EduStat Case Study

Denver Public Schools: Making Meaning of Data to Enable School Leaders to Make Human Capital Decisions

Nicole Wolden and Erin McMahon

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Authors: Nicole Wolden & Erin McMahon

Section I

A. Describe what you determined to be the fundamental issue in this case and how you arrived at that interpretation.

The core issue of our case study is how to drive the use of consistent data to inform and enhance school based human capital decision making. These include, but are not limited to personnel decisions such as renewal, tenure, identification of teacher leaders, remediation and dismissal, as well as professional development decisions such as coaching, new teacher support, teacher leader roles, etc.

Explain the pertinent facts and events that drew attention to the problem. What data sources did you consider key and how did you make sense of them? If applicable, share how Schoolnet/Pearson aided you in this process.

Our focus for this study is to share learning and insights about how Denver Public Schools is using performance data to increase accountability, consistency and informed decision making regarding evaluation structures and human capital management. A few key data sources include:

- **The frequency and consistency in which school leaders provide actionable feedback:** In examining observation data captured in Schoolnet, our main question was: Are school leaders providing the appropriate levels of observation support and coaching to teachers throughout the district? We wanted to understand completion rates for observations and how the feedback supported a teacher's professional development.

  Through data analysis, we discovered a large number of school leaders were not completing observations. As a result, the performance data varied widely. This then impacted the amount of opportunities for assigning professional development (PD) via Schoolnet in direct relation to the observed behaviors. Fewer observations meant fewer prompts for coaching and PD.

  The data sources leveraged here were the observation history in Schoolnet and the extraction of the raw data from Schoolnet used to create monthly progress reports to inform school leaders and instructional superintendents about principal and peer observers' observation completion.

- **Determining what to do with all the individual components of LEAP:** The Leading Effective Academic Practice system consists of multiple measures including observation data from principals and Peer Observers, Student Perception Surveys, Professionalism and multiple measures of student growth. After collecting LEAP data, we are working to make sense of the individual measure data to inform how we create a summative score. Using available data through LEAP piloting, we have been able to model different possibilities of how the measures could come together to inform how our district and union leadership make decisions.

- **Variance in how tenure and renewal decisions are made:** Tenure and renewal decisions for probationary teachers have lacked consistent guidelines in how data was used to inform decisions. DPS generated a set of business rules and guidelines to assist school leaders in looking at multiple sources of data when making tenure and renewal decisions for probationary teachers. The goal was to move toward a systemic process where school leaders consistently apply similar parameters for using a body of evidence to make more informed decisions.

As we work toward creating a sustainable teacher effectiveness system for the district, understanding and using data will be critical to driving the teacher growth and development, which ultimately will impact student achievement. Broadening the learning and embedding it across human resources will enable DPS to make better human capital decisions that will enhance our schools and our students.

C. Briefly summarize any competing explanations of the issue that were considered and share the rationale for the explanation of the issue selected as most critical.

Two issues were considered the most critical to address in order to provide data that would enable school Leaders to make human capital decisions:

1. **Lack of priority due to competing initiatives and time:** DPS, like many districts, has multiple large priorities happening simultaneously. The priorities of educator effectiveness, implementation of the Common Core State Standards, and ensuring success of our English Language Learners are demanding more and more time for school leaders to grow in their roles as strong school and instructional leaders. The feedback we receive from them indicates they are overwhelmed by the level of change they are experiencing. They are often unclear about how to prioritize and connect academic priorities to drive school performance. By providing tools, resources, training and data support for LEAP, our goal is to streamline and simplify the processes to increase school leaders' involvement in the work while connecting teacher effectiveness with other initiatives, e.g., we added an icon to the DPS Framework for Effective Teaching to show school leaders which indicators align to the Common Core and include LEAP data usage as part of the DPS Data Inquiry cycle.

2. **Lack of trust and confidence in the data:** Due to DPS using both peer observers and school leaders to complete observations we had issues with perceived data reliability between observers, as well as, variance in the quality of the feedback provided. Additionally, there were concerns about the training and support school leaders received to enable them to consistently score both the observation and professionalism measures accurately. We developed messaging to remind everyone that the data from a single observation objectively captured a point in time, and was only one part of a body of evidence. As we move into 2013-14, we are also implementing a comprehensive inter-rater agreement certification process and training support program for the 13-14 school year.

II. Determining the Guiding Principles and Criteria for Approaching the Issue

A. Summarize the principles or criteria regarding the district goals and mission, professional knowledge, and processes, and/or values that guided your decision-making.

