

Principals model data analysis to make decisions

Standardized achievement scores, until recently, were the predominant source of data about student achievement. Now, school principals and staff have at their disposal a variety of data to help them make decisions about school improvement, professional development, and continuous improvement. The principal has a special role in helping school faculty use data to create meaningful information. In *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards into Practice: Innovation Configurations* (Roy & Hord, 2003), one of the Desired Outcomes for principals regarding the Data-Driven standard is: **The principal analyzes with the faculty disaggregated data to determine school improvement/professional development goals.**

To accomplish this Desired Outcome, the principal **works with the whole faculty to analyze a variety of disaggregated student learning results to determine school improvement goals.** While a leadership committee may have a primary responsibility of examining student

data, the principal should involve the staff in using the data to make school decisions. Staff involvement leads to their ownership and commitment and increases their comfort in using data for instructional and curricular decisions. Staff “buy-in” is not something that can be accomplished once others have made key decisions. According to Holcomb (1999), ownership of improvement goals is something that is “grown, crafted, and invented” throughout the process (p. 10). Holcomb describes a process that engages staff in turning data into useful

information. In her data carousel analysis, groups of staff examine and describe the meaning of student achievement data (p. 61-66).

Disaggregated data is also critical to this analysis. Disaggregated data provides a more detailed inspection of results for sub-groups of students served by the school. This data also allows faculty to answer the question, “Is the school serving **all** students equally well?”

When faculty members are involved in data analysis, they have the needed background to

help set goals and prioritize school improvement and professional development goals. Many strategies can help large groups set goals and identify priorities. Holcomb describes the nominal group process (p. 69) which involves time for faculty to discuss and lobby for specific goals.

The principal also **works with the whole faculty to analyze a variety of disaggregated student learning results to determine student and adult learning needs.** The faculty begins by identifying student needs; student needs then shape adult learning needs. For example,

if mathematics achievement in statistics and probability is weak, the first step may be to examine existing curriculum to ensure it is aligned with the assessment. If the curriculum materials are sufficient, then a more detailed analysis of teacher practices and knowledge needs to be made.

Making data-driven decisions may mean that both the principal **and** faculty need to acquire new skills in analyzing data, using data to make instructional and curricular decisions, and facilitating large group decision making.

DATA-DRIVEN

Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.



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REFERENCES

- Holcomb, E. (1999).** *Getting excited about data: How to combine people, passion, and proof.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Roy, P. & Hord, S. (2003).** *Moving NSDC's staff development standards into practice: Innovation configurations.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

For more information about the NSDC Standards for Staff Development, see www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm