DOINGWHATWORKS

Go Back and Reflect

Shotwell Middle School, Texas • December 2009

Topic: Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making

Practice: Student Use of Data

Highlights

- Students at Shotwell Middle School are required to complete Data Analysis Booklets in which they look back at a test to see which answers they got wrong and reflect on why they chose the answers they chose.
- Data Analysis Booklets help students dig deep to determine their own areas of concern and how they can improve in the future.
- Students enjoy working on the Data Analysis Booklets because it gives them ownership of their own learning and allows them to see their improvement.

About the Site

Shotwell Middle School

Houston, TX

Demographics

61% Hispanic

32% Black

4% Asian

2% White

78% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

At Shotwell Middle School, the entire school staff uses data regularly for collaboration and instruction. Additionally, students learn to monitor their progress and set learning goals accordingly. A coordinated set of actions guides the use of data:

- Establish a clear vision for using data to support instructional decision making
- Provide support through skills specialists, professional development, and a testing coordinator
- Use common planning time to analyze data
- Assess the progress of each subgroup through the subgroup master system

Full Transcript

My name is Renata Gaddy. I am a seventh- and eighth-grade language arts teacher at Shotwell Middle School, in Houston, Texas, as part of Aldine Independent School District.

The Data Analysis Booklets are a tool that was developed by our department head, Barbara Dixon, to help us assist the students in tracking their progress as they go throughout the year, taking the benchmark exams and the other standardized exams, to help the students determine what they need help with and how they can improve not only their scores, but their logic behind their decision making when they chose certain answers.

The students always start by looking at what answers they got right and what answers they got wrong. They are supposed to write down the question they got wrong, write down the answer choices that were available to them, and write down the answer that they chose. And then after that, the students are expected to write down why they chose the answer that they chose, what the rationale was. In some classrooms, they will go a step further in the booklets and write down how they are going to improve for the next exam.

The Data Analysis Booklets also allow students to see exactly what areas that they have concerns in. When they go back and they look at their exam—with the teacher's guidance, of course—and they notice, oh I missed questions two, five, and seven, those were all mood and tone questions, they will put that in their Data Analysis Booklet and then will have a better understanding of the fact that maybe they are deficient in that area and they know that that's what they in particular need to focus on. They are also required to go back, write down why they missed those answers, which is the most valuable piece, I think, because they really have to be cognizant of why they are making the mistakes they are making.

Initially, students weren't really keen on the idea of the Data Analysis Booklets, just like we as teachers weren't really keen on having to do all of our own data analysis because it is very overwhelming to look at a bunch of numbers or to have to track your progress and see where you were weak and where you were strong. So initially the students weren't really keen on the idea. They said, "We took the test. We are done

with the test. Why do we have to go back and look at this test again?" But now they have noticed that they have improved in areas and they are seeing the growth and they are taking ownership of it, and they are noticing that the reason they are improving is because not only did they help identify their own weaknesses, but they came up with a plan and, guess what, it worked. Well now they are really starting to enjoy looking at their Data Analysis Booklets, working on their Data Analysis Booklets, and then planning again for the next time that they need to work on their Data Analysis Booklets.

I think that the Data Analysis Booklets are a wonderful tool for students beyond just learning their core content area, beyond just learning language arts or math or science, because they provide students a way to strategize how they are going to be problem solvers in the future. Because, really, success is dictated by your ability to respond to failure, your ability to plan for the future to see how you are going to correct your mistakes. So the ultimate goal here is not just to create students who perform well on tests, although that's a wonderful by-product. The ultimate goal is to create students who are critical thinkers, who can go throughout their lives and be able to recognize their deficiencies, accept that without becoming upset or without deciding that they are not going to be motivated anymore and they are just going to give up. The ultimate goal is for them to look at their mistakes, recognize them, embrace them, and then strategize how they are going to fix them. And I think that is the best thing that we can get out of the Data Analysis Booklets, creating productive citizens who know how to learn from their mistakes, can recognize why they made them, and then who can move on.