



BEYOND THE NUMBERS CONVENING 2014

Breakout Session Summary

Dual Purposing Data to Inform and Improve Teacher Evaluation Data that Informs Professional Learning

Newly restructured teacher evaluation systems provide an abundance of data about teachers' instructional quality. While the focus of teacher evaluation has largely been on accountability, these new data offer the opportunity to create actionable feedback systems that support professional learning for educators and ultimately improve teaching practice. This session focuses on some of the research and resources available to help practitioners understand the process and necessary conditions to use teacher evaluation to support professional learning.

SDP Faculty Advisor John Papay, assistant professor of education at Brown University, spoke about understanding the connection between teacher performance and work context. The school- work context is important because it affects teacher satisfaction and turnover. Contrary to some beliefs, teachers leave not because of the students, but because of an unsupportive environment. Among teachers who do not leave, the school context can make teachers more effective "when organizational supports are in place." These supports can include good professional development, strong discipline, and a sense of order in school, and they lead to better teacher performance and development. Teacher evaluation plays a role here--while most of the focus has been on accountability, evaluation can be used to improve teacher development.

Center on Great Teachers and Leaders' Deputy Director Lynn Holdheide and Project Manager & Technical Assistance Lead Ellen Cushing presented on Professional Learning Modules (PLMs), a toolkit to help move evaluation systems from accountability to understanding growth and supporting instruction. The goals of PLMs are to use data to inform professional learning. The process of using that data should start with the teacher and be active and ongoing. This creates a cycle of self-reflection and goal setting, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation. In the first, the teacher is taking charge of his or her professional development. In the second, the teacher debriefs with an evaluator to modify and implement an action plan. In the third, the teacher looks at his or her impact.

Lynn also asked about the barriers to quality professional development. The audience volunteered that obstacles include convenience, cost, time, and policy barriers. Some essential conditions, in turn, are trust, resources, access, and availability when needed. This might require structural changes, like a change in teachers' schedules to allow time for development, as well as cultural, technical, and fiscal changes.

SDP Fellow Emalie McGinnis, director of data, research, and assessment in the San Jose Unified School District, shared her sense as an administrator that she has lots of evaluations and not enough time to review the data. She framed the problem in terms of three concepts. First is time and tools.

Administrators can improve their process for collecting information about teachers, and ensuring that they have enough time in the face of competing demands. Second, schools need to focus on relationship, trust, and authenticity. Schools need systems where administrators can have tough conversations and use data to name what they are looking for from teachers. Third, schools need to provide aligned and ongoing feedback that makes teachers feel transparency and provides action steps.