Using Data to Focus Improvement

What can you expect to get from this module?

This module helps participants and school teams to think about data beyond a cursory look at standardized test scores. School leaders learn how to identify important questions, mine a variety of data sources to find answers and make decisions based on the data they find. Participants learn to work as a team to do this work and make it meaningful.

What *shouldn't* you expect to get from this module?

This module does not provide detailed information on any particular state or national test; instead it focuses on broad concepts that apply to a variety of data.

Who should take this training?

This module is for school leaders and potential school leaders. The audience may include school teams of principals, aspiring leaders, teacher leaders and others who are members or potential members of the school's instructional leadership team. **NOTE:** In order for this training to have significant impact, the principal **MUST** be part of the school team being trained. In addition, it is beneficial to include district staff involved in data management and assessment.

Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this module:

There are no formal prerequisites for this SREB module. It is considered one of the foundational modules for the SREB leadership series.

What will you have to do to get the most from this module?

Participants must commit to attending as a team, completing the prework, attending three initial days, completing a homework assignment and attending one follow-up day. It is important for teams to have time to reflect and apply what they have learned between the initial training and the follow-up session.

Big Ideas in This Module

- Data are everywhere. They go well beyond the "outside data" provided to us by testing agencies and district/state offices. These data are useful, but you may find answers to your most important questions through data that you gather and analyze at your school.
- Schools can — and do — use data to get answers to pressing questions. Data can give you a new window into your practice.
- By triangulating data — comparing two or more measures and/or looking at trends over time — you can gain greater insights about root causes.
- Looking at existing data from standardized tests is just a "jumping off point" to get you to think about questions of how your students are doing, what differences in instruction contribute to differences in achievement and what you can do about it.
- Before you can analyze data, you have to be able to interpret them — to understand clearly and deeply what they say and what they do not say.
- You can use a systematic process to help your team identify related outcomes, inputs and processes. These will help you identify key questions you want to answer through system analysis.
- Using various worksheets and tools will help a school team tackle the difficult job of choosing the right data and analyzing it in the right way.

Module Design. *Using Data to Focus Improvement* is a four-day workshop (3+1). It also includes prework and homework assignments. Each section is described below.

Prework (about three hours). The prework includes three assignments. First, participants complete a questionnaire asking them to reflect on existing data use at their schools. Second, participants read two chapters in the required text and complete worksheets summarizing key points. Third, participants must gather and bring specified sets of data from their schools.

Introduction (four hours, 30 minutes). In this overview on Day One, participants learn how using data can help improve student and school performance. Through brainstorming and discussion, they gain an appreciation for the wide range of data available to them. They work individually and in teams to determine their own reasons for embracing data use, and they begin to describe their vision for data use in their school and the gap between that vision and the current state.

Data, Data, Everywhere: What Do They All Mean? (seven hours, 10 minutes) In this section, extending from Day One to Day Two, participants get a basic grounding in understanding measures: What are the different types? How are they used alone or in combination? What do they tell us? Activities are built around Victoria Bernhardt's Multiple Measures Model and around general testing terms. These activities include a review of the prework readings, a large-group activity involving classifying measures, participant-led presentations, interactive discussion of levels of evaluation and a role play in which participants practice interpreting their schools' data for various audiences. At the end of this section, participants practice interpreting case study data and some data from their school.

Data, Data, Who's Got the Data? (six hours) Day Three focuses on the logical thinking process that participants must use to focus their evaluation, gather data from various sources, analyze, triangulate, and display data and make decisions based on that data. They also explore a variety of ways to display and communicate data. They learn that the process combines two very different skills: the ability to stay open-minded and look at the big picture, and the ability to stay focused on a single goal or evaluation question. By the end of this section, participants should be able to describe and apply a structured process of evaluation.

Homework. School teams are asked to apply everything they have learned by completing a structured set of worksheets to develop focusing questions, collect data, analyze data and display it on Day Four of the training.

Making a Difference (six hours). Day Four starts with a data fair — each school team presents key learning points from their homework and provides constructive feedback to other teams. Participants then lead presentations on various processes for school improvement. Finally, teams customize the process and create action plans.

Summary and Portfolio Assignments (one hour). Participants, working as a team, must lead the effort to facilitate the creation of an action plan that addresses findings from data, including strategies (such as remediation, tutoring, parent communication, curriculum adjustments, staff development and textbook use) to improve at the school, grade, classroom teacher, subject matter and student levels. Participants submit a portfolio that contains team products as well as individual reflections and narratives.