DATADRIVE 2030

Thinking sideways with your ELOM data

DATADRIVE 2030 INSIGHTS LAB

Thinking sideways using

Playful provocations

Data often arrives carrying weight: expectation, judgement, pride, disappointment, urgency. When this happens, teams tend to move quickly to explanation, defence, or fixing. While understandable, this usually narrows the range of possibilities the data can offer.

Playful provocations deliberately slow this down. By interrupting familiar ways of thinking, they can help you: loosen fixed interpretations of your results; surface hidden assumptions; and make space for curiosity and creativity.

This matters because the quality of your actions depends on the quality of your questions. When interpretations are too quick or too narrow, actions can be be reactive, superficial, or misdirected.

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DATA DRIVE

Guidelines for use

The following pages contain **playful provocation cards** - cards with an invitation, statement, probe or question designed to support thinking or talking about your data in novel (and often strange) ways.
These provocations are most useful when used in small groups, but they can also be used alone. They work best after your ELOM report has been read and before any formal planning begins.

Print the cards, cut them out, and then pick a card at random and try to apply it literally, as is. Apply it to a particular datapoint, insight, problem or trend (e.g., poor gross motor results, low enrolment, poor quality teaching).

Use the provocation to design a creative and fictional solution to the issue you are thinking about. There are no right answers. Some cards will feel irrelevant, irritating, or nonsensical. Some are vague or may seem incomplete in their instruction. That is not a problem, but an invitation to lean in and use your creativity and powers of interpretation!

The goal

Remember that this is a thinking exercise, not a planning task. Using playful provocations strengthens teams' ability to question assumptions, hold multiple interpretations at once, and think beyond familiar solutions. These skills support programmes to evolve through learning, experimentation and adaptation.

How might this look in practice?

A team draws a card at random: "**Children in Charge** ("Imagine that the children were designing an activity to help their teachers develop these skills. What would they do?")

They imagine children setting up a series of ridiculous challenges for adults: teachers must thread beads while wearing gloves; they have to pick up grains of rice using only their elbows; they are timed while trying to build something tiny that keeps collapsing. Children shout encouragement, change the rules halfway through, and laugh when adults struggle.

The team realises that many fine motor activities in their programmes are quiet, controlled, and correctness-focused. There is very little room for struggle, repetition, silliness, or visible effort. Children are expected to perform skills cleanly, rather than work their way into them. The provocation does not generate a solution. Instead, it surfaces a new way of seeing the data: Fine motor development may be less about precision and more about giving children permission to try, fail, and persist.
That insight is captured and carried forward. Decisions about what to change come later. The role of the card was simply to make a different interpretation possible.

Reflections

After playing with the cards, it is useful to reflect on what ideas, shifts, or directions emerged when thinking differently. Ideas generated using the cards may represent signals that alert you to changes or shifts necessary in programming, practice or processes.

Alone or with the group you played with, identify and capture these. Ask:

- "What is this idea really suggesting?"
- "What principle or need is sitting underneath it?"
- "What behaviour or condition is this idea trying to change?"

Reverse It

Reverse the challenge and look at it from the opposite perspective.

For example, instead of asking 'how can we *improve* children's fine motor coordination?', ask 'how can we *worsen* children's fine motor coordination?'

Time Traveler

If you could borrow one tool or teaching method from the future (that you imagine exists) to help solve this challenge, what would it be?

Children in Charge

Imagine that the children were designing an activity to help their teachers develop these skills, what would they do?

Robot Takeover

If a highly advanced robot were the teacher, what would it do?

Healthy Noise

What are the “noisy” distractions in a classroom? Start there. What can the noise teach you?

Artful Quality

Every learning activity is a work of art. How would you teach this skill, or address this challenge, if your only goal was to make the process beautiful?

In the Dark

Imagine that you are working in a completely dark room. Children and Teachers can see nothing. How do these constraints open up new learning possibilities?

Phone a Friend

Open your WhatsApp and look at the last person you chatted with. What might this person add to the conversation?

Letter N

Find one object in front of you that starts with the letter N - build an idea around this object.

Proverbs

Think of a cultural saying or proverb that speaks to this issue. What advice is contained within it?

Handsfree

You can no longer use your hands while teaching this skill or addressing this issue. What changes?

Do a Bad Job

First design the worst possible solution to this issue. What does it reveal about the good one?

The Weather

Respond to today's weather. How does learning change in rain, wind, heat, or cold?

Flip It

Assume the thing you are trying to address is the *cause* rather than the *outcome*. What follows from that?

Childless

Pretend the activity was designed by someone who has never met a child before. What would they prioritise, and what would they get wrong?

Something Blue

Find an object in the room that is blue. The solution or activity must revolve around this object.

Loadshedding

Imagine the activity/solution must be carried out during a power outage. No lights, no devices, no printed materials.

Gogo Knows Best

Imagine that the solution was designed by your grandparents. What would they insist on?

Voiceless

Imagine that you and your team have lost the ability to speak.
What does this limitation force you to do?

Imperfectly Perfect

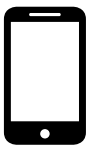
Find something in the room that is broken, cracked, or imperfect. That imperfection is the way forward. What is it saying?

Debate

Imagine the solution must end with the team disagreeing with each other. Design for disagreement, not consensus. What is likely to cause the most debate?

Braai Master

You can only address this issue using what is typically at a braai. What objects prove to be the most helpful and why?



There's an App for That

An app exists to tackle this exact issue. What is the app called and what does it do?

Mother Nature Knows Best

Your office is a forest. Your only materials and equipment are what already exist there. What solution can you design using natural elements?