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FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Supporting a Culture of Data Use

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Topic: Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making

Practice: Data-Driven Culture

Highlights

- It's important to provide support to encourage teachers to use data.
- Schools can have a data facilitator or another specified person whose job it is to help with data use. If a school chooses to implement a data facilitator position, it must make sure that this position is well defined and well structured.
- Ongoing professional development for data is a key way to support the use of data and to build capacity within the school and district.

About the Interviewee

Jeffrey C. Wayman is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests focus on the effective use of data for school improvement. Dr. Wayman's research on data-based decision making includes efficient structures for creating data-informed school districts, software that delivers student data to educators, effective leadership for data use, and systemic supports that enable

widespread teacher use of student data. His current research projects include a three-year study funded by The Spencer Foundation titled "The Data-Informed District: Implementation and Effects of a District-Wide Data Initiative" and a two-year evaluation of the effects of the Acuity data system on student achievement in a large urban district. Prior to joining the University of Texas faculty, Dr. Wayman worked at Johns Hopkins University with the Center for Social Organization of Schools, at Colorado State University in the area of prevention research, and as a junior high math teacher in Kansas City and Salt Lake City.

Full Transcript

I am Jeff Wayman. I am on the faculty at the University of Texas at Austin in the Department of Educational Administration, and I served on the expert panel that wrote the Practice Guide Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making.

It's important to provide support to encourage teachers to use data for a number of reasons. One, because data use is hard to do, and none of us were really prepared to do this. Another reason is the time burdens that teachers and principals have on their day. Another support that we can provide educators is help in terms of personnel. That help can come from another teacher on campus. That help can come from a data facilitator or another specified person whose job it is to help with data use. That help can come from an administrator (a principal or an assistant principal).

If a school chooses to implement a data facilitator position, they must make sure that this position is well defined and well structured. It's very common for us when we talk to schools to find data facilitators who say, "I don't know exactly what my job is. I am a gofer. I help people do things and I don't know exactly what it is." It's also important to remember that this position needs to be highly, highly trained. These positions need to have a lot of skills associated with them. And most schools and most districts don't have staff currently to be able to fill all of these roles, so they must provide ongoing training for these data facilitator roles. A data facilitator might be able to provide support in terms of collaboration, a data facilitator might be able to help teachers set an agenda within a collaborative meeting, a data facilitator might actually be able to facilitate this discussion in this agenda.

Collaboration about data use is important because collaboration takes advantage of the ways that we can share our practice. Collaboration will take advantage of the fact that we can have shared learning, that we can have shared practice, that we can improve our conversations with each other about students and their learning in our own practice. It's very important to provide ongoing professional development for data use for two main reasons. One is that as teachers and administrators, none of us were prepared to make use of these vast amounts of data that we have now. Yes, education has had data forever, but with No Child Left Behind we were suddenly asked to use these data. And everybody was in the same boat, that much of our training now has to be done in the field. So this professional development is important for that. The other reason why it's important is that without ongoing professional development, it's hard to build capacity for

educators. Data use is something that needs to be a continually growing thing, and that's only done through ongoing professional development.

It's important in providing professional development around data use to remember that there are a variety of forms that we need to use to enable effective professional development. Professional development in education has traditionally been done large scale in what teachers call "sit and get" meetings, where everybody goes to a class and learns how to use something; maybe they can use it in the next six months and maybe they can't. We recommend that professional development for data use be done specifically and that it be specifically focused on something that is immediately useful to the teacher.