# editor's note/tracy crow

# **USE EVIDENCE TO MAKE THE CASE FOR LEARNING**

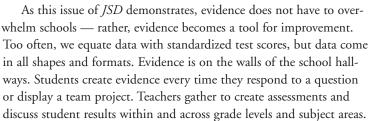
ocial scientist Samuel Popkin wrote about the concept of "gut rationality" to explain how voters make decisions during presidential elections (1994). His theory is that voters take a bit of new information about a candidate, add that to their experiences, knowledge, and biases, and make their choice. Voters count on their instincts to decide what makes a person presidential.

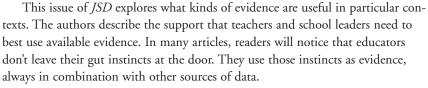
When educators come to conclusions about how students perform, do we use something like gut rationality? Or do we take time to study a range of evidence?

There is no shortage of data in education. Some schools are truly data-driven. They use data to understand where students succeed and where they fall short. They analyze data to know which students struggle at which times in specific contexts. Once they understand what students need, they craft educator learning in

response. Importantly, they keep gathering and studying data to know if their interventions produce the intended results.

Yet other schools spend an enormous amount of time and energy on data without making any improvements. Just because we're surrounded by data doesn't mean we know what to do with it, or that we have the right data to determine what our problems are or what the solutions might be. In those cases, it's easy to understand why educators would turn to gut instinct.

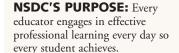




Beginning with this issue, Stephanie Hirsh, NSDC's executive director, contributes to *JSD* as the "Results" columnist (p. 53). In each issue, Hirsh will share an educator's professional learning challenge and the potential solutions that may lead to the results we want for all educators and their students. If you have challenges you would like to share, please e-mail her at stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org. The most recent author of this column, former NSDC Director of Communications Joan Richardson, has become editor-in-chief of *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine. We wish her well in her new post.

## **REFERENCE**

**Popkin, S.L. (1994).** The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ■



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