

The care and feeding of school improvement “data teams”: An Alaskan university – school partnership

Multiple goals of data teams

- Professional development
- Trust building & group building
- Vehicle for sustaining community of learners & culture of inquiry
- Represents teams of critical stakeholders & expert resources
- Teams tied to SIP's
- Helps meet federal, state, district and school mandates
- Helps improve practice across network

HOW did we build data teams?

- Developed & delivered online and site delivered courses that explore iterative process of:
 - Community building and collaboration
 - Improvement-oriented evaluation process
 - Harvard's data-wise model
 - Ruth Johnson's data teaming
- Conducted intensive site visits & classes in schools
- Created series of academies at network level
- Started with critical friends model that was under utilized
- Collected data on effectiveness of data team building
 - Made improvements in teams building based on data reflection

Sequence of data team building...

Year 1: Began with network academies to explore...

- What constitutes core “team”
- Role of principal, superintendent, teacher, para-professionals
- First year data collection around SIP
- Assessment literacy focusing on achievement testing

Year 2: Network academies NOT enough

- Refined more site-specific projects and increased site visits
- Added online coursework

Year 3: Reinforcing foundational skills & structures

- Consciously developing trust-building strategies
- Systematically addressing data-wise steps
- Going beyond time and structure needs– i.e., avoiding Step 5

Year 4: Started action research around data teaming

- Next step - a rubric to guide & measure growth & development of teams*

Facilitating PD of data teams:

- Multiple approaches to data team training: School based PD, course work, academy networking, NSAs in place
 - Starting simple: quadrant graphing
- Build developmental sequence using DataWise
- Valuing multiple data types and sources
 - Quantitative AND qualitative data
 - Formal and informal assessments
 - Classroom based and assessments by others
- Change action perspectives
- Embed professional development in learning community
 - Intentional practice of Wellman's facilitation rubric
 - Practice framing inquiry questions about “productivity”

A supporting framework for network and site teaming:

[Data-Wise Process](#)

- Structures data teams' work
- Reinforces developmental sequence for individuals
- Provides a rubric for evaluation use
- Focuses on students who “aren't making it”
- Focuses on “What can we do?”



Findings – what have we learned...

Teams take over three years to get there:

- Teaching training, summer institutes, language camps, parent training, child growth portfolios, immersion model, ...
- Re-alignment & recasting of AEIN academies as ongoing aspect of network work
- Reinforcement of culturally responsive understanding of student improvement
- Teams began designing logic maps in August 2007 at NSA – application, integration, & recording varied
- More time investment required than anticipated: teacher time, principal time, supporting experts' time

Learnings about creating a culture of inquiry:

- Flawed initial assumptions
- Revised assumptions
- At least 3 levels of teams emerging
- Facilitating PD of data teams
- Challenges
- Indicators of successful communities of inquiry

Revised assumptions:

- Revision process should be integral to the project design and its SIP function
 - Constructive, iterative, and reflective processes
 - Learning and progress are multi-faceted
 - Team development is iterative, nonlinear, uneven, but measurable

Challenges shaping team success

- (in)tolerance for ambiguity
- Core requirements for team readiness not in place
- principal and superintendent buy-in & support**
- leveraging of internal & external evaluation resources
- looking beyond the short-term
 - Data collection focused only on student performance
- integrating data team efforts with non-negotiable state/national accreditation and NLCB efforts toward data driven decision-making
- principals delegating responsibility for data teams

Process Indicators for successful communities of inquiry...

- High trust** among team and community members
- Diversity** in perspective and membership
- Open respect and reflection** among members in discussion and decision-making
- Shared and articulated sense of inquiry** among team members
- More than technical knowledge and skill building
- Tolerance for ambiguity and iteration present
- Principal matters, process matters, structure matters
- Allow time to get there...**

Output indicators of successful data teams

- Shift from culture of external dependence
- Shift in data collection process and content
- Increased system savvy
- Expanded culturally responsive data analysis
- Purposeful and explicit link of practice to school improvement plans and professional development plans
- Completion of multiple Data Wise cycles

What's still needed...

- Invest more resources in Communities of Learners
 - Leverage network resources better
 - Adopt long-term network co-ownership & team building
- Become more purposeful and explicit about:
 - purpose, roles, communication, trust, collaboration, and data use

Next steps ...

- Development and introduction of an iterative data team rubric**
- Revise professional development base**
 - Need a common language to proceed
 - An iterative model of development
 - Collegially reflect on process of PD
- Team development**
 - Given issues and reality of turnover – What are effects on team development
 - Expect three year base level of initial development
 - Macro and micro strategies to help school participants link site-specific views to big-picture
 - Increased principal teaming via more site visits

