to solve every issue that crosses our path, but it does mean standing with people in their struggles. Chapter 5 provides practical strategies for deep listening, and Chapter 10 offers adult learning routines that allow people to safely express their emotions.

KEY CHALLENGE 4: DISCONNECTED DATA

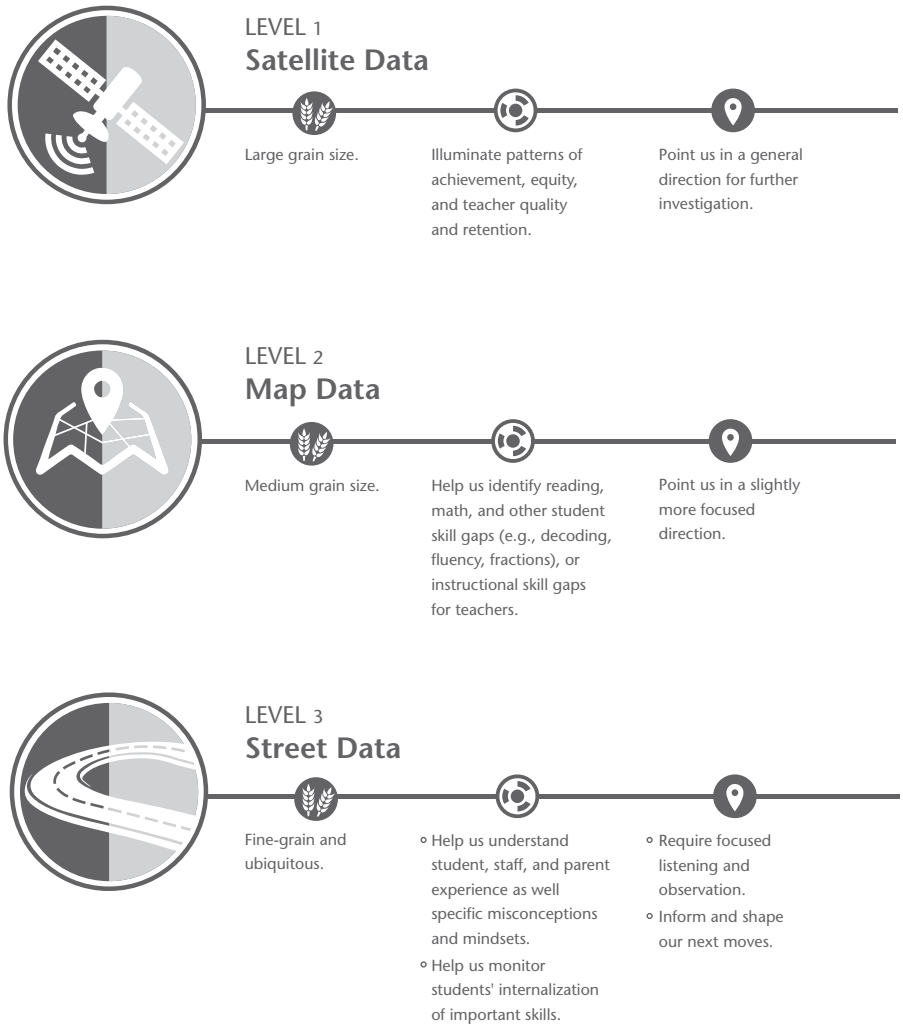
Finally, listening will help us address a troubling consequence of the test-and-punish era: overreliance on data that is far removed from student learning. Many of us have grown accustomed to setting goals in reaction to periodic bursts of data that rain down on schools. This leads to a mismatch between the problems we face and the solutions we design. Assessment expert W. James Popham argues, "America's students are not being educated as well these days as they should be. A key reason for this calamity is that we currently use the wrong tests to make our most important educational decisions."[18]

Listening Leaders recognize that much of the data we need is right before us if we choose to listen—speaking, sending emails, showing up in our offices every day.

Listening Leaders recognize that much of the data we need is right before us if we choose to listen—speaking, sending emails, showing up in our offices every day. It's in our close observations of students working on tasks and of teachers engaged in collaboration. These street-level data tell the story of school transformation. The Levels of Data framework (see Figure 1.3) allows us to consider the types of data we need in any given context. Although Level 1 "satellite" data orients us in a general direction, it fails to illuminate what's getting in the way of student (or adult) learning, or what's working best for kids. Level 2 "map" data gets us closer to pinpointing a subskill or priority area of need. But Level 3 "street" data is the key to designing supportive structures, achieving equitable outcomes, and developing high-capacity teachers.

My colleague Noelle Apostol Colin taught under a new administrator who asked her staff to regularly analyze benchmark assessment results—Level 1 data—in order to determine which skills to reteach. Apostol Colin found this process frustrating for a couple of reasons. First, her students struggled mightily on the tests, and in the absence of additional data, the results made her feel like a "bad teacher." Second, the benchmarks failed

FIGURE 1.3 LEVELS OF DATA



to clarify *why* and *how* her students were struggling, so she was left feeling powerless. She needed Level 2 and Level 3 data to inform her planning and instructional moves.

