Indicator Explanation

DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Leadership	Prioritize improvement and communicate its urgency	1A.7 School leaders analyze and communicate the data for Instructional Teams and individual teachers to use for academic decision-making and problem-solving related to student performance and outcomes, e.g., attendance, behavior, and learning mastery.

School leaders are positioned to take a broad view of the data available to them and make decisions on the focus and direction of the school. They can assess where there are strengths to be celebrated and weaknesses that need shoring up. An IES study of successful schools (2008) found that these schools considered data at three levels: at the school level to focus on areas that needed schoolwide improvement to meet adequate yearly progress, at the classroom level to focus on teachers' instructional strengths and weaknesses, and at the student level to focus on instructional needs of individual students" (p. 14-15). Data helps leaders determine if their perceptions about what is happening in their school matches reality. What programs are really working in your school? Which students are testing at grade level and which students are not? Why? "Disaggregating data by different student populations will show which students are excelling and which are falling behind. These clues begin to form a picture of what is really happening in schools" (AASA, n.d. p. 6).

Multiple sources of data are needed to tell a complete story. Schools collect large amounts of data on attendance, behavior, performance, as well as survey data. To improve instruction, however, it is not the amount of data that is on hand but using the data to tell the story and then to use that information to make changes (Hamilton, et al., 2009). Teachers have a wealth of additional information at their fingertips such as the collected assignments from students and results of formative assessments given in the classroom. Teacher teams such as Instructional Teams can meet together to analyze the data and form ideas on how to enrich instruction for students who need additional challenges and plan interventions and supports for those students who are struggling (Jacobson, 2010, Tobia, 2007).

Leaders should be ready to ask the right questions when looking at the data. Questions should be as specific as possible, and when the first level of answers is reached, create the next layer of questions. Methods such as the "Five Whys" or the "Fishbone" can be used to find root causes. Also question what types of data is being reviewed in order to find the answers to the questions. As leadership becomes more comfortable working with and analyzing the data, being to involve the teachers in the process so they are equipped to use the same methods when looking at the classroom level data that they collect.

Simply sharing the data with instructional staff does not necessarily mean that change is imminent. Levin (2012) writes, "A further important caution is that assessment and data do not tell people what to do next. It is important to know, say, that our fourth graders are not doing well in expository writing, but that does not tell the staff what to do to generate improvement. The latter requires work to review the research, share and test new practices, and help teachers integrate better practice into their classrooms in a sustainable way… Given how critical effective professional learning is, and how much time and other resources PD involves, we cannot continue to support activities that do not produce significant results" (p. 107 & 126). Elmore (2000) states that "if the purpose of leadership is the improvement of teaching practice and performance,

then the skills and knowledge that matter are those that bear on the creation of settings for learning focused on clear expectations for instruction" (p. 20). Educators are now shifting their "focus from simply reporting test results to using the data to improve instruction" (AASA, n.d., p.iii) and using data to "measure student progress, evaluate program and instructional effectiveness, guide curriculum development and resource allocation, promote accountability, and most importantly, ensure every child learns" (AASA, n.d., p. iii).

Teachers can build their lessons based on what they learn from student data. What worked in previous lessons? What didn't work? Where will students need more background information before this lesson is taught? Collaboration school-wide around the data ensures that all teachers are learning and growing in their professional practice and students are provided the best support possible on their learning journey.

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