Creating a Data-Driven School Culture

The Data Driven Instructional Systems School (DDIS) offers a model that can be used to improve student learning. At times, it may be difficult to determine if a school is a DDIS as the student targeted feedback flows easily from teacher to student and from student to teacher. While this may seem natural and effortless, a great deal of training and practice has occurred. This happens when teachers and school leaders are committed to carrying out the time it takes for training and to work with the data for each student. Much like an IEP, the formative assessments that are a result of this effort provide information for individual differentiated learning for each student who shows signs that they may be struggling with a subject or one area of a subject. Rather than wait until the end of the year and summative assessments that show that a student may be at risk for failure, formative assessment helps the teacher, parent, and student recognize when and what type of intervention will help the student succeed (Halverson, 2010). According to Kofman & Senge (2001), Formative assessment helps an organization look at their issues systemically when they become aware that “parts” and the whole operate in a circle of self-generation. It is not enough to react to problems when the “whole” of the issue has grown to the point that it takes a major overhaul to fix it. If we could see that the “parts”, which we can fix and adjust as we go through the use of data, will ultimately result in the “whole” either functioning at a high level, or it will have been changed, somewhere through the assessment process, into a something that is more adapted to the future. This is what occurs when data is used to intervene in our educational system.

Types of Assessments

- Formative vs. Summative

Classroom assessments can vary from anecdotal notes taken observing a student to standardized tests. These options are divided into two categories – formative assessments and summative assessments.

- Formative assessments are on-going assessments, reviews, and observations in that Teachers use in a classroom to improve instructional methods and student feedback throughout the teaching and learning process. As a tool for intervention formative assessment allows for interventions to be adapted as needed in a timely manner. Students can use formative assessments to monitor their own learning. The results of formative assessments are used to modify and validate instruction.

- Summative assessments are typically used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and services at the end of an academic year or at a pre-determined time. The goal of summative assessments is to make a monitor student competency after an instructional phase is complete. For instance the Oregon State Testing, OAKS, is a standardized test that measures a student’s mastery when compared to other students or benchmarks. Summative evaluations are used to determine if students have mastered specific competencies and to identify instructional areas that need additional attention. They are the assessment used by districts and states to compare their learning outcomes.

Contact Information and Acknowledgements

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