Use of Data to Drive Instruction

District and School Improvement at American Institutes for Research (AIR)

AIR's District and School Improvement Center (http://revivingschools.org/) provides a smart, real-world, hands-on approach to school improvement that is based on a framework grounded in research and refined by practice. Instead of implementing a one-size-fits-all program, we identify the needs specific to districts and schools and provide guidance for modifying existing programming or starting fresh. District and School Improvement Center staff believe that sustained district and school turnaround and transformation can be achieved through building capacity at all levels of the educational system and developing a strong collaborative partnership among teachers, leaders, families, and communities.

Background

Data are the key to continuous improvement and reflection. Data patterns reveal strengths and weaknesses in the system and provide excellent direction for data-based improvement decisions. Experts recommend establishing a culture of data use that involves all school staff and making data part of an ongoing cycle for instructional improvement (Hamilton et al., 2009). Frequently administered assessments, quick turnaround time for receiving results, and close alignment with curricula all may contribute to the utility of data for instructional decision making (Marsh et al., 2005). A case study of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Strategic Staffing Initiative suggested that high-capacity teams of teachers who work collaboratively to plan for instruction and analyze and interpret student assessment data can dramatically increase student achievement (Travers & Christiansen, 2010). AIR offers school staff support in the effective use of data through the development of balanced assessments and professional learning communities (PLCs).

Service Description

When educators plan, they must use data to gain insight and focus for their goals. AIR supports school staff in building their knowledge and capacity to use data to drive instructional decisions through the use formative assessments that monitor the progress of student learning. The high-quality formative assessments that are used in the classroom and embedded in the curriculum drive the improvement of student learning. The AIR model for school transformation devotes significant on-site time and support to teachers in developing and monitoring formative assessments of student learning that are aligned to benchmark and state assessments. Typically, AIR activities include: (a) supporting the selection, use, and analysis of benchmark assessments and data and (b) supporting the development of classroom formative assessment practices. Identifying the data is typically the easy part. Aligning the data with appropriate instructional challenges, and equipping teachers to implement those strategies, form the heart of the challenge. AIR works with teachers to develop, implement, and sustain PLCs on using data to inform instruction.

Value We Bring

When educators implement change, it is important to collect data that describe the impact strategies. Partnership with AIR will develop practices that realize the full power in driving targeted, thoughtful decisions about student achievement.

Fred Clarke, East St. Louis High School, East St. Louis District #189, 618-623-7770, fred.clarke@estl189.com