

DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Using the Three-Week Assessment Cycle

MacArthur Ninth Grade School, Texas • December 2009

Topic: Using Student Achievement Data to Support
Instructional Decision Making
Practice: Cycle of Improvement

Highlights

- It's important for assessment data to be analyzed quickly so that instructional staff may act on the results.
- The administration at MacArthur Ninth Grade School uses data to monitor teacher and student progress throughout the building.
- Teachers use the data to monitor student progress and improve their instruction.

About the Site

MacArthur Ninth Grade School

Houston, TX

Demographics

83% Hispanic

12% Black

4% White

79% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

MacArthur Ninth Grade School uses student achievement data to support instructional decision making through such activities as:

- Engaging in three-week and six-week assessment cycles
- Embedding data use into the school's mission and vision
- Using data to develop curriculum and key areas of focus for instruction
- Implementing tools for students that provide clear expectations and grading criteria for all core classes
- Accessing and analyzing data from the districtwide data warehouse system

Full Transcript

Susan Baker: I am Susan Baker, the testing coordinator at MacArthur Ninth Grade School, in the Aldine Independent School District, in Houston, Texas.

The data that's available to our teachers is the data warehouse that our district provides; we scan the tests, and that will provide us with the answers that have been broken down into the state standards. But we also create our own objective spreadsheets, and that's where we break it down by objective rather than just the broad state standards. This helps the teachers and the students to identify which overall objective needs to be worked on specifically.

Analyzing these spreadsheets has become easier for the teachers because I have formatted them so that they come out colored. If a student is not successful, then obviously the number is red; if they are on the borderline, if they have just passed it but they are not commended performance yet, the cell will be yellow; but if they are 90%, which is the commended performance, it comes green. So when the teacher inserts all of the data, right there they can look instantly and see if there is an awful lot of green or if there is a lot of red or something, and that will instantly show them that they need to identify that objective and proceed from there in their department. If the analysis indicates that it was a very low percentage that passed, then we look at the questions and then we look at how it was taught to see if perhaps we did not teach the objective long enough. The overall results are looked at and determined if we need to review through tutorials or if we need to do pull-outs out of elective classes or additional classes or if we need to reteach that objective as well.

Doing data analysis in a very timely manner really quickly is a very important component of this teaching cycle because if we do not get right back on track and reteach immediately, we have moved on to another objective and then we are just spiraling out of control. We need to analyze immediately and then determine if we are going to redesign or do another assessment or if we could just move on and incorporate these objectives at another time. So time is of the essence.

Valerie Trembacki: Hi, my name is Valerie Trembacki. I am an algebra and pre-AP algebra teacher at MacArthur Ninth Grade School, in Aldine Independent School District, in Houston, Texas.

MacArthur uses an assessment cycle that is by the six weeks, and we have six-weeks and three-weeks major assessments. We also have some smaller assessments within the three weeks, such as quizzes or projects. We use the results of our tests to analyze the data, and then we make instructional decisions based on that data. We collaborate as a math department and look at our individual data to determine if content needs to be addressed in individual classes or as a department as a whole. If that is the case where we need to address an objective as a whole, we will figure out a new way to teach that content, if necessary; we will look at what teachers did do well in that content area and see what they did. After we go back and reteach if necessary, when that content is retested again, we look at did the class improve or did they not. If the students did not improve a second time being tested on that objective, then again the teachers go back and look at what can be done to improve the presentation of that content area. So it is a continuous cycle where the teachers are constantly going back and reflecting on their students' progress as well as their own teaching strategies.

I think the assessment cycle we use is very beneficial to teachers as well as students. It gives me an opportunity to see which objectives my students have mastered and which, if any, need to be retaught and reviewed.