District Goal - Our next phase of work will be capacity building for teachers, teacher leaders, and principals to use LEAP data to ensure growth in practice and human capital decisions. Key to our approach for increasing student achievement is improving the strategic use of teacher performance data to help teachers improve their individual performance and help principals make higher quality human capital decisions. The district developed LEAP to provide feedback through multiple measures--- peer and principal observations, professionalism, student perceptions and created structures of formative feedback loops to increase opportunities for teachers to improve their craft. The role of teacher leaders is expanding within the district and will be critical to capacity building for our schools' leadership.

Processes – Leveraging the data from the multiple measures has enabled DPS to help school leaders and teachers think and plan differently about how they approach growth and development. DPS and Schoolnet have structures in place for schools and teachers to: (1) develop a Professional Growth Plan and select two areas of focus (*Framework for Effective Teaching* indicators) for the year and (2) the ability to monitor progress toward those goals throughout the year. In addition, in 2011, DPS re-categorized and audited its professional development offerings to align with LEAP, eliminated unaligned offerings and filled in gaps. In 13/14 we will work to align PD capabilities within Schoolnet. Our goal is to further inform PD development and target support for teachers in each school based on the Framework.

Criteria–Currently, teachers are able to access a variety of high-quality options that are most relevant to their individual needs and interests, including:

- **Ensuring teachers and school leaders have easy access to support.** DPS has in place a web-based platform of videos, webinars and text-based materials tagged, searchable, and aligned to our Framework that can be "pushed" out to teachers. There are also online tools and resources teachers need, including online assessment tools and curricular resources. The platform allows principals and teachers to track PD completed and allow DPS to centrally use LEAP data to measure the impact of PD completed by teachers and push specific resources to teachers across the performance continuum.

- **Providing reliable data in a consistent format to guide conversations around professional development and growth.** To ensure observers have the skills and support they need, DPS is implementing a rigorous Inter-rater agreement certification process to be used in 13/14. DPS is partnering with Schoolnet to build one tool to capture and report out on a teacher's performance on the multiple measures of LEAP.

- **Offering guidance around how to interpret the data to inform human capital decisions with confidence.** DPS continues to improve the guidance around the use of performance data from observations, professionalism, student perceptions and student outcomes. This data is expected to be used as part of a body of evidence to inform the identification and selection of potential Teacher Leads, remediation support and making tenure and renewal decisions.

- **Empowering teachers and school leaders to drive their own development.** DPS has made a major shift on the delivery mechanisms for PD moving away from central office toward embedding teacher supports at the school building level. PD that is now teacher led (through 600 teacher leaders). Schools use existing organizational structures for their professional learning communities and grade/department teams, to deepen knowledge of content and reflect on student work to calibrate rigor. Teacher Leaders facilitate this work and principals have been trained to utilize their teachers as instructional leaders to create a system of truly distributed leadership.

- **Increasing the frequency of feedback throughout the year.** Using observation performance data from the 12/13 school year, DPS was able to create a differentiated support model for 13/14. Peer observer support will automatically be given to novice teachers, and any teacher who is performing below an established performance threshold. By differentiating this support, DPS is moving away from a one-size fits all approach to a more focused support model based on need. This model also provides flexibility for teachers who were not assigned a peer observer, but want additional support, by allowing them to opt-in for peer support. School leaders can leverage this support model to help them identify which teachers to prioritize as they schedule observations.

B. Explain how these guided your decision making.

Despite a significant investment in this new system of PD and talent management, overall effectiveness of these systems remains mixed. Teacher usage and understanding of PD offerings is low. Teachers are either unaware of the PD offerings available on-line or know about the resources; but, struggle with finding the time to access the PD system. Principals are in different stages of understanding LEAP and the teacher support system aligned to help teachers grow individually. Moreover, principals do not feel they have the time and or energy to be both the instructional leader and run the day-to-day operations.

Our vision is to create a system of teacher support that empowers teachers to grow as professionals while achieving the school and district level goals of improving student outcomes. The focus on PD must evolve from designing and implementing new "systems" of PD to build a shared understanding and vision for teacher support and better utilization of teacher leaders as agents of change.

Currently, many principals are utilizing LEAP performance data to inform decisions for professional development, renewal, dismissal, and non-probationary status. An additional few are using performance data to make teacher leadership, staffing, retention, and other human capital decisions.

III. Determining a Plan of Action

A. Explain briefly the logic model (inputs, outputs, outcome) for your intervention to convey how you intended to achieve the desired results (see also http://tinyurl.com/ms2sj)

We believe that if we develop improved data dashboards so that school leaders may use data, then they will use that data to inform staffing and performance management decisions, monitor and support

teacher growth, and identify teacher leaders who will work to make a positive impact on the school community.

