



Data-Informed Leadership

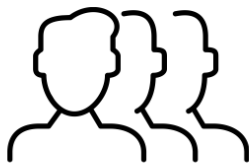
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February 2016

Context-Focused Approach: Importance of the 4 Ps

In our decade of research studying districts and schools implementing data-driven decision making, we have learned that having a larger vision for data use by leaders matters a great deal. Understanding and assessing the context is critical. The people, policies, practices, and patterns (4 Ps) comprise the setting, or context, of educational change.

The four Ps context-focused approach to understanding the implementation of data use pushes researchers and practitioners to move beyond simple questions of whether it is effective or useful for teaching and learning. This approach helps direct attention to the people and conditions that shape the process and its potential consequences.



People

A school has a unique set of leaders and teachers with established habits and patterns of interaction. One has only to witness the departure of a few key players to see how large an impact people have on a school.



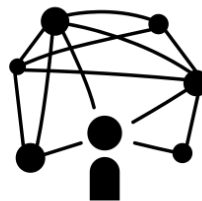
Practices

Protocols for doing things, ways of talking about students, and norms of interaction can either help or constrain the data-informed leader. Sometimes the same features simultaneously help and hinder.



Policies

Policies shape the work of schools more than ever before, and districts are taking an increasingly active role in educational reform and accountability increases at governmental levels. At the school level, such policies help to inform classroom practices, as teachers emphasize certain content areas over others, group students in particular ways, and so on.



Patterns

People also have particular patterns of interaction within a given setting. In some schools, teachers may wield a great deal of influence, whereas in others they have very limited decision making power.



Implications for Leaders

We cannot fully evaluate whether tools or practices are effective in data use without knowing how they are used in schools, each with their own unique four Ps. Data-informed leaders need to engage in all of these activities as well as remain keenly aware of the local conditions that may help or hinder the work.

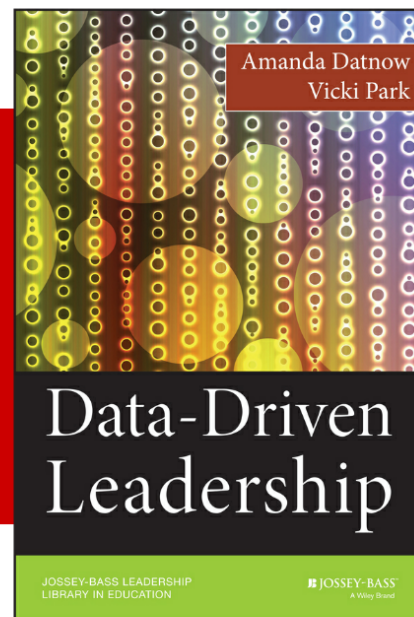
- What is the prior reform history? What experiences have teachers had with other initiatives that may be seen as similar to this one?
- How stable is the leadership at the district and school levels? Is leadership spread over multiple individuals at the school level?
- Who are the key people among the teaching staff that will help or hinder data use efforts?
- What is the existing capacity of teachers and leaders to take new goals or practices?
- What patterns of interaction exist among people that can either facilitate or thwart change?
- What current routines and practices may support data use? And what existing ways of doing things will get in the way?
- How do changing state and federal policies shape data use efforts here? How does the current record of achievement, as measured by accountability systems, shape the potential for data use?

Additional Resources

Datnow, A. & Park, V. (2014). *Data-Driven Leadership*. Jossey-Bass Leadership Book Series. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Wiley Inc.

Datnow, A. & Park, V. (2015). Data use for equity. *Educational Leadership*, 72(5), 48-54.

Park, V., Daly, A.J., & Guerra, A.W. (2013). Strategic framing: How leaders craft the meaning of data use for equity and learning. *Educational Policy*, 27(4), 645-675.



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