



DESIGNING YOUR STUDY

Research Question 1:

How much are your READ 180 students' reading skills really increasing as measured by the SRI? As measured by other standardized tests?

If your study group decides to examine changes in students' reading skills during the period that they participate in *READ 180*, the simplest way to do this is to collect SRI scores from when students entered the program and from when they left. Once you have collected these scores, you will simply subtract the pretest scores from the posttest scores and examine the differences. A more complex analysis may take into account multiple SRI time points. It is important to note that the entry of each student's reading level into the computer prior to the first administration of SRI will result in a more precise first time Lexile® score. Subsequent SRI tests will adapt according to the students' prior performance. As you think about using SRI scores as measures of progress and outcomes, it is important to keep in mind that Scholastic recommends that the SRI be administered three to four times a year. Teachers are sometimes tempted to administer the SRI more often as a way of improving student scores, but frequent administration can greatly reduce the validity of the results and may demotivate students.

A somewhat more sophisticated study would also look at the results of other assessments administered before and after students participated in *READ 180*. This approach has the advantage of using the study results to look at the contributions of *READ 180* to students' attainment of improvement goals set by state and local accountability systems. There is a note of caution, however, in examining other kinds of assessment data to gauge the impact of *READ 180*. It's important to first determine whether the assessment actually measures the skills that are prominent in *READ 180*. Not all assessments measure the same kinds of skills. You may get better data by looking at scores on portions of these tests rather than at overall scores. Most standardized test results can be broken down into subscale scores that may be more useful for your analysis.

A second consideration in choosing this approach is whether your district's assessment cycle includes annual assessments of student outcomes in reading and literacy. For example, if your district is implementing *READ 180* in the sixth grade, you will need results from tests administered to fifth graders as well as results from tests administered to the same students at the end of sixth grade. If the district testing cycle does not include annual administration of tests, you will not be able to use the standard pretest/posttest approach to measure student progress. *Figure 2* displays the analysis scenario described above.

