

Data Wise Step 2: Building Assessment Literacy

Questions for Discussion

1. What steps does your school currently take to build staff members' assessment literacy? What additional steps could you take to ensure that faculty members are equipped to use data responsibly? What internal and external resources could the school draw upon to support teachers becoming more data literate?

Over the past several years our school has done a great deal of work to build the assessment literacy of our staff. We identified that our school has specific sub groups whose data identifies a need for differentiation and lesson planning to support all kinds of learners. We first formed a data team, which included administration, coaches, classroom teacher and specialty teacher (ELL). The following year we identified a point person as our data specialist. This individual attends Network Meetings and professional development to deepen her knowledge of data analysis and assessment literacy. This information is then shared and turn keyed to the data team members, which we expanded to include one data facilitator for each grade level inquiry team. We were now ready to engage all staff members in learning to talk about data as a means of developing their individual assessment literacy. As staff members became familiar and comfortable sharing data within their grade level teams we introduced vertical teams to assess the validity of our assessment language and usage throughout the school. The school based data team then initiated data day meetings that allow for one to one conversation with teachers regarding their class data. Each year we develop focus questions that allow teachers to deepen their understanding of the various types of data and ways to use data to problem solve learning concerns and enhance teaching practice. Both the data specialist and administrative team attend professional development provided by our Network Inquiry facilitator. The data specialist then provides grade level data facilitators with professional developments, which includes how to find multiple sources of data to analyze student growth, develop grade level goals, and talk further about data with members of their inquiry team.

2. Review the "Using Data Wisely" handout and the accompanying explanation in the appendix to this chapter. Would it be productive to have staff members at your school discuss these scenarios as the Newton North data team members di? Who would be the right person at your school to review the explanations document ahead of time and facilitate the discussion?

The "Using Data Wisely" handout is a tool that would be beneficial to share with our staff. Up to this point much of our assessment literacy has focused on types of data, triangulating data for validity and using multiple data to identify strengths, goals and next steps. Using the handout to allow for deeper conversation and understanding of how to use data responsibly would complement the work we have done with our inquiry teams. The way that our teams are structured I would first share the handout and explanations with our data team that includes administrators, data specialist, specialty teachers and data facilitators. By allowing the data facilitators to facilitate the discussion staff members become more inclined to ask questions and participate in conversation, supporting a trusting environment.

3. Are there ways in which you have seen assessment data misused? Describe a scenario that you considered to be a misuse, describe why it was a misuse and suggest how a data-savvy educator might take steps to correct it.

Unfortunately data is misused frequently within our school system. Most recently the data used to assign Progress Report grades to schools is a perfect example of misused data. Measuring schools in relation to Peer Schools creates the initial disparity. Upon analyzing Peer School data it is evident that there is a large sampling error between these schools. The identification and calculation of these peer groups does not support knowing whom and what we are comparing. Specifically we are not provided with information regarding whether these groups started from a comparable point. One indicator that creates a significant margin of error when looking at our school data is the stability of our students. Knowing our population and collecting data on our transient students allow for deeper discussion regarding the data presented in our Progress Report in relation to our assigned Peer Groups (who also changed several times since the initiation of the Progress Report, making it even more unreliable to measure growth).

Other examples of data misused is the overall grading of schools which only allows specific percentage of schools to fall into a category A, B C or D school. Also the identification of students who do not meet AYP on our state report card uses data from to different cohorts of students. As a result of our transient population the number of students on a grade fluctuates each year, sometimes between 5 to 20 students, creating significant issues concerning validity of the data.

4. Describe a successful attempt you have experienced or witnessed on the part of a school to prepare its staff members to increase their data literacy. Explain who was involved, the lesson or concept that was communicated, and factors that you think made the endeavor successful.

Taking things slow, developing comfort and trust when looking, talking and sharing data are key to successfully increasing data literacy. We began by gathering the data as a team and sharing it with teachers. Slowly we engaged teachers in conversation, posed questions, and opened discussion. The understanding and comfort of staff varied greatly so we introduced data facilitators to the grade. For those members not as comfortable asking administration for clarity or assistance collecting and talking about data, this allowed them to have a point person (colleague) who they could learn with. Still some staff members were more at ease understanding and talking about data, by creating data meeting days it forced teachers to use their data to tell the story of their class. Some teachers were unsure of what to expect but at the end of our first set we saw that our goal was met and we were able to engage our staff members in a common language when discussing data. These were our first steps towards building assessment literacy across our school.