




# PAINLESS STATE TEST RESULTS: WRAPPING UP THE YEAR CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT DATA

It’s that time of the year again: in many states, summative test results from last spring are on their way back to districts like yours. Whether they have butterflies or pits in their stomachs, district and school leaders are bound to find the news nerve-wracking.

Here are tips from some of the best state test result reveals we’ve seen. We hope they help you share your state test data with your district clearly and empathically.

Tip	Why?	What does it sound like?
 <p><b>Share the data beforehand</b></p>	<p>Everyone processes information differently, so give folks a chance to review the results and generate questions before a live discussion if they wish. This is especially true for high-stakes data: with the element of surprise eliminated, everyone will have more emotional and mental bandwidth to engage constructively.</p>	<p>“Dear colleagues,</p> <p>You can find the state test results from last year by clicking <a href="#">here</a>. In preparation for our data day on Thursday, please take 10 minutes to review. We encourage you to explore both where we have succeeded and how we can improve. (Hint: try exploring some of the interactive reports that will help you disaggregate by subgroup and identify trends!)</p> <p>Best, Data Champion”</p>
 <p><b>Dedicate the time</b></p>	<p>If it’s not held as sacred, it won’t happen! Especially during the beginning-of-the-year rush.</p>	<p>“Take a deep breath and set aside everything else on your mind right now. It’ll still be there in an hour.”</p>
 <p><b>Never lose your why</b></p>	<p>Data can too often be perceived as cold, clinical, or punitive. If you kick off the discussion with a clear connection to your mission—your students—you’ll get both analytical and emotional engagement from your audience. Bonus points if you can get your audience to offer that clear connection in their own words.</p>	<p>“To remind you why we chose _____ as one of our three core strategic goals this year, [insert link to students].”</p> <p>Or try a more interactive approach:</p> <p>“Would anyone like to share why they think we take the time to review this data?”</p> <p>“Great, thank you. And why do we care about [insert answer you just received]?”</p> <p>“Great. And why do we care about that?”</p> <p>[Keep going until the group traces data use back to your students.]</p>

Tip	Why?	What does it sound like?
 <p><b>Reiterate that goals are a collective responsibility</b></p>	<p>State test results are the data most likely to be read as top-down judgment. Set up your group for a more engaged, empowered conversation by referencing your earlier consensus. (Note: for this reason, make sure strategic planning successfully and sincerely includes all stakeholders.)</p>	<p>Lots of first person plurals: “We decided on this metric last summer as one of our strategic goals...”</p>
 <p><b>Express data quality confidence, not perfection</b></p>	<p>You want your audience to trust their data—but data quality is an ongoing process, and you need help uncovering errors! This need is especially true if your state test results include student-provided data; in some cases, records might not match and might even be dropped. When sharing those results, walk the line between confidence and humility, and provide a clear process for collecting feedback.</p>	<p>We spent a lot of time making sure this data was clean and current before we shared it with you today. But there’s always a chance that you find something that doesn’t look quite right. If that’s the case, please alert me in the following way . . .”</p>
 <p><b>Focus on specific data points</b></p>	<p>When presented with too much data and too little focus, groups tend to do one of two things: shut down from information overload or scatter into each individual chasing a different data question. Keep the group focused on what matters right from the get-go.</p>	<p>“I drilled down on overall proficiency and noticed that our English Language Learner proficiency is much higher than it was last year. Because that’s another one of our strategic goals, I thought we could spend some time discussing it.”</p>
 <p><b>Highlight bright spots</b></p>	<p>This work is hard! Keep the team motivated by sharing wins in a way that feels genuine. Don’t race through the positives to get to the rest of the session; that celebration will feel artificial. Instead, slow down and go beyond the results by asking how they were accomplished. You’ll have a more productive conversation and folks will truly feel that their good work was appreciated.</p>	<p>“When we regroup, I’d like you to bring one bright spot and one area that you think warrants further conversation. For that bright spot, please share what strategies allowed you and your team to accomplish it.”</p>
 <p><b>Model positive data culture</b></p>	<p>The purpose of data use is two-fold: to enable the discovery of new insights and support the investigation of new solutions. The second part isn’t always second nature; model what an open-minded, solutions-oriented data attitude looks like to those who might otherwise shut down.</p>	<p>“As you can see, Washington Middle’s seventh grade scores are lower than what we see across the rest of the district. We don’t have a good understanding of how that’s happening yet, so we’ve planned a couple visits so we can plan what types of interventions we might want to try first.”</p>
 <p><b>Encourage exploration!</b></p>	<p>For better or worse, high-stakes assessments trigger high engagement in data. Capitalize on that attention by reminding folks how to access the data on their own and encouraging them to use it to test out interventions and track toward success regularly, not just once per year.</p>	<p>The sound of mouses clicking! Nothing beats muscle memory, so at the end of your presentation, ask folks to break out their laptops, roll up their sleeves, and explore the data on their own—you can circle the room to provide assistance as needed.</p> <p>One more note: the more interactive your reports, the richer the engagement. If possible, use an interactive platform designed to answer questions about trends, subgroups, specific individuals, etc., without confusing anyone. (Check out <a href="#">Mosaic District Progress Monitoring</a> as an example.)</p>