

DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Helping Students Gain Ownership Over Their Learning

Jonathan Supovitz, Ed.D. • November 2009

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

Highlights

- When students examine their own data, they gain a sense of control over their learning.
- As part of teaching students to examine their data, teachers need to provide feedback that is timely, specific, and easy to understand. Feedback should include actions needed to improve.
- It is helpful to provide students with tools to analyze their data, such as charts and rubrics. Rubrics are especially helpful because they provide explicit goals and the dimensions of performance to meet those goals.

About the Interviewee

Jonathan A. Supovitz, Ed.D., is an associate professor at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania and a senior researcher at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. He is a mixed-methods researcher and has conducted a number of studies on the relationship between data use and professional development, teacher and leadership practice, and student

achievement. His current research focuses on how schools and districts use different forms of data to support the improvement of teaching and learning. Additionally, Dr. Supovitz directs the evidence-based leadership strand of the University of Pennsylvania's midcareer doctoral program in educational leadership. He teaches courses on the policy and instructional uses of assessment, evidence-based leadership, and organizational learning.

Full Transcript

My name is Jonathan Supovitz. I am an associate professor at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania and a senior researcher at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. I was a panel member that developed the Practice Guide Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making.

The key reason that we want students to examine their own data is to get them involved in their own learning. If students don't take ownership of their own learning, then teachers are doing all the work. So by getting students involved in looking at their own data, then we are getting students to take ownership of their own learning.

Feedback to students needs to be designed to help them understand their strengths and their weaknesses. In that way it needs to be timely, specific, and easy to understand. It's really important that feedback be given connected to the students' learning experience, so for that reason the panel recommends that feedback be given within one week of the completion or the turning in of an assignment or a test. There are also important ways that students can get feedback that's easy for them to understand. It needs to be done in a language essentially that really speaks to students. So things like T-charts which show the students their strengths and the areas that they need to focus on are a good example of a tool that helps students to understand the meaning of feedback. And also things like rubrics are really, really valuable because rubrics not only specify the goal for performance but all the different dimensions of performance they give, different levels of moving towards that goal. So rubrics are a really nice example of a particular way that students can get feedback in an easy-to-understand manner. Another technique that teachers could use is graphs. So students could graph or chart their performance over time towards a particular goal, and they could see their progress on that chart or graph over time.

It's not just that teachers are giving feedback to students, but it's the quality of the feedback that really makes a difference. So if teachers give students a test back and the test says that they got an 82, then that doesn't give the students very much information that will help them to improve their performance. But if teachers not only give the correct answers but an explanation of both the correct and incorrect answers, then that gives the students more information because they understand more about why they didn't perform well on a particular item. And even better yet would be if teachers gave students not just the correct answers and an explanation of the correct and incorrect answers, but an explanation of the difference

between their answer and the correct answer. So that would help give even more feedback for students. Now even better feedback would be not only to give the correct answers and an explanation of the correct answers and an explanation of the difference between their answers and the correct answers, but also specific actions that they could take to help them to move from the answers that they gave to the correct answers for the subject. And even better yet would be an activity that would actually support the cementing of their understanding of how they performed and the goals for their performance.

This particular topic of having students examine their own data is really nested within a larger set of issues about how teachers can use student performance data to inform their practice and to help to drive student performance. And it's also nested within a larger set of questions around how schools and districts and other entities really can provide supports for how teachers use data and how students can examine their own data.