

Schmoker M. (2003). *First Things First: Demystifying Data Analysis*, Educational Leadership, (22-24).

When it comes to data analysis one would admit that it is an overwhelming process that can sometimes leave educators more confused than anything else. Knowing exactly where the problem lies is the only effective way to improve, not only test scores, but a student's education level. Zoning in on weaknesses and then collaborating through the content areas, is an excellent and effective way to improve students' achievement.

After reading Mike Schmoker's article "First Things First: Demystifying Data Analysis," I realized that I am not alone in my resistance to data. He breaks it down into two simple questions: "How many students are succeeding in the subjects I teach? Within those subjects, what are the areas of strength or weakness?" If administrators concentrated on these core questions, the use of data can not only become useful to educators, but effective.

As a former English teacher myself, knowing where my students need help and practice, enables me to utilize my content as scaffolding, not only for their success in my classroom, but their success in all content areas. As Schmoker says "the primary purpose of analyzing data [is] improving instruction to achieve greater students' success." But if the data collected is not focused and clear, then it cannot be useful to anyone, least of all the students.

Another important point in Schmoker's article is the collaborative use of data within a school. If students have low comprehension scores, then all content areas are affected. Being aware of it gives educators the opportunity to use the data collaboratively, increasing student achievement. Setting short term goals, meeting consistently, and having an open forum to

discussion and questions, will not only work on the problem at hand, but strengthen the school as a whole, in its ability to confront a weakness and come up with a unanimous solution.