Tool G: The Anatomy of a Data Request

- Once you have identified the specific questions you want to ask in your data request, you must compile those questions in the data request itself.

- The heavily annotated data request below is loosely based on an actual data request made to a state in 2018. It aims to offer a more detailed sense of what to ask for and what to avoid. This data request is extensive and ambitious. Consider beginning with a much more limited request. You can submit more detailed requests after you examine the results of your first request.

1. **SCHOOL DETAILS:** *This request will give you critical information about districts and schools that can help you add context to data you receive through other requests.*

   One row per school per year in 2013-18 with the following columns (if available):[1]

   A. *Year*

   B. *School name*

   C. *Unique district ID*

   D. *Unique school ID[2]*

   E. *School address*

   F. *School latitude*

   G. *School longitude[3]*

   Other school details to consider: *By asking for more details on schools' characteristics, you may be able to identify disparities in access and participation from one type of school to the next.[4]*

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Urbanicity. Does your state's data system indicate which schools are urban, suburban or rural?

- School type. Does the data system indicate which schools are charter schools? Magnet schools? Alternative schools?

- High-poverty schools. Does the data system indicate which schools have high concentrations of poverty — e.g., where more than half of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch?

- High-minority schools. Does the data system indicate which schools have high concentrations of students of color?

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1. By requesting data for as many years as possible, you can examine trends in your state. NOTE: Your state's data system may not have data available for this many years.

2. Include these unique identifiers in every data request. Doing so will allow you to analyze data at the district and school level. These unique IDs can also allow you to link different datasets.

3. This geographic information can allow you to display schools on an interactive or static online map.

4. States often track and publish this kind of data on publicly available websites.

2. **TOTAL NUMBER OF CLASSES/COURSES OFFERED IN THE ARTS AND IN ALL SUBJECTS:**

   This request will allow you to examine availability of arts classes by discipline.

   One row per school per year in 2013-18 with the following columns (as available):

   A. *Year*

   B. *School name*

   C. *Unique district ID*

   D. *Unique school ID[5]*

   E. *Total courses offered in any course (arts or otherwise)[6]*

   F. *Total number of courses in which any student received a grade in any of the available art forms[7]*

   G. *Total courses offered in music*

   H. *Total courses offered in visual arts*

   I. *Total courses offered in dance*

   J. *Total courses offered in theatre*

   K. *Total courses offered in media arts*

3. **TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING GRADES IN THE ARTS:** *This request will allow you to examine participation in arts classes, by discipline.*

   One row per school per grade per year in 2013-18 with the following columns (as available):

   A. *Year*

   B. *School name*

   C. *Unique district ID*

   D. *Unique school ID*

   E. *Grade level*

   F. *Number of students enrolled[8]*

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5. By knowing which district or school offered courses in what disciplines, you can calculate the percentage of students who attend schools that offer arts courses, by discipline area. This can be an important marker of access.

6. By requesting the total number of courses offered, regardless of discipline, you can calculate what percentage of courses were offered in the arts.

7. Some data systems define a course as having been offered if any students received a grade in it. Such data would not be available until the end of the school year. Before making a request, clarify with state data professionals how they determine if a school has offered a course.

8. Don't forget to ask for total enrollment in any course, arts or otherwise, in each school and district. That will allow you to calculate percentages of students enrolled in arts courses (e.g, "46% of Lincoln Middle School seventh-graders completed a music course in 2017.")

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G. *Number of students that received a credit/completion mark in at least one arts course during that year[9]*

H. *Number of students that received a credit/completion mark in at least one arts course during that year – music[10]*

I. *Number of students that received a credit/completion mark in at least one arts course during that year – visual arts*

J. *Number of students that received a credit/completion mark in at least one arts course during that year – dance*

K. *Number of students that received a credit/completion mark in at least one arts course during that year –- theatre*

L. *Number of students that received a credit/completion mark in at least one arts course during that year – media arts*

Other categories of students to consider: *If you would like to examine differences in enrollments by different groups of students, consider asking for the data broken out by student group as well as data for all students. For example, consider requesting extra columns of data for each of the following subgroups:*

- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch
- English language learner status
- Disability status

For each subgroup, you must request total school enrollments and total enrollments in arts classes — broken out by grade level, if appropriate. For example, ask for the total number of African American ninth-graders in the school as well as the total number of African American ninth-graders who received a credit/completion mark in an arts course. This will allow you to calculate the percentage of African Americans who enrolled in arts classes and compare it to percentages for other races or ethnicities.

