

Data

We are a data driven society. Education as a field has responded to the use of data as a method for accountability and quality control in how we do our jobs. State departments of education have made this use of data direct components of an administrator's role. It is also directly relevant to teacher's work with students. Recently, administrators and teachers are encouraged to together. Hord (1997) describes this working together as professional learning communities. These efforts are meant to enhance their professional performance. This framework for structuring process change has significantly impacted how administrators and teachers think about working along side one another. Working from this shared stakeholder point of view, all of the issues that impact effective instruction become as salient to the job of teaching as the teaching itself.

Our focus on the use of data in instructional design and delivery reflects several *performance-based principal licensure standards* for administrators:

Standard 4: Content knowledge Instruction
Standard 5: Individualization of Instruction
Standard 6: Management and Evaluation of Instruction

Holding these standards in mind, our presentation was constructed specifically to examine three aspects of how school personnel use data: 1) What data is used, 2) How it is analyzed, and 3) How it impacts practice. The integrity of the match between instruction and standards in part depends on the rigor of our data analysis and application of that knowledge.

My direct experience with quality data analysis and subsequent teaching task analysis is disappointing. The expectation of professional learning communities exist. However, the groundwork described by Astuto and others (1993) as important to the process does not

consistently occur. They describe several attributes that facilitate the development of professional learning communities:

- Supportive and shared leadership
- Collective creativity
- Shared values and vision
- Supportive conditions/environment
- Shared personal practice

When aspects of the learning community are weak or underdeveloped, then the quality of the data analysis and application is impacted. I sincerely believe that data contributes significantly to how we do our jobs. It is important that administrators take the initiative and demonstrate skill in this area. Meaningful data analysis can be a powerful starting point for enhancing the potency of the learning community in a school.

References

- Astuto, T.A., Clark, D.L., Read, A-M., McGree, K. & Fernandez, L. de K.P. (1993). Challenges to dominant assumptions controlling educational reform. Andover, Massachusetts: Regional Laboratory for the Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands.
- Hord, S.M. (1997). Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement. Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.