Competency 1: Accountability (Teaching and Learning)

- **1.1 Related Task:** Ability to interpret meaning of various standardized tests to board, teachers and lay citizens.
- **1.1.3 Specific Task:**
  o Ability to use assessment data to identify weaknesses and recommend strategies for improving student performance.
- **Narrative Description of Task:**
  o Review results from most recent DIBELS' assessment for Gaines Elementary and the trend evident over the last two years. Analyze fourth grade in depth, including a factor analysis that identifies areas in which students are particularly proficient in reading and those areas where they are particularly deficient. Based on such analysis, recommend school improvement strategies tailored to strengthen student performance in fourth grade. Share the findings with teachers and other staff members.

Smart Goal: By April of 2016, do an item analysis of the 4th grade DIBELS' data that includes identifying proficient students as well as deficient areas and also offering a professional development plan of action.

Specific:	Analyze 4th grade DIBELS' trends and establish a plan of action for any areas of deficiency.
Measurable:	Establish a plan of action for any areas of deficiency.
Attainable:	Identifying achievement successes and deficiencies/gaps is necessary in guiding future decisions.
Relevant:	Identifying academic deficiencies can guide future professional development planning.
Timely:	By April 2016, do an item analysis and establish a plan of action to address all areas of deficiency in the 4th grade DIBELS' assessment.

Description and Rationale of Project:

Data will always play a crucial role in organizational and instructional decisions. Administrators need to be able to make informed decisions about the direction the school should take through identifying key characteristics of the school and identifying strengths and weaknesses. With so many educational tools at our fingertips that allow us to easily analyze the data at hand, it is shocking to see how schools can simply become complacent and not utilize those tools and analyze the data at hand. These tools allow us to see what changes need to be made by pointing out key strengths and weaknesses of the building. Therefore, a quality

administrator must have an understanding of how their students are performing by utilizing the data analysis tools, and then make properly informed decisions to better the school.

Data analysis is even more crucial now that mainstream education is all around us. As educators are even more pressured to ensure that all students are receiving an adequate education, it is imperative that administrators analyze the data to place their teachers in the best possible situations that allow for maximum student growth. It does not matter if students are below, at or above grade level, the quality of education must be that which promotes and provides students with the opportunity to be lifelong learners. Students should never be placed in a classroom in which they are not challenged academically nor allowed to expand their own knowledge and understanding. Therefore, the importance of data analysis is crucial as it allows the administrator to observe how students are progressing in various areas through the year. It is then necessary for schools to be aware of areas they are doing well in, as well as areas of necessary improvement. Data analysis will make this task more manageable.

I started this project by emailing the lead reading educational aide in our building and requesting to receive all fourth grade Dibels scores for this year and last year. The reason Dibels was chosen was for the simple fact that it is such a huge factor in deciding instructional interventions for classroom teachers. The Star Assessments could have been chosen, but they are relatively new to our district and school. The consistency of long-term trial is not there yet. Therefore, its data may not be as reliable because of a number of possible factors including lack of familiarity with the assessments, electronic testing, and a lack of exposure to the testing material and standards to measure. As the school and district are continuing to adapt to state regulations, new standards, and curriculum, it was determined that the best source to use to give a more accurate representation of literacy results of student performance in fourth grade would be the Dibels Test as previously mentioned.

With the data tool chosen, the next phase was to access the performance records over the last two years from the lead reading aide. Once the data was given to me via hard copy, I began looking at the various sources of data that was at my fingertips through close analysis of student progress monitoring reports, class progress monitoring reports, growth outcomes, and diagnostic reports. These reports presented valuable information that helped to paint a picture of the students overall performance on the test in fourth grade. With this, I began to analyze the results of our fourth grade students' performance from last year and this year up to the midyear window.

The reports provided an overall view of student performance by looking at five key areas. Those areas included words correct per minute, accuracy, retell, DAZE, and composite score. Scores of students are based on two parts. The first part is based on reading performance during a 1 minute read, one on one, with a reading aide. The aid essentially takes a running record and records the student performance. The second part is the DAZE where students are given 2 minutes to read a cloze reading passage and fill in the blanks with proper academic vocabulary. The purpose of this project was to determine the areas of weakness and focus points for instruction moving forward. I chose the Dibels Test as it provided the most comprehensive analysis of the fourth grade performance based on individuals and classrooms.

Once the data was chosen and received, I began to chart the classroom performances by creating a chart for each classroom at each testing window in fourth grade (fall, winter and spring) dating back to last year. All of the scores were input into PowerPoint charts where I broke them down by window and classroom. Finally, once the classroom data was uploaded for each category, a formula for calculating the classroom averages in each category was configured and graphed. Once I found the averages for each of the 5 areas in the classroom, I then compared it to the benchmark for that time of the year. Once that was all completed, I went through and analyzed the data looking for low scoring areas where the classroom averages are below the benchmark for that time of the year.

This data was then converted into bar graphs in PowerPoint to make it easily readable. The purpose of doing this was so that I could easily present the information to my administrator and possibly staff members so that they could see the overall performance of the students. It was then time to analyze the patterns and identify next steps to promote building growth in fourth grade literacy scores.

