators. Districts that have "moved their numbers" for all children have or are engaged in developing district-wide processes that allow for more collective use of relevant data to make smarter decisions, including the ongoing assessment of teaching and learning at the classroom, school, and district levels. These processes include the development, implementation, and ongoing use of teacher-developed formative assessments, and the use of grade-level/departmental/course, and vertical teams to collaboratively score these shared assessments and plan for shared instruction. They also include the use of building and district benchmark assessments. Fullan (2008) states that principals working directly with teachers in the use of data is more than twice as powerful as any other leadership dimension, and Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found that the reliability for assessing student learning and district decision making was one critical characteristic of effective districts.*

ROLE	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONSIDERATIONS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Increasing the Performance of Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement</i></p>
<p><b>DISTRICTS &amp; THEIR SCHOOLS</b></p>	<p><b>To what degree do districts and their schools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish clear expectations for effective data use at all levels of the system?</li> <li>▪ Use data to identify district, building, and classroom needs, and establish goals and performance targets at the district and school level?</li> <li>▪ Use data to measure the degree of implementation of strategies/actions, including professional development, to reach district/school-identified goals?</li> <li>▪ Use data to evaluate the effect of strategies/actions on student learning?</li> <li>▪ Require teachers and teacher teams to use data to establish instructional priorities and inform instructional practice on an ongoing basis?</li> <li>▪ Model and monitor the use of data to inform instructional decisions?</li> <li>▪ Provide support at all levels in the effective use of data to facilitate higher levels of learning for all students and groups of students, such as students with disabilities?</li> </ul>