

The Educational Partners LLC
With Superior Solutions LLC
Your partners in educational Excellence!



Increased Student Achievement and School Improvement are Our Goals
Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making is Our Solution

Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making: ***Part 3: The Principal's Role***

© 2007 The Educational Partners LLC

Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making:
Principal's Role
By Sally Jessup

© 2007 The Educational Partners LLC
Visit Us Online youreducationpartners.com

Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making: Part 3: The Principal's Role

Principal's Role:

Once schools begin the inquiry-based data-driven decision-making process, it is important that principals trust the process to work.

Administrators must believe in the process enough that they are willing to support it and participate in it as part of a collaborative full-staff effort. In other words, administrators should respect and value data analysis as an increasingly important tool in education (Wade 2001) and should help provide the resources necessary for their staffs to engage in it as a team effort.

“A key component (that makes this team effort possible)...is the provision of time on a continuing basis for teachers to discuss the data and to work together to develop *solutions*. Teachers view this time as an opportunity both to develop their skills in data analysis and to brainstorm and share effective instructional strategies” (Protheroe Summer 2001). It is this collaborative team effort that helps focus everyone’s attention on the same goals and allows everyone to agree on a course of action that they both individually and collectively accept as their own. This sense of ownership allows the process to work.

Therefore “using data to improve school programs must be supported not just by one or two administrators, but by as many faculty members as possible. Data inquiry must grow out of a common recognition of the potential benefits statistical data can have in helping to achieve common goals”(Wade 2001). For this

belief to form, principals must foster and support this team approach with the commitment of time and resources.

However, with resources and teacher time committed, it is also important the principals monitor the process not only on the building level, but as it rolls out in individual classrooms. Therefore, principals need to know what good instruction should look like in the targeted areas.

One way to develop this awareness is through the use of principal coaches. By working with a principal coach, principals learn how to conduct effective walk throughs and classroom observations that support the schools’ goals. They also learn how to provide meaningful supportive feedback to their staffs. This descriptive feedback serves as a starting point to help the teaching teams to become self-reflective as they learn assess their own effectiveness in meeting their students’ needs (Meyers and Rust qtd. in Protheroe Summer 2001).



“Principal Coaches help principals focus on instruction, make the best use of school-based resources, and nurture teacher leadership” (Neufeld & Dana Roper 2003).

Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making: Part 3: The Principal's Role

These professional conversations are an important part of instructional leadership. As Protheroe states, “to be successful, school leaders need to engage in conversations with teachers, using assessment data to diagnose strengths as well as areas in which the teachers need to modify their instruction” (Protheroe Summer 2001). However, it must be remembered that the goal of these conversations as it relates to data-driven decision-making is not to assign blame, but rather to focus everyone’s attention on the student achievement goals.



“School leaders need to engage in conversations with teachers, using assessment data to diagnose strengths as well as areas in which the teachers need to modify their instruction” (Protheroe Summer 2001).

Consequently principals should foster a climate where their staffs feel free to explore the data. It might be helpful to remember “if the collection of data has not been a normal function of the school environment or data has been only collected to evaluate performance at the end of a year in a summative fashion, faculty members may be intimidated by the introduction of a data collection process” (Slowinski 200), so in these cases, principals must work to de-stigmatize the process in order to help promote the collaborative culture that is essential for the process to be successful.



Faculty members may be intimidated by the introduction of data collection.

Accordingly principals need to encourage everyone to “presume the positive intent” as they explore the data (Adapted from Garmston and Wellman, 1999). This presumption will help ensure openness on everyone’s part as they deal with the data, so that they feel free to think out of the box.

Therefore, Principals need to point out that this is not a time to assess blame. It is a time to come up with workable solutions. For this to happen, the staff members must have the opportunity to say this is where we are now and this is where we need to be without that statement being seen as a self-incriminating indictment of anyone’s past teaching practices, so principals have to be willing to listen and help their staffs in this endeavor.

By engaging in the inquiry-based data-driven decision-making process and providing time and resources to allow both their staffs and themselves to unlock its full potential, successful principals use it as an effectively tool to help transform their school improvement and student achievement goals into a reality.

**Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making:
Part 3: The Principal's Role**

References:

- Aldersebaes, Inge, Jana Potter, and Newton Hamilton. 2000. *Programs Don't—People Do: Insights into Schoolwide Change*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Barnes, Frank. (April 2004). Making School Improvement Part of Daily Action. *Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University*. Online at <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/tols/guide/index.php>
- Bernhardt, Victoria L. (Winter 2000). "[New Routes Open](#) When One Type of Data Crosses Another. *Journal of Staff Development* 21, 1.
- Bernhardt, Victoria. (February 2003). [No Schools Left Behind](#). *Educational Leadership*. Vol 60, NO 5, 26-30
- Bransford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking, R. (Eds.) (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Calhoun, Emily F. How to Use Action Research in the Self-Renewing School. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994. ED 370 205.
- Cromey, Allison and Matthew Hanson. 2000. *An Exploratory [Analysis](#) of School-based Student Assessment Systems*. Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Education Laboratory.
- Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for Advanced Engineering Study.
- DuFour, R. (1997). Functioning as Learning Communities Enables Schools to Focus on Student Achievement. *Journal of Staff Development*, 18, 56-57.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- DuFour, Rick. (Summer, 1999). [AUTONOMY](#). *Journal of Staff Development*, v20 no3
- DuFour, Rick. (February, 1999). Help Wanted: Principals Who Can Lead Professional Learning Communities. *NASSP Bulletin*, v83 no604
- DuFour, R. (2001). [How to launch a community?](#). *Journal of Staff Development*, 22(3), 50-51.
- Du Four, Rick. (Summer; 2002). [Bring the Whole Staff on Board](#). *Journal of Staff Development*, 23 no3
- DuFour, R. (2004). What Is a "Professional Learning Community"? *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6-11.
- Feldman, Jay, Lucey, G., Goodrich, S., & Frazee, D. (February 2003). [Developing an Inquiry-Minded District](#). *Educational Leadership*. Vol 60, NO 5
- Feldman, J., & Tung, R. (2001). Using data-based inquiry and decision making to improve instruction. *ERS Spectrum*, 19(3), 10–19.
- Garmston, R., & Wellman, B. (1999). *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. Norwood, Massachusetts: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.
- Gelb, M. J. (1995). *Thinking for a Change*. New York, York: Harmony Books
- Guskey, Thomas. (February 2003). [Using Data to Improve Student Achievement](#). *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 60, NO. 5, 6-11
- Hargrove, T. (2004). No Teacher Left Behind: Supporting Teachers As They Implement Standards-Based Reform In a Test-Based Education Environment. *Education* (Chula Vista, Calif.), 124(3), 567-572.
- Hibbard, K. Michael, and Mary E. Yakimowski. 1997. *Assessment in Connecticut: A Partnership to Improve Student Performance—Connecting State-Level Assessment and Classroom Practices*. Cheshire, CT: Connecticut Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Jessup, S., & Tibbetts, G. (2004). *Using Data to Help Create a Collaborative Culture Focused on Results*. The Educational Partners: Farmington Hills, MI. (In-service).
- Johnson, James H. (May 1996) [Data-Driven School Improvement](#). OSSC Bulletin Series. Eugene, Oregon: Oregon School Study Council,. 38 pages. Online in Eric Digest
- Killion, J. & Bellamy, T. (Winter 2000).

**Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making:
Part 3: The Principal's Role**

- [On the job: Data analysts focus school improvement efforts.](#)
Journal of Staff Development, Vol. 21, No.1
- Killion, J. (2002).
[What Works in the Elementary School Results-Based Staff Development.](#) The national Staff Development Council
- Killion, J. (2002).
[What Works in the High School Results-Based Staff Development.](#) The national Staff Development Council
- Love, Nancy. (Fall 2004).
[Taking Data to New Depths.](#) *Journal of Staff Development*. Vol. 25, NO. 4
- Marzano, R. J. (1997). An array of strategies for classroom teachers. *Momentum (Washington, D.C.)*, 28, 6-10.
- Marzano, R. J. (1998). What are the general skills of thinking and reasoning and how do you teach them?. *The Clearing House*, 71(5), 268-273.
- Marzano, R. J. (1999). Building curriculum and assessment around standards. *High School Magazine*, 6(5), 14-19.
- Marzano, Robert. (January, 2002). In search of the standardized curriculum. *Principal*, (Reston, Va.) 81 no3
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). [Using Data: Two Wrongs and a Right.](#) *Educational Leadership*, 60(5), 56-60.
- Marzano, R. and Marzano, J. (2003).
[The Key to Classroom Management.](#) *Educational Leadership*. 61 no1 S 2003 WN: 0324403461002
- Meisels, S. J., Atkins-Burnett, S., Xue, Y., Nicholson, J., Bickel, D. D., and Son, S-H. (2003). Creating a system of accountability:
[The impact of instructional assessment on elementary](#) children's achievement test scores, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 11(9)
- Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning . (2003).
[Sustaining School Improvement—Professional Learning Communities](#) Report.
- Mitchell, R. (2005). Building a Better Assignment. *Journal of Staff Development*, 26(1), 42-47.
- Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2005). [Policy Brief: Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms.](#)
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/31/35661078.pdf>
- Protheroe, Nancy. (Summer 2001). Improving Teaching and Learning with Data-Based Decisions: Asking the Right Questions and Acting on the Answers. *ERS Spectrum*. Online at
<http://www.ers.org/spectrum/sum01a.htm>
- Rallis, S. F., & MacMullen, M. M. (2000).
[Inquiry-minded schools:](#) Opening doors for accountability. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(10), 766–773.
- Scherer, Marge. (February 2003).
[Using Data to Improve Student Achievement.](#) *Educational Leadership*. Vol 60, NO 5, 5-5
- Schmoker, M. (1999). *Results: The Key to Continuous Improvement*. . Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Schmoker, M. (2000). Standards versus sentimentality: reckoning--successfully--with the most promising movement in modern education. *NASSP Bulletin*, 84(620), 49-60.
- Schmoker, M. (2003). [First Things First: Demystifying Data Analysis.](#) *Educational Leadership*, 60(5), 22-24.
- Scholtes, P. R. (1988). *The Team Handbook: How to Use Teams to Improve Quality*. Madison, WI: Joiner Associates Inc.
- Shulman, L.(1987). Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57 (1): 1-22
- Slavin, Robert. (February 2003). [Using Data to Improve Student Achievement:](#) A Reader's Guide to Scientifically Base Research. *Educational Leadership*. Vol 60, NO 5, 12-16
- Slowinski, Joe. (September 2000) [Finding Your Way Through The Data Smog:](#) Enabling Empowered Decision Making with Free Online Tools. *From Now On The Educational Technology Journal*, Vol 10, No 1
- Sparks, Dennis. (Winter 2000)
[Results are the Reason](#) Data should be used to select the most results-oriented initiatives. *Journal of Staff Development*, (Vol. 21, No. 1)

**Inquiry-Based Data-Driven Decision Making:
Part 3: The Principal's Role**

- Stiggins, R. J. (1995). Assessment literacy for the 21st century. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 77, 238-245.
- Stiggins, R. J. (1999) [Assessment, Student Confidence, and School Success.](#) *Phi Delta Kappan*. V81 no3 p191-8
- Stiggins, R. J. (1999). Barriers to effective student assessments. *The Education Digest*, 64(6), 25-29.
- Stiggins, R. J. (1999). [Teams.](#) *Journal of Staff Development*, 20(3), 17-21.
- Stiggins, R. J. (January 2001). "The Principal's Leadership Role in Assessment." *NASSP Bulletin* 13-26.
- Stiggins, R. J. (2002). [Assessment Crisis: the Absence of Assessment for Learning.](#) *Phi Delta Kappan*. V 83 no10
- Stiggins, R. J. (2004). [New Assessment Beliefs for a New School Mission.](#) *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(1), 22-27.
- Stiggins, R. J. (September, 2005). [Assessment for Learning Defined.](#) *ETS/Assessment Training Institute's International Conference: Promoting Sound Assessment in Every Classroom*, Portland OR.
- Wade, Howard. (Dec. 2001). Data Inquiry and Analysis for Educational Reform. *ERIC Digest* 153. online: <http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest153.html>
- Wellman, B., & Lipton, L. (2004). *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry*. Sherman, CT: MiraVia, LLC.
- Wiggins, G. (2004). [Assessment as Feedback.](#) *New Horizons for Learning Online Journal*, 10(2)
- Wiggins, G. (1997) Practicing What We Preach in Designing Authentic Assessments. *Educational Leadership*. V54 pl 18-25
- Wiggins and McTighe. (2005). *Understanding by Design Expanded Addition*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development

Visit us online at
youreducationpartners.com.