As a corollary, we believe that if we enhance the guidance and training for conducting performance conversations, then this will ensure principals can make informed recommendations to meet the differentiated needs of teachers.

Lastly, we believe that if we utilize teacher leaders as a key leverage point in our district, they can facilitate reflection and problem solving with cohorts of colleagues at their school to maximize the collaborative planning time built into teacher schedules.

B. What enablers and constraints (e.g., school-, district- or community-based programs, practices, tools, structures, procedures, policies, systems, and so forth) were most relevant in shaping the particulars of your intervention(s) for this issue and in achieving fidelity in its implementation?

Enablers

Process

We are continuing to develop Data dashboards through Schoolnet and other portal tools to increase data distribution and increase understanding of how to use data to inform decisions.

Tools

Development of improved central office supports to use LEAP data and building structures to understand how data needs to be used in context to help guide decisions and by defining guidelines the district believes determine effectiveness.

Tools and support will enable DPS leaders to more effectively utilize performance data to inform hiring, staffing, recognition and retention decisions.

With LEAP performance data in place, DPS will be able to design an aligned employee value proposition (EVP) for teachers, which will include cohesive career lattices, recognition programs and compensation structures using LEAP data as the foundation. The EVP will

Constraints

The ability of our school leaders, Instructional Superintendents and HR School Partners to use performance data remains mixed. With LEAP there is a bounty of performance data previously unavailable, and it will require a significant investment to build the capacity of these teams to interpret and use this data.

Revisions to ProComp, DPS' compensation structure for teachers, must be negotiated with our union. DCTA has been a collaborative partner in the design and rollout of LEAP, but we do anticipate tension as we consider compensation structures that materially differentiate compensation based on performance.

IV. Implementing Your Plan of Action

A. Describe how you developed a shared vision for the district about this issue, communicated about it to generate stakeholder buy-in, and monitored organizational performance relative to this vision.

DPS has had the same priorities for the last three years and the first priority remains "Grow Our Educators". Additionally, with the rollout of the principal Framework for Effective School Leadership, DPS has identified four priority indicators, including one that is focused on performance management.

In addition to these top down efforts to communicate this priority, DPS has also been working closely with DCTA from inception to implementation of the educator performance management system**.** As the work continues, DPS and DCTA will continue to collaborate to ensure joint ownership of the work and that the teacher perspective is reflected in the systems by which they will be held accountable. DPS plans to continue collaborative structures such as the LEAP steering committee with DPS and DCTA leadership, two DCTA liaisons, and teacher and principal design teams to create shared ownership of the LEAP system with DCTA along with teachers and principals across the district.

B. Relate how you prepared people for new duties or roles relative to this issue by supporting reflection, learning, or growth to foster improvement.

We have worked to strengthen and empower teachers and principals as leaders within the context of shared district wide values that are teacher and student centered. This includes leadership training for teachers to support their engagement in diverse leadership roles that are critical to the success of LEAP and the integration of CCSS.

We have also worked over the last three years to train principals, instructional superintendents, and human resource school partners on data usage to inform all phases of human capital management. Training has focused on building district capacity to support use of LEAP data to inform human capital management, school structure and staffing strategies. DPS has worked to ensure vertical alignment in the teacher and school leader accountability systems to further support LEAP implementation and effective usage.

In analyzing observation performance between various observers and observer types, DPS noticed inconsistent scoring. As a result, DPS analyzed the current training and calibration process and determined that more structured guidelines, data collection and training were required to ensure all observers are credible and inter-rater agreed in scoring observations.

In 13-14 DPS is implementing an Observer Certification process using RANDA as the technology solution. The process is as follows:

1.) Observers attend a minimum of 4 hours of pre-certification training that includes calibration with a practice video.
2.) Observers take the certification assessment online (1 video); the scores are compared against a normed report that has been created by a Master Coding Committee.
3.) If the observer scores 83% adjacent (exact or +/- 1), s/he is a certified observer for the school year. If the observer falls below the minimum 83% adjacent threshold, additional training

support is required and observers will then be required to take another assessment and successfully meet the threshold to be granted certification. If the observer falls below the 83% adjacent threshold on the second assessment, s/he will be assigned an in-person certifier that will work with the observer at his/her schools observing those teachers.

C. Discuss how you strengthened the district culture, modified organizational structures, built collaborative processes, handled internal marketing and PR, and managed the district environment so that your district works to support your intervention for this issue.

DPS has been a leader in utilizing teacher leadership for peer-to-peer feedback and has developed teacher leaders as agents of change. Over the past three years, DPS has created the Teacher Leadership Academy (TLA) that now includes 600 teacher leaders to build the capacity of an effective core of teachers to lead their colleagues in implementing CCSS and school-specific improvement strategies. While gains have been made, there are only pockets of excellence throughout the district and not the systemic impact we have been working toward.