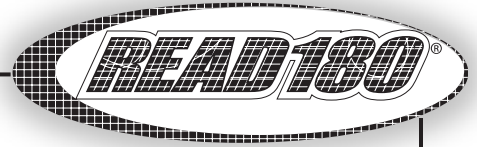
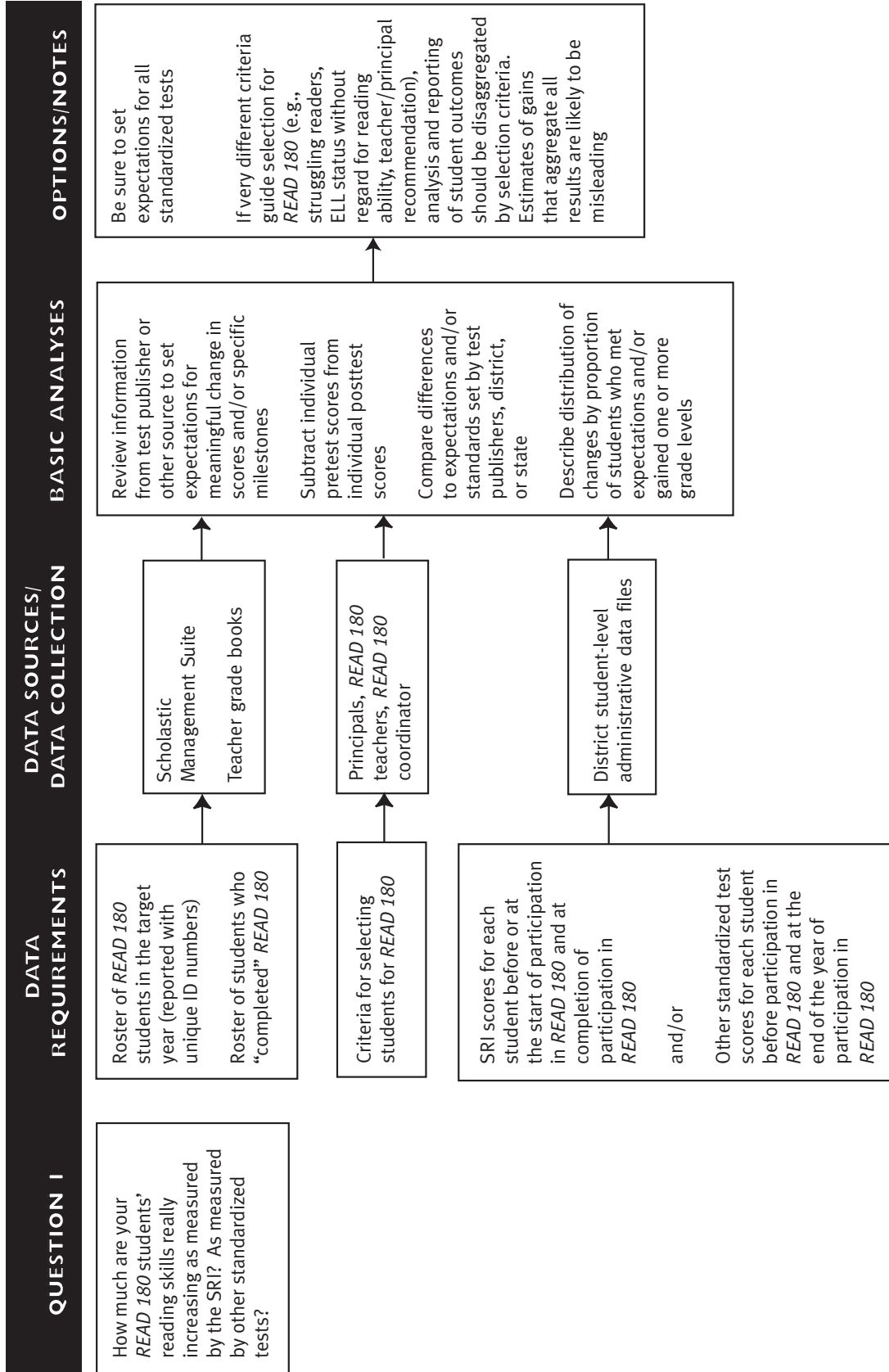
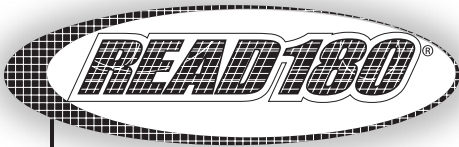


FIGURE 2





Research Question 2:

How much are the reading skills of various subgroups of READ 180 students (e.g., English-language learners, students who receive special education services, students who receive free or reduced-price meals) increasing?

In addition to looking at changes in all students' pretest-to-posttest scores, the study team could examine the impact of *READ 180* on various subgroups of students. Members could, for example, disaggregate the results for English-language learners or for students who need special education services. The same goes for members of different ethnic groups or for males and females. All of these results can help you determine which groups are benefiting most from *READ 180* and which groups are likely to need additional help. *Figure 3* displays the data requirements, data sources and basic analysis for this research question.

