

The D3A2 Discourse

*A Periodic Publication of the Ohio
Data-Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement Project
July 2006*



Introduction

The Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement (D3A2) project is a long-term initiative focused on developing the capacity of educators while improving instruction and student achievement. D3A2 will provide pervasive access to timely data and educational resources aligned to Ohio's Academic Content Standards. The primary goals of D3A2 are to:

- Improve educator's comfort and proficiency in analyzing data to inform instruction and practices.
- Contribute to a sustainable infrastructure to promote and enhance information-based education practice and content alignment across the state.
- Leverage technology user groups (i.e., school districts, application vendors and information technology centers) to accelerate the integration of existing educational tools and the development of new data systems.

D3A2 is a cooperative effort that is being developed and governed by stakeholder groups rather than any single entity. Numerous school districts and professional education organizations are supporting this initiative. D3A2 will provide teachers with access to item analysis assessment data, tools to interpret areas needing improvement, and links to aligned educational content resources. The initial release of this multi-year multi-phased project is scheduled to be operational in December 2006.

The D3A2 initiative is one of several new statewide collaborative projects that are being enabled by the Ohio K-12 Network with its utilization of the Third Frontier Network (TFN) fiber-based high-speed backbone that provides the Ohio K-12 educational community with the most advanced K-12 statewide network in the nation. The D3A2 and Ohio K-12 Network projects demonstrate a collaborative strategy of using technology to help meet educational needs of students.

Release 1.0

The first release of the D3A2 initiative will provide school districts with the opportunity to load data into a secure statewide data warehouse with up to three years of statewide assessment data at the classroom item analysis level, including the ability to analyze results for individual students at the standard level. This capability will be coupled with tools to assist teachers in interpreting areas for improvement, and links to aligned electronic educational content resources.

School District Readiness for Release 1.0

School districts that wish to be ready to participate in Release 1.0 of the D3A2 initiative beginning in December 2006 can take several actions now in preparation. These steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Begin providing your instructional staff, administrators, board of education, and public with information about the D3A2 initiative so that each individual has a basic understanding of the project and its potential benefits for your school district.
2. Encourage your district staff to visit the D3A2 web site (www.d3a2.org) regularly to keep updated on the latest information regarding the project.
3. Identify a small group of volunteers from among your school district's instructional staff and administrators to be "D3A2 Pioneers" (early adopters) that will be among the first in your school district to utilize the D3A2 item analysis tools when they become available in December 2006. These volunteers should ideally be individuals that are comfortable with the use of computers

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and data, who can share their experiences with others within your school district.

4. Locate your detailed item analysis data from state assessments (OGT and Achievement) for the past three years and be prepared to work with your ITC to load the data into the D3A2 secure data warehouse. Many school districts have already loaded this data into DSL, DASL, or eSIS, but it may be more efficient to transfer the data to the D3A2 secure data warehouse by reloading the data from the CDROM provided by the assessment vendor.

Information Technology Center (ITC) Readiness for Release 1.0

As with school districts there are a number of actions that an ITC can begin taking in preparation for Release 1.0 of the D3A2 initiative. These steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Begin providing your internal staff and your participating school districts with information about the D3A2 initiative as it becomes available.
2. Have members of your staff participate in one or more of the various committees of the D3A2 initiative as staff time permits.
3. Identify a small group of volunteers from among your participating school districts' instructional staff and administrators to be "D3A2 Pioneers" (early adopters) that will be among the first of your school districts to utilize the D3A2 item analysis tools when they become available in December 2006. These volunteers should ideally be individuals that are comfortable with the use of computers and data, who can share their experiences with others.
4. It is believed that the initial deployment will utilize the following technologies that should be researched by your technical staff: Apache web server, Tomcat application server, LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol), and Shibboleth web-based single sign-on middleware. Training will be planned for these software technologies in September through November 2006, but beginning to learn about these tools and how they work will be beneficial to your ITC.
5. Prepare for the need to provide a method of user identification and authentication for each user to be provided access to the D3A2 item analysis tools through your ITC. This will likely be implemented using LDAP in conjunction with one or more existing directory structures (e.g. – MS Active Directory, Novell, etc.) already in use by your ITC and/or participating school districts.

Additional D3A2 Information

Additional information regarding the D3A2 initiative can be found at the D3A2 web site (www.d3a2.org). Queries regarding the project can also be made to Eric James (eric.james@ode.state.oh.us).