Please note that state may suppress some data to avoid violating student privacy. If the numbers for any group in any district or school get too small, states typically do not share them.

4. **TOTAL CREDITS EARNED/COURSES COMPLETED IN THE ARTS:** *This request will help you determine the intensity of arts course-taking by district or school.*

One row per school per grade per year in 2013-18 with the following columns (as available):

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9. By asking for numbers of students who completed "at least one arts course" in a year, you will get unduplicated counts of students. In other words, no student would be counted twice for taking two different arts courses in one year.

10. You will need to define what it means to have taken a course in terms that correspond to how your state collects the data. This request defines it has having received a credit or a completion mark.

  A. *Year*

  B. *School name*

  C. *Unique district ID*

  D. *Unique school ID*

  E. *Grade level*

  F. *Number of credits earned/courses completed in any course in any subject during that school year*

  G. *Number of credits earned/courses completed in any available arts course during that year[11]*

  H. *Number of credits earned/courses completed in any available arts course during that year – music*

  I. *Number of credits earned/courses completed in any available arts course during that year – visual arts*

  J. *Number of credits earned/courses completed in any available arts course during that year – dance*

  K. *Number of credits earned/courses completed in any available arts course during that year – theatre*

  L. *Number of credits earned/courses completed in any available arts course during that year – media arts*

5. ENROLLMENTS IN EVERY FINE ARTS COURSE TAUGHT FROM 2013-18: *This request will give you more granular data on enrollments in every arts course offered in a school, such as concert band (rather than just music), or theatre – stagecraft (rather than just theatre).*

One row per school year/school/fine arts course/teacher/grade with the following fields:

  A. *School year*

  B. *Unique district ID*

  C. *Unique school ID*

  D. *School name*

  E. *Fine arts course number*

  F. *Unique teacher ID assigned to fine arts course number*

  G. *Grade level*

  H. *Number of students that completed the course[12]*

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11. The number of credits earned will probably be larger than the number of students taking them, because some students take more than one arts course per year. Together with data on student enrollment, these data can allow you to examine how many arts classes students typically take.

12. While this request will produce enrollments by course, you must not add these enrollment data together to calculate total enrollments in a more general arts discipline or in the arts overall. If you do so, you will double-count students who take more than one arts course per year.

6. NUMBER OF ARTS TEACHERS: *This request will allow you to examine access to arts teachers by district and school.*

One row per school per year in 2013-18with the following columns (as available):

  A. *Year*

  B. *Unique district ID*

  C. *Unique school ID*

  D. *Total number of full time equivalent teachers (effective the 20th day of school) with certifications or endorsements in the arts[13]*

  E. *Total number of full time equivalent teachers (effective the 20th day of school) listed as the teacher of record for an arts course*

  F. *Total number of full time equivalent teachers (effective the 20th day of school) filling an arts teaching position on the school budget (i.e., dedicated arts teacher)[14]*

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13. Teacher assignments can be unstable in the opening weeks of school. Many state data systems will have data on teachers recorded after those first transitional weeks. Note: Not all teachers with arts certification or endorsement may be teaching an arts course. Also, when you present data on the number of certified teachers, consider spelling out your state's requirements for certification and endorsement to provide better context for the data

14. Some, though not all, data systems may record which teachers fill a teaching position explicitly funded as an arts teaching position. This information may allow you to count the number of arts teachers dedicated to teaching primarily the arts. This information can be helpful in elementary schools, for example, where teachers often hold general certifications that include the arts even though they are not dedicated arts teachers.