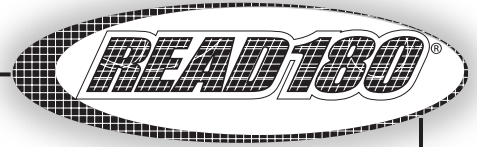
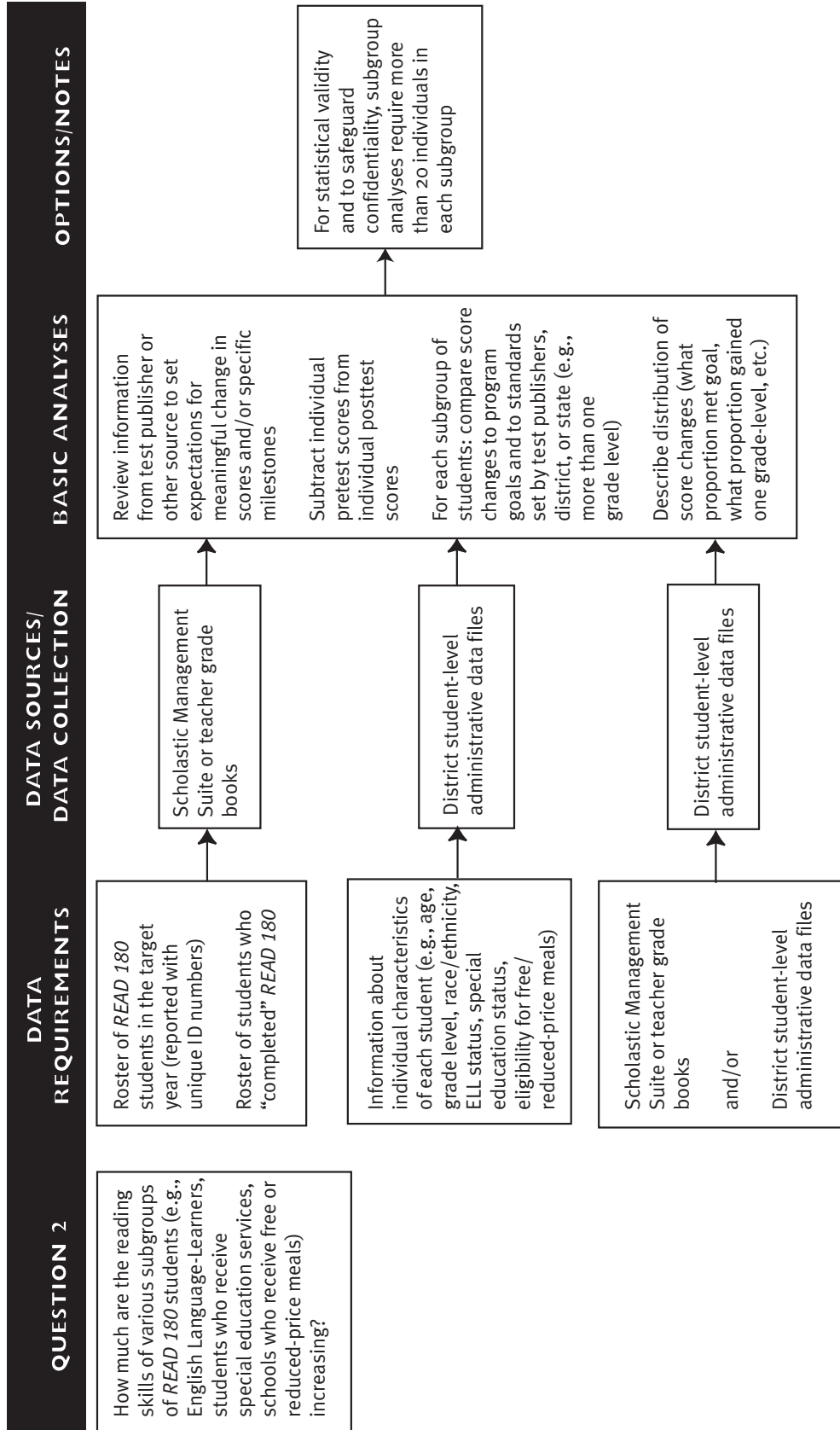
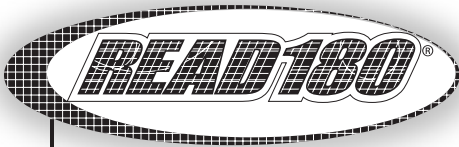


FIGURE 3





Research Question 3:

Do the gains in the reading skills of READ 180 students appear to translate into improvement in other subject areas or in certain kinds of behavior, such as attendance and discipline?

