

Author Henry Louis Gates, Jr. states, "Collecting data is only the first step toward wisdom, but sharing data is the first step toward community." As coaches and other school leaders, we are always looking for stories to share about how well a particular model, method, or technique works in schools.

We want to know if our attempts at school transformation are worth the time and effort we have invested in implementation. In order to know what works well and what needs to be refined, we need to collect carefully crafted research and excellent data and then share that data with the school communities.

With the six circles of the Standards-Aligned System in place, instructional coaches and mentors work with teachers and administrators to embed instructional practices in literacy across all content areas; that is, coaches help teachers transform student engagement and learning so that students are reading and writing to learn. PIIC has recognized that assessment is basic to improving student outcomes; only if teachers, with the assistance of coaches, become skilled consumers of the many different kinds of formative data available to them, will they be able to use these data effectively to meet the instructional needs of their students.

Data is not just a collection of standardized test scores but rather a collection of information that helps us understand what is happening in classrooms. Sometimes it is a snapshot in time; sometimes the data tell us that what works in one environment may not work in another.

Regardless of what kind of data we collect, we know that collecting data is the foundation for continuous improvement when used appropriately so that teachers can effectively revise their thinking and serve the target population in meaningful ways.

Instructional coaches are critical in the data collection and analysis process. They help teachers use and analyze formative and summative data to identify student needs, assess how changes in classroom instructional practices can meet student needs, and track student progress.

They collaborate with teachers about what data to collect and how to use it in practical and efficient ways.

They help teachers see the connections among data collection, research, teacher practices, and student achievement.

Coaches help teachers collect qualitative data using student observations, reflections, and surveys. Since teachers are the first responders to student needs, their stories reflect a great

deal about student growth and maturation. The coaches and teachers talk about how students learn and which best practices address the myriad of learning styles in any classroom.

Building on the work of Dylan Wiliam, coaches help teachers use five key strategies in collecting and using data:

- sharing learning intentions;
- asking questions that show evidence of learning;
- providing feedback that changes instruction;
- helping teachers and students use self assessment strategies; and
- enhancing peer assessment strategies to help teachers make adjustments in their instruction so that students learn more and can show what they have learned.

Coaches supported by the PIIC Mentors regularly use a variety of formative assessment tools based in part on Dylan Wiliam's work. Examples include but are not limited to: entrance tickets and "do nows"; learning logs; think, pair, share; question strips; summarizing and paraphrasing; reflective learning/journal writing; and 3-2-1 exit tickets.

In addition to these quick classroom assessments, collecting information about student attendance, discipline referrals, and course passing rates all paint a picture of how we measure our progress and make certain that what we do is closely aligned with our goals and objectives for improved student success.