Additionally, DPS has on staff a full time DCTA Liaison whose role it is to visit schools and speak with teachers and school leaders about LEAP. He frequently addresses misperceptions, as well as gathers feedback that supports the district in making ongoing changes. Through this role, DPS has identified many of the gaps in our accountability and training structures that will be addressed in the following year.

V. Reflecting Upon The Plan of Action, Its Implementation, And Its Effectiveness

A. Looking back, describe any lessons learned about the conditions that contributed to the creation of this issue, its identification, or handling.

As DPS moves in to the 13-14 school year, data collection, analysis and action planning will continue to be a pivotal step as we continue to refine and improve the data, training, support and management of human capital decisions. Immediate impacts of our efforts to drive consistent data use have been:

Observation Model improvements:

- In 11-12 DPS went from requiring 3 full observations to one full with partials and walktrhoughs based on completion rate data and feedback from the field.
- For 13-14, DPS is differentiating Peer Observation support based on a teacher's data and performance on the Framework for Effective Teaching. This decision allows DPS to better utilize resources to insure support structures are differentiated.
- Implementation of the Observation Certification process is designed to increase confidence in observation process and reduce observer inconsistencies.

Multiple Measure Calculations:

- In 11-12 and 12-13, DPS has provided an End-of-Year report to help teachers and school leaders identify strengths and areas of improvement as well as inform performance decisions.
- In 13-14, DPS has been able to run a variety of scenarios using the data to help shape the decision making around how these measures should and could come together to begin making meaning of the individual components as a whole.

Variance in how tenure and renewal decisions were being made:

- By putting parameters and guidance around the data collected, DPS was able to begin preparing instructional superintendents and school leaders to use the data in a consistent format when making tenure and renewal decisions. As a result, DPS made almost 2,000 human capital decisions this spring 12-13, including more than 400 tenure decisions. Of those decisions 87% of probationary teachers were renewed, and 62% of teachers who were eligible were granted non-probationary status. Compared to last year 11-12, this was a lower renewal rate, and a higher tenure rate.

B. Looking forward, describe any new systems were established or more routinized to improve the ability of the district to deal with this issue in the future.

We are working to build a professional development system and strategy that is aligned with opportunities for teachers to make connections between the pedagogy in the Framework for Effective Teaching, the instructional shifts in the CCSS, and the best practices for working with ELLs. While current professional development offerings have been aligned to indicators within the Framework for Effective Teaching, enhancements are needed to support teachers at different performance levels along the continuum of practice. In addition, we need to enable teachers to successfully utilize the CCSS, CAS, and WIDA standards to plan instruction and assessment.

As a result, by leveraging the LEAP performance data, the district is working on a design for professional development that will include differentiation of modules within indicator areas to meet the needs of educators by virtue of their respective scores (currently, one size fits all is the norm for professional development modules).

The design intends to align school wide and personal areas of focus with standards work. To support a district wide increase in teacher effectiveness, DPS is working on centralized human capital systems that will align with and be informed by LEAP data such that all human capital decisions drive toward ensuring effective teachers in every classroom. Schoolnet's enhanced PD support is enabling DPS to achieve this goal.

The work needed in this area includes revisiting teacher compensation and recognition to support retention and strategic placement of highly effective teachers; development of meaningful career pathways and distributed leadership roles that leverage the district's most effective teachers to raise the effectiveness of their peers. Use of LEAP data to ensure that the district is effective in screening, recruiting, and staffing effective teachers and implementing a more supportive, effective process to identify and remediate or replace low performers is the goal.

C. Highlight how data or Schoolnet (product, services, or implementation) helped you in recognizing and

We are working with Schoolnet to allow teachers, principals, and central office leaders to access performance data and other measures on an ongoing basis. This access will facilitate the identification of professional development needs, benchmark progress and inform human capital decisions. Together, we will develop and implement data dashboard reports that will facilitate access to timely, intuitive LEAP data alongside other existing teacher and student level data to support human capital decision making -- such as staffing, probationary teacher renewal, awarding of non-probationary status, and identification of teacher leaders.

The accountability processes will verify that dashboards are used by analyzing and ensuring that human capital decisions being made by principals are based on good use of quality data. The work to build the capacity of principals and teacher leaders, specifically in the use of LEAP data, will afford more effective differentiation of professional development needs and the selection of teacher leaders. Schoolnet's Educator Development work has supported our PD offerings and link to data. Better use of this data will also improve the human capital decision ma process, resulting in increased numbers of effective teachers overall, including those for high need areas.