Struggling readers are probably experiencing other difficulties in school that your group can study as well. For example, if students can't read, they're sure to be struggling or perhaps even failing in some, if not all, of their classes. Persistent failure often leads to students disengaging from school or engaging in a variety of antisocial behavior. Therefore, your study of *READ 180* could examine indicators such as attendance, tardiness, and disciplinary referrals among *READ 180* students. *READ 180* research reveals that early success in *READ 180* learning activities may turn around anti-social behavior and help students become more active and motivated learners. *Figure 4* displays the data requirements, data sources and basic analysis for this research question.

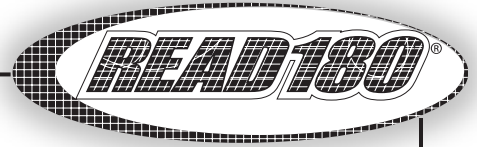
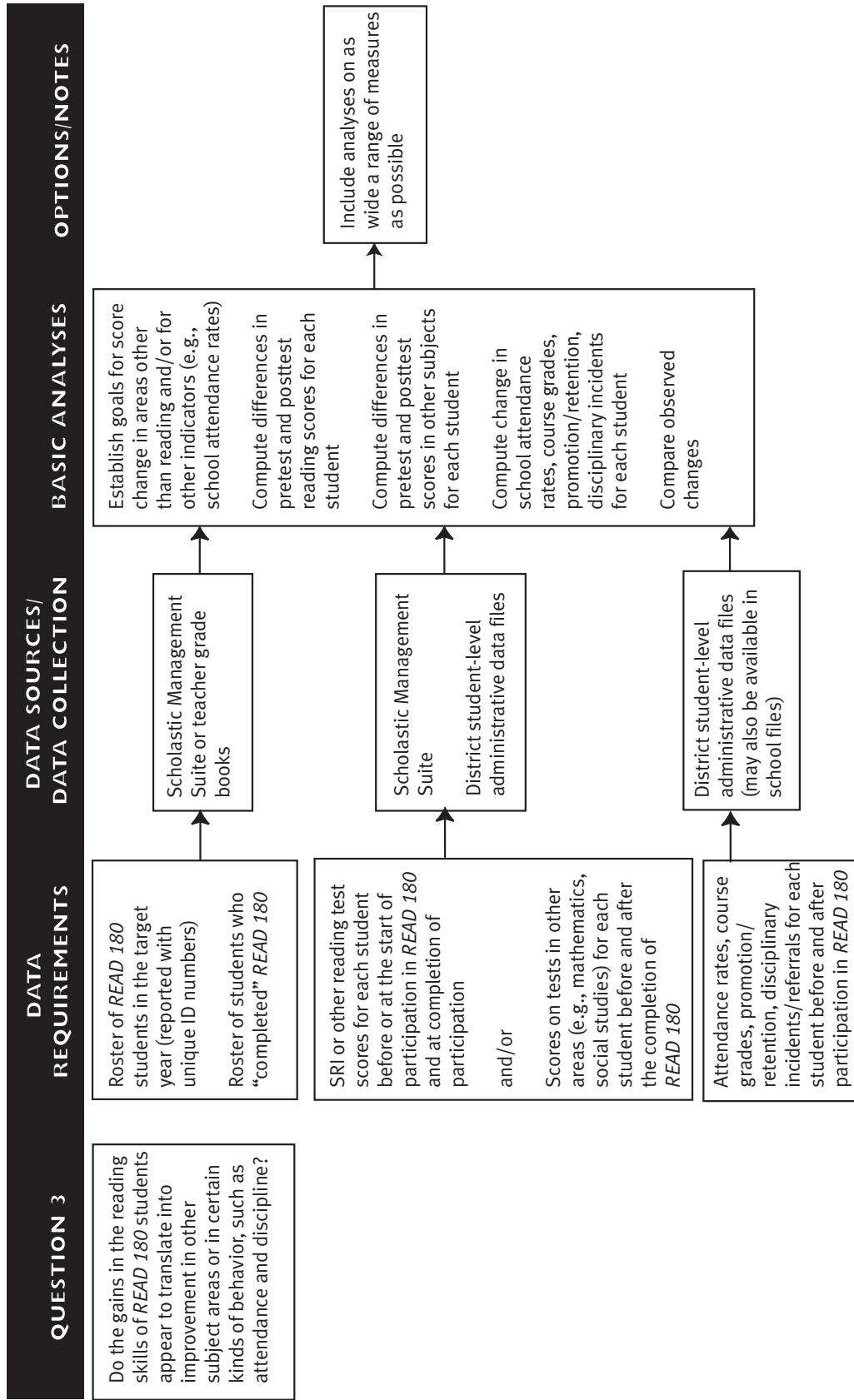


