# TEACHER TIP – Using data walls

A **data wall** can use simple materials such as sticky notes and masking tape to visualise student achievement over time. Any grouping of students, from a single class to a whole school, can form the basis of a data wall. Many schools are already using this powerful tool to monitor teaching impact on student learning growth, and centre professional conversations on identifying the classroom strategies needed to keep every student progressing.

## BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

* See the impact of your teaching

By “putting faces on the data”[[1]](#footnote-1) a data wall reconnects numbers and percentages to real students. Physically moving an individual student’s sticky note along a wall is an active and tangible way to track their progress on a learning continuum.

* Improve your teaching

A data wall includes every student, shifting the conversation from ‘my students in my classroom’ to ‘our students in our school’. It can be the place where you gather with your Professional Learning (PL) team to transform data into actionable classroom strategies.

## ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

* Start small

Set up a data wall at any time. It is a great way for a PL team to start an inquiry-based improvement cycle. Start with a single curriculum standard or set of students and build it up. Talk to school leaders about introducing data walls across the school.

* Use data from common, moderated assessments

Common assessments are the foundation of a data wall – providing the achievement yardstick to measure student learning growth. Moderation ensures each student’s place on the relevant learning continuum is displayed accurately.

* Look for patterns in the data

Pattern-spot in your PL team, using the following prompts to guide the discussion[[2]](#footnote-2):

* *Generalisations*: “In general, I noticed...”
* *Exceptions*: “Exceptions to this were...”
* *Contradictions*: “On the one hand....but on the other hand...”
* *Surprises*: “Things I was (wasn’t) expecting to see, but didn’t (did) see were…”
* *Puzzles*: “Things that still puzzle me that may need following up on are…”
* Ask what each student is ready to learn next

Refer to the data wall in every PL team, asking: What are students at each level of proficiency ready to learn? What might these students do with scaffolding, modelling, or the support of a more capable peer or the teacher?[[3]](#footnote-3)

This centres conversation on evaluating teaching impact and identifying teaching interventions and learning strategies to move every student forward, especially those making little or no progress.

* Use high impact teaching interventions

The search for teaching interventions to keep students moving along the learning continuum should be guided by reliable principles and strategies. The [Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/principlesexcellence.aspx), [High Impact Teaching Strategies](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/hits.aspx) and [Literacy Teaching Toolkit](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/literacy/Pages/default.aspx) draw on the best available evidence from international research, leading experts and high-performing Victorian schools.

## RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

To access the full resource this Teacher Tip is based on, see: [*Professional Practice Note 5: Using data walls to turn data into instruction*](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/collaboration/PPLD/WSEU_Public_Documents/Professional_practice_note_5_data_walls.pdf).

To hear a leading international expert talk about using data walls, see: [Dr Lyn Sharratt on data walls](https://vimeo.com/258562802/f12086a909).

## FEEDBACK WELCOME

For more information, or to share your feedback, email: [professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au).

1. Sharratt, L. and Fullan, M. (2012). *Putting FACES on the data: What great leaders do!* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Knowledge Institute: <https://knowledgeinstitute.co.nz/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Adapted from Griffin, P. E. (2018). *Assessment for teaching. Cambridge*, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)