Focus on Teacher Data Literacy

By: John Ralston, Perry Meridian Sixth Grade Acdemy
Team Members Names: Crystal Livesay, Kelly Swisher
Contact: jralston@perryschools.org

Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

For the 16-17 school year Perry Academy implemented a Flex period within our schedule. Flex is a 30 minute period at the beginning of our school day that gives teachers time to work with individual or small groups of students to address skill gaps that have been identified through data analysis. We also began using Evaluate, a computer based formative assessment tool. Our students take Evaluate assessments in Math and Language Arts every month.

Towards the end of the second nine weeks, it became obvious that many teachers were struggling with learning how to use data from Evaluate to identify the skill gaps that we want addressed through our Flex period.

To determine if our observations were accurate, we asked teachers to answer the following three questions regarding Evaluate data and Flex time:

#1 - How many days a week do you currently use flex time to work with individual or small groups of students for remediation and/or enrichment?

   54% of teachers responded they were only using Flex 1 or 2 days a week (our
   goal is 4)

#2 - On a scale of 1 to 5 (one being the lowest and five the highest), how comfortable are you using data to plan for flex?

   35% of teachers responded with a 1 or 2

#3 - On a scale of 1 to 5 (one being the lowest and five the highest), how comfortable are you navigating the Evaluate system and using the data?

   34% of our teachers responded with a 1 or 2

Based upon the data from the above questions, we realized that we needed to work with our staff regarding data literacy. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to provide the teachers with professional development on data literacy to see if this would increase the number of days teacher were using Flex to work with individual or small groups of students.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

Will an intentional focus on data literacy (understanding and using data to identify skill gaps) positively impact teacher use of Evaluate data to plan for Flex time?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, our leadership team decided to dedicate a four week cluster cycle to improving the data literacy of our teachers. Cluster is a 50 minute professional development session our teachers attend each week.

The four week cluster cycle was structured as follows:

Week #1 - Identify and discuss major stresses/stressors of Flex and Evaluate.
  - Look at January Evaluate results (your class vs building).
  - Identify one skill to work on during Flex.
Week #2 - Classroom connectors in Evaluate (What? Where? Why?).
  - Find connectors related to low skill identified through data.
  - Plan for how to use during Flex.
Week #3 - Evaluate data scavenger hunt – teachers had to find data and reports
  in Evaluate based upon scenarios given to them.
  - Viewing data by class and by student (how to individualize).
Week #4 - Look at February Evaluate results
  - Identify skills that we have taught that are low and may need
   remediation
  - Inferences and implications we can make about our instruction.
  - In-depth discussion of individual questions.

Due to the varying levels of data literacy amongst our teachers (as shown by the three question pre-survey), we decided to divide the teachers into small groups based upon their skill level to facilitate discussion and collaboration.

Data collection consisted of exit tickets from each Cluster meeting, observations of Cluster facilitators (Master Teacher, Principal, and Assistant Principal), and the three question pre and post survey administered to teachers.

Our leadership team met weekly to discuss previous week's Cluster meetings and make any necessary adjustments for the coming week.

Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing our data, things we learned include:

1) Pausing what you are doing to get everyone on the same page, although it may not always seem ideal and takes some extra planning and scheduling, can yield great results.
2) An intentional focus on data literacy helps teachers feel more confident in their use of data which translates into more targeted interventions for students.
3) The structure of professional development can really help or hinder teacher involvement. Smaller groups and more time for teachers to work with each other were driving forces in making this data cluster cycle so successful.

Data and observations to support learning:

1) Pausing what you are doing to get everyone on the same page, although it may not always seem ideal and takes some extra planning and scheduling, can yield great results.

Prior to planning this data cluster cycle, our clusters were planned out through the rest of the year. Reorganizing that plan was not easy, however the data from the pre and post survey administered to teachers shows that after our cluster cycle on data literacy teachers were more confident using data, teachers stating their comfort level with data was a 4 or 5 increased 123%, and the number of teachers using Flex 4 days a week increased 66%.

2) An intentional focus on data literacy helps teachers feel more confident in their use of data which translates into more targeted interventions for students.

After our data cluster cycle, the number of teachers stating their comfort level with using data to plan for flex as a 4 or 5 increased 52%. Also, the number of teachers using Flex 4 days a week increased 66%. This data shows that teachers being more confident using data allowed them to then use that data to provide targeted interventions during Flex time.

3) The structure of professional development can really help or hinder teacher involvement. Smaller groups and more time for teachers to work with each other were driving forces in making this data cluster cycle so successful.

Based upon our observations and comments from teachers, future cluster cycles, whenever possible, will be conducted with the smaller group model that we implemented for this inquiry project. Comments from teachers include:

"The smaller setting made me feel much safer sharing my thoughts and opinions. I did not feel judged or fear criticism."
"The time to sit with colleagues in our department is greatly appreciated."
"I thought this was going to be horribly boring, but it wasn't! Being in a smaller group made all the difference.""

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Based upon our observations and comments from teachers, future cluster cycles, whenever possible, will be conducted with the smaller group model that we implemented for this inquiry project.

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We will have a follow up data/Flex cluster cycle early next year and will develop a plan to have monthly data meetings with teachers (individual? academic teams? department?)

Continue to work with teachers on how to effectively use Flex period to address skill gaps (keeping the focus off working on classwork, homework, etc).

References:

N/A