FIGURE 4



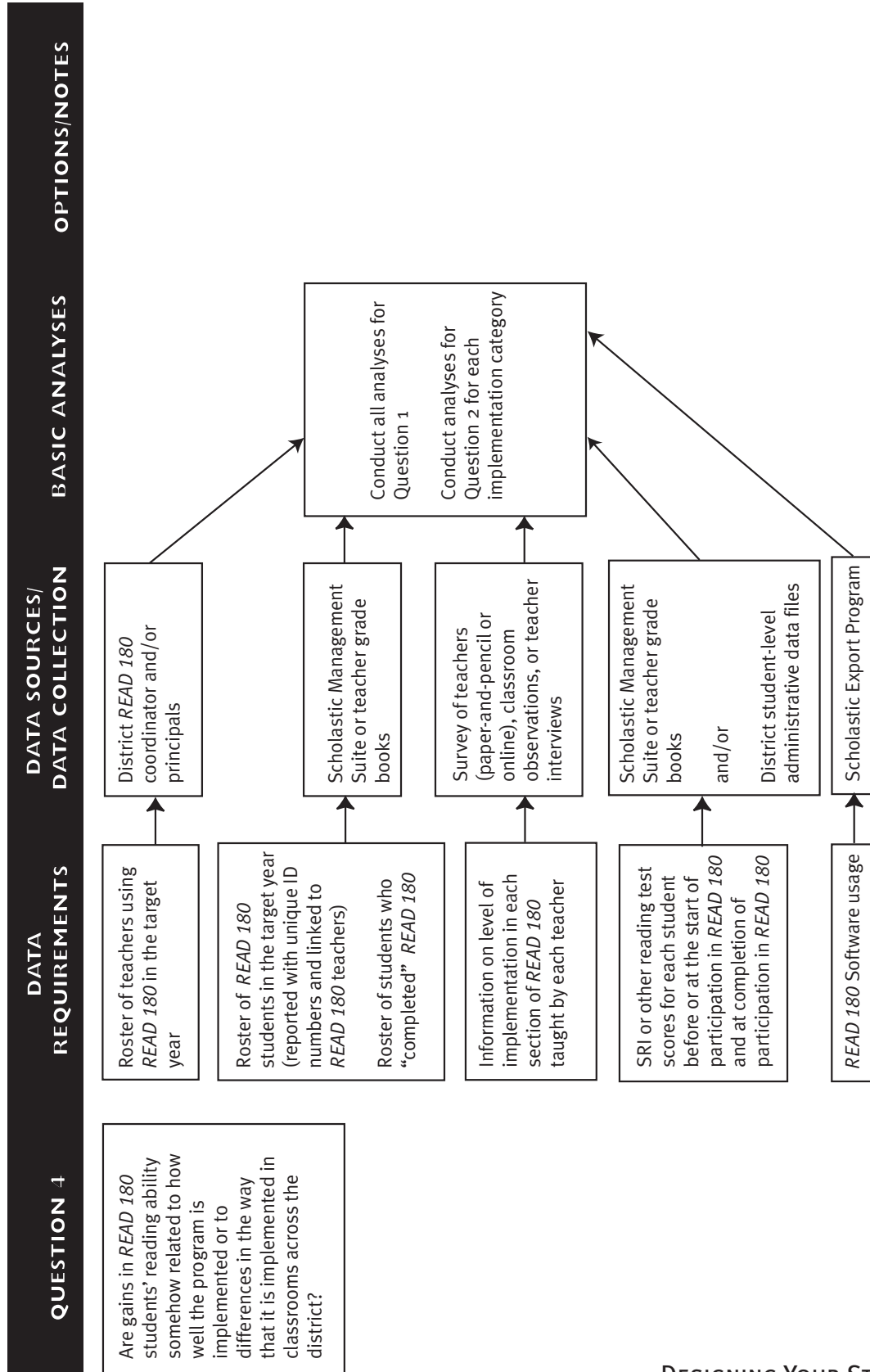


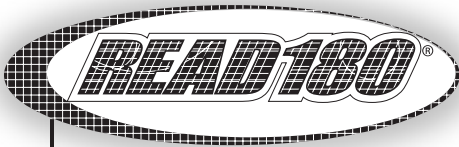
Research Question 4:

Are gains in READ 180 students' reading ability related to how well the program is implemented or to differences in the way that it is implemented in classrooms across the district?

Another way to look at the impact of *READ 180* is to examine the relative benefits of different levels of implementation. This kind of study differs from the others discussed here in that instead of examining student scores and behaviors, it looks at the extent to which teachers are implementing the program as specified by Scholastic and how implementation influences student outcomes. The results of this kind of study can pinpoint problems and suggest ways for teachers and others to work together to improve the program's implementation. If large numbers of teachers are using *READ 180* and if individual teachers and schools are given some degree of latitude in how they implement it, in terms of scheduling, for example, the study could explore how variations in implementation as defined by the three levels of implementation discussed earlier affect student outcomes. You can compare the progress of students who participate in the program in classrooms where the program is fully implemented (Level 1), with the progress of students who participate in classrooms where the program is implemented at Level 2 or Level 3. *Figure 5* displays the data requirements, data sources, and basic analysis for this research question.