Apostol Colin's principal could have offered the benchmark data as a starting point to establish patterns of achievement before asking teachers

to think about what other evidence they needed. Should Apostol Colin administer a running record—a literacy tool that helps teachers identify patterns in student reading behaviors—to diagnose precisely where a child's comprehension was breaking down? Should she closely observe a student while he solves a math problem, noting the strategies he employs and where he gets stuck? These are examples of Level 3 data that help teachers navigate the complex path to learning.

As we change the conversation about data, here are a few principles to keep in mind:

Local accountability Work to create a culture of local, peer-to-peer accountability for results. Design opportunities for students to publicly demonstrate and reflect on their learning. Structure regular opportunities for staff to analyze student work. Cross-reference Level 3 data with Level 1 and 2 data to check for alignment and rigor.

Timeliness The data is most useful when it gets in the hands of educators quickly. Build teachers' capacity to collect daily informal data about student misconceptions. Coach teachers to listen carefully to student dialogue in the classroom. Give everyone a clipboard, and invite him or her to capture quotes and observations.

Experiential data Value people's experiences—students and adults—as a form of evidence. Listen keenly to how people tell the *story* of their experience, and pull out common words and narrative patterns. We'll talk more about this in Chapter 7.

Formative vs. punitive Don't use data as a hammer; use it purely for improvement, and you'll see how much more open teachers become to its positive potential.

Alternative assessments Multiple forms of data tell a story about students that paper-and-pencil assessments can't. Stretch yourself and your team to consider other measures, such as portfolios, graduation capstone projects, and performance-based assessments, that offer a fuller picture of who each student is.

Use the tool in Table 1.3 to identify your purpose in looking at data before selecting the data you need.

TABLE 1.3 A FRAMEWORK FOR LEVELS OF DATA

	Level 1: Satellite Data	Level 2: Map Data	Level 3: Street Data
Definition	Large grain size. Helps illuminate patterns of student achievement and equity. Points us in a general direction for further investigation.	Medium grain size. Helps identify reading, math, and other skill challenges (e.g., decoding, fluency, fractions). Points us in a slightly more focused direction.	Fine-grain and ubiquitous. Helps identify specific student misconceptions and monitor internalization of key skills. Requires careful listening.
Evidence of Student Learning	Standardized and external test scores (SBAC, SAT, PSAT, statewide graduation exams, district benchmarks, etc.)	• Reading Lexile levels • Oral fluency assessments to estimate correct words per minute • Student perception surveys • Performance-based assessments (portfolios, senior defenses, etc.) • Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) or other similar assessments	• Student nonverbal cues • Student interviews and focus groups • Teacher observation notes from guided reading or guided problem solving to gauge a student's misconceptions • One-on-one running records • Student work artifacts • Observation of students engaged in sorting activities to check misconceptions and internalization
Evidence of Teacher Effectiveness	Standardized and external test scores, disaggregated by teacher	• Administrator observation notes from formal observation and evaluation • Teacher performance-based assessments (portfolios, end-of-year reflective presentations, etc.)	• Teacher interviews and focus groups • Teacher nonverbal cues during lessons • Leader's notes from listening to teacher discourse in one-on-one meetings • Notes from regular, informal observations • Video clips of students engaged in a task

Note. Adapted from the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM), Baruch College. For a downloadable tool to apply the Levels of Data framework, go to my website: shanesafir.com/resources

Of course, better data alone won't transform our schools. To improve outcomes, we have to strengthen the instructional core—the "black box" where teacher, student, and content intersect.[19] In his synthesis of over 800 studies of what works best in education, professor and researcher John Hattie found that leaders have little *direct* effect on student learning.[20] They can, however, create the right set of conditions for good instruction by discerning which initiatives matter and which do not; defining, as the Arts Academy staff did, local measures of success; building the capacity of teachers and teacher leaders; and working hard to foster a collaborative culture.

MAKE IT MINDFUL

- What do you want every exiting student to know and be able to do?
- What values do you want students to develop?
- What types of data will you use to measure success?
- If you transform your school or system, what will parents, teachers, and students be saying 3 years from now?

BECOMING A LISTENING LEADER

Reflecting on the dynamics of school leadership, my colleague Jessica Gammell noted to me, "The higher you move up the food chain, the more you're rewarded for compliance." To that I would add, "and the less you're rewarded for listening to your staff and community." Listening runs counter to the archetype of a charismatic leader who unites his or her community through dazzling speeches. But charismatic leaders often do more harm than good because they foster dependency and serve as symbolic role models who can never be replaced. Listening Leaders, by contrast, understand their central mission as building the capacity of others to help lead and sustain change.

This book will walk you through three developmental areas of Listening Leadership represented in the acronym ARC: awareness, relational capital, and complex change. ARC provides a road map for listening and leading in ways that fuel equitable school transformation. Figure 1.4 depicts the three areas as rocks in a cairn—a human-made pile of stones