Data analysis of the made charts and graphs pointed out several key observations for all to see. The first thing I noticed was the minimal growth in one classroom between testing windows within the DAZE part of the Dibels testing while the other fourth grade had a lot of growth occur. It was also observed that the amount of growth that took place in the fourth grade classrooms in the previous school year was way more than is being seen this school year (minimal). Based on these main observations, I then interviewed the teachers and asked them for their thoughts behind these two findings. Based on the minimal DAZE growth, it was determined that classrooms that had a lot of growth were the rooms that had cloze reading passages as a part of their weekly classroom routine which allowed students to be more comfortable with this part of the assessment. Secondly, it was also noted that classrooms that had greater growth in the amount of words read and accuracy, were the classrooms that used quick timed reading passages as a part of their classroom routine. Third, it is evident that we have not been able to retain our reading aides for the entire year and the turnover ratio of employment has been incredibly high in comparison to last year. Thus, students who are receiving tier 2 and tier 3 reading interventions from these aides are not being given consistent instruction as they have cycled through a handful of reading instructors. This inconsistency does not help promote positive student growth by any means.

Once these observations were made, I then began to look for methods and best practices that could be utilized to promote student learning. I made four suggestions based on the data analysis and interviews with fellow educators. The first suggestion was to incorporate cloze reading passages into all fourth grade classrooms periodically, or at the very least, two weeks before each testing window to build student familiarity with the assessment. The second suggestion was then to implement timed reading passages into all fourth grade classrooms periodically, or again, at least two weeks before each testing window to build familiarity with that part of the assessment. The third suggestion was to improve the hiring process when hiring educational aides such as screening candidates in the summer and being sure we will at least gain a full year of service from them. I also recommended better advertising of these positons to gain more qualified applicants as many people do not apply because they did not know there was even an opening. Lastly, I suggested improving the fluidity of the school schedule for

classrooms and their specials and planning time. This year, teachers have different specials times almost daily which makes setting the classroom schedule a daunting task for teachers. This then makes setting the reading intervention schedule an even harder task and almost impossible to keep consistent. This then causes inconsistencies in the schedule and hinders student growth and performance. I recommended having a committee tasked with setting school schedules rather than having one administrator trying to set the schedule every year. It is a difficult task and one that, if tackled by a team, might end up with a more fluid schedule which then will only help build consistency in the learning environment and promote better literacy performance.

These suggestions were then sent to my principal for the possibility to be shared with the MTSS Team or at an upcoming staff meeting.

Outcomes:

Through further understanding of student performance, teachers at the school will be able to bring about higher rates of student achievement. Through data analysis, teachers can and will see the students who are growing at an outstanding rate, but they will also notice how they can better help improve their classroom culture of learning through identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers are provided the knowledge and tools to support their students' needs. With this project, hopefully it becomes more evident to everyone of how the use of data analysis will help promote student growth and provide teachers with better understanding of how to meet the needs of all of their students.

Reflection:

This project was incredibly valuable as a future administrator. First of all, it was crucial in understanding that data analysis is a very in depth process and one that involves taking the time to sit down and truly analyze the data. When the time is taken to truly analyze, patterns of strengths and weaknesses are identified and connections can be made to help the school make the necessary changes to head it in the right direction. Essentially, the process may be time consuming when done diligently, but it is a process that can help the school grow.

Data analysis is not an easy task by far, and it truly does take time to conduct properly. It is more than simply looking at numbers and seeing who is doing well and who is not. It is easy to utilize the data and identify weaknesses, but the most important step is deciding how to respond to the data interpretations. For example, in our building it was identified that some of the fourth grade classrooms had minimal growth on the DAZE part of the Dibels Test. However, you cannot just leave it at that. The next step was then to ask yourself why that is and what can be done to fix it. Anyone can highlight a number and point out a pattern, but this is just the starting point when looking at a school improvement plan. However, a quality administrator knows it does not stop with analyzing the numbers. We then must research what the data means and gain clarification to see the bigger picture, and then finally look at some best practices and suggestions for how to improve the educational environment and student learning. In addition, the time consumption of this analysis plays a significant role in the entire process.

As an administrator, it can be easy to become overwhelmed and consumed within other responsibilities and then would be easy to dismiss tasks such as data analysis.

The other difficult factor was knowing that there are probably more than one factor at play causing patterns in the data. It would be easy to identify a weakness, point out a best practice to fix it, and be on your way. However, more often than not, it is not that simple. As an administrator, one must also be open to other staff members' suggestions and interpretations of the data that may not have been seen originally. It is not always easy to admit your suggestions may not be the best choice, but being open-minded to others is crucial as teachers are a crucial part of the team and have the educational experience to voice quality opinions regarding the data presented.

Sharing the analysis with fellow staff members of the building is also a sensitive process that one must remember to be honest and straightforward, but also choose the best words that identify areas of improvement and not just focus on a classroom's weakness which could lead to teachers feeling defensive and sensitive to the "accusations". However, data cannot be ignored and a good administrator would always want to do something with it. This ultimately means difficult conversations will have to take place that involve analyzing instructional practices of staff. One of the suggestions I made was that more classrooms incorporate timed reading passages and cloze reading passages, yet not all of them do this. Thus, it would have to be presented carefully and in a positive manner to allow the teacher to feel like you are guiding them to increase student performance and not forcing them or making them feel like their instructional practice is poor. It is a delicate balance that must be practiced and developed. A good administrator will stick to the data, the facts, and the research, and leave personal opinions and biases aside while also presenting findings to staff in a sensitive manner that allows for the instructional techniques to grow and student learning to improve.