FIGURE 5



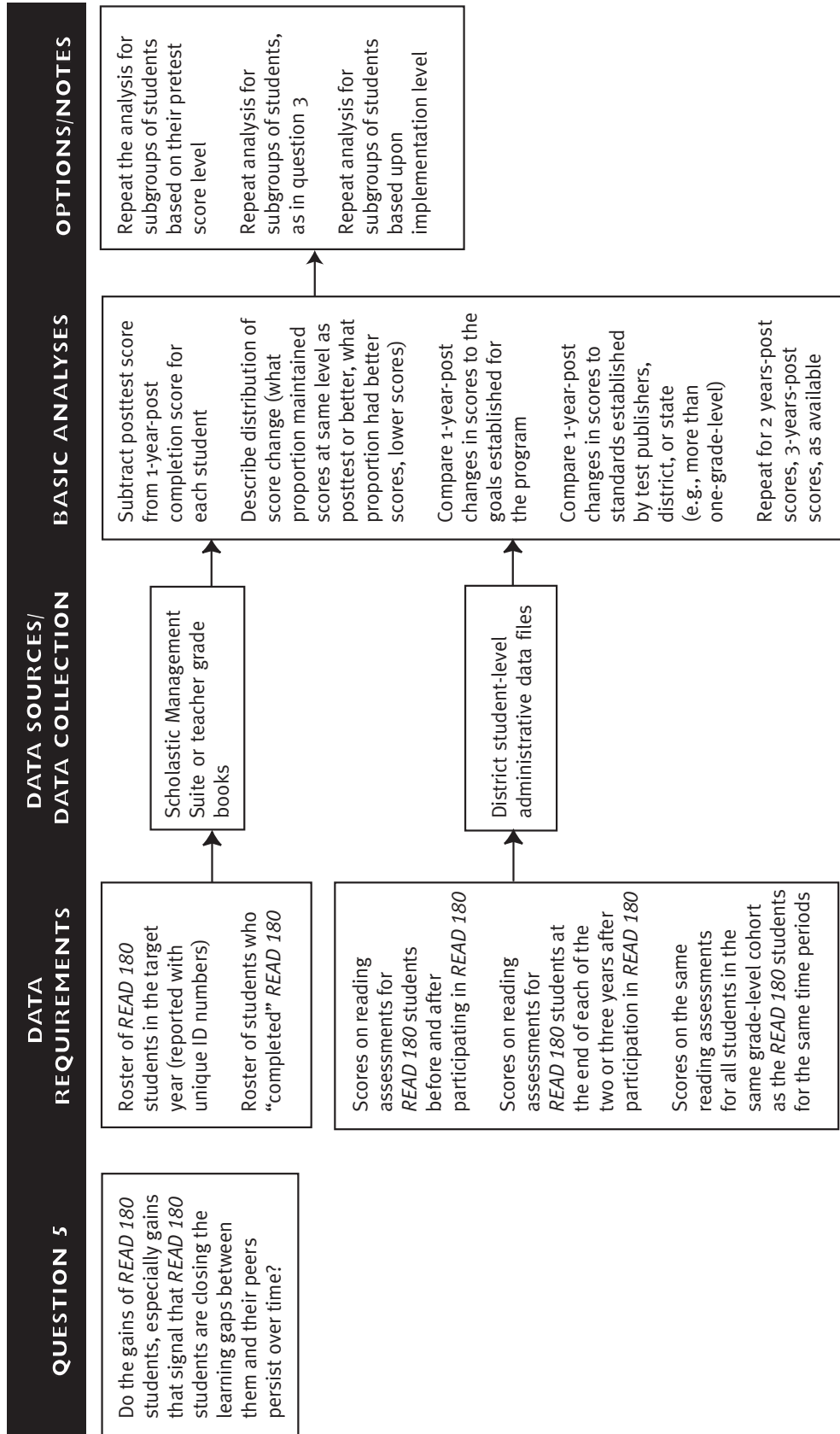


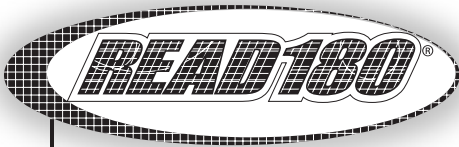
Research Question 5:

Do the gains of READ 180 students, especially gains that signal that READ 180 students are closing the learning gaps between them and their peers, persist over time?

One of the challenges of working with struggling readers and other students who are falling behind in school is to sustain, and even accelerate, improvements once they appear. If the early results of your study suggest that *READ 180* students are making gains or that their gains actually represent an acceleration when compared to those of their peers, it may be advisable to examine the extent to which these gains are sustained or even increased over time after students leave *READ 180*. You may also want to look at changes in student learning outcomes following their initial gains in *READ 180*. Once the project has generated a database of individual student records, as described in the next section, it would not take a great deal of effort to track these students after they leave *READ 180*. Knowing more about what happens in student learning careers after they leave *READ 180* can increase understanding of the program's benefits as well as encourage a careful review of additional types of support that may be necessary to ensure that students sustain their initial successes. *Figure 6* displays the data requirements, data sources, and basic analysis for this research question.

FIGURE 6





Research Question 6:

How do the gains made by READ 180 students compare with those made by similar students who are not enrolled in READ 180?

An even more rigorous way to assess the effects of *READ 180* and to find out more about your district's return on its investment in the program is to add a comparison group to your study. Adding a comparison group made up of students who are not participating in *READ 180* lets you determine not only if *READ 180* students are making progress, but also the value added by *READ 180* because you will be able to see whether gains made by *READ 180* students are greater than those made by other students. You can complement your examination of student achievement gains in the comparison group by documenting the kinds of learning activities in which these students participate. *Figure 7* displays the data requirements, data sources and basic analysis for this research question.

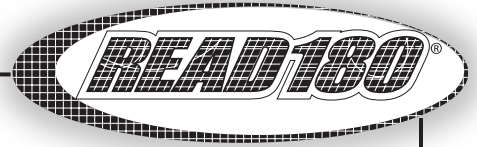


FIGURE 7

