

# Solution Tree | Press

## **Data Dynamics: Aligning Teacher Team, School, & District Efforts**

*By Edie L. Holcomb*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Data Dynamics: Aligning Teacher Team, School, & District Efforts* by Edie L. Holcomb. *Data Dynamics* illustrates the common misuses of school data and gives educators strategies for employing data where it will be most beneficial to schools and districts. Holcomb helps the reader visualize data's uses through the fictional Mode Middle School, which overcomes the very real problems encountered by many district and school leaders and educators.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or by an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your effort to effectively use data in your school or district.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Shifting the Dynamics of Data Use**

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1. What are data dynamics?
2. What are the benefits of disaggregating data?
3. What are the dangers of misusing data?
4. How do high-performing schools and districts use data?
5. In what way has the public visibility of state assessment systems impacted the sense of collective responsibility in schools and districts?
6. What steps does your school or district take to help students who perform poorly on state assessments?
7. How should the data meant to be used in planning response to intervention (RTI) be applied?
8. How do high- and low-data use schools differ? What are some activities typical of high-data use schools?
9. What differences emerge when comparing the use of data in elementary and secondary schools?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Creating the Culture and Structures for Data Use**

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1. What steps should leaders take to make their school or district's mission sustainable and a source of encouragement?
2. What steps should be considered by leaders who are working to strengthen cultures?
3. Why should learning organizations legitimize dissent? How does it reinforce the group's goals?
4. Compare shared leadership and collective leadership. What were the key findings of Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) in regard to each concept's effectiveness?
5. Identify the staff who make up the administrative team and improvement/leadership team in large elementary and secondary schools. What role should the principal play in each?
6. What are the duties of the school improvement/leadership team?
7. Who should be a part of the schoolwide data team? What characteristics should they possess?
8. What basic tools do all teams need in order to function effectively?
9. Contrast the discrepancies between pace and degree of change in elementary schools and pace and degree of change in secondary schools. How does your school compare?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Using Student Achievement Data**

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1. What are the fundamental concepts for use of assessment data?
2. What considerations should be included in judging the value and quality of data?
3. Define and identify the role of diagnostic assessments, benchmark assessments, summative assessments, and formative assessments in data use.
4. What is the purpose of short, frequent, formatively used assessments aligned with specific learning targets?
5. List and explain two ways of dealing with the question of what other data to gather and analyze.
6. According to the author, one of the challenges at the elementary level is the lack of schoolwide assessment data from grades K–2. How can this challenge be overcome?
7. What data challenges do high schools face? Why?
8. What is the top priority of school leaders and educators?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Using Nonacademic Student Data**

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1. What are nonacademic student data? How should they be used?
2. What are objective nonacademic student data? Why is their implementation critical to the success of students?
3. What sources should objective nonacademic data utilize to gather data?
4. What questions should be asked during the discussion of objective nonacademic data?
5. What are subjective nonacademic student data? What role do they play in the success of schools?
6. What method(s) for gathering subjective nonacademic data would work best in your school or district?
7. Who should participate in the discussion of subjective nonacademic data? What points should they focus on?
8. When discussing subjective nonacademic data, what are some suggestions for helping staff process student input in a professional development setting?
9. How might the gathering of nonacademic data differ for elementary and high schools?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Using Staff Data**

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1. Does your school have a school improvement plan?
2. Which team is responsible for carrying out actions that relate directly to instruction and assessment in specific grade levels, courses, and classrooms?
3. How does professional development data allow customization? How can these data be attained?
4. What is the benefit to schools and districts of possessing basic data about teachers' preparation?
5. What kind of information should be included in basic and critical data about teachers' preparation?
6. How does perceptual data guide teacher support?
7. Who should decide on action from objective staff data? What should be considered when creating an action plan from these data?
8. Identify ways objective staff data can be gathered. Which of these ways can you employ in your school or district?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Using Parent/Community Data**

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1. Why can't the schoolwide data team include parent/community representatives on a regular basis?
2. What are the fundamental concepts for use of parent/community data?
3. What are the differences between objective and subjective parent/community data?  
How can school leaders and educators gather information on each?
4. When creating questionnaires for noneducators, what points should the data team keep in mind?
5. Who should participate in the discussion regarding the interpretation and implementation of gathered parent/community data?
6. How can the differences in parent activity levels between elementary and high schools be explained? What can be done to increase parent involvement in high schools?
7. What ideas do you have for connecting with non-school householders in your school or district's community?

## **Chapter 7**

### **Using Data for School Improvement**

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1. What components must an effective school improvement plan contain?
2. How is strategy defined in the context of the school improvement plan? Why is it important for your data team to distinguish between its use here and a specific list of teaching behaviors?
3. What questions should be raised when incorporating data into decisions for schools and districts?
4. Why is it important for all staff to participate in the interpretation of schoolwide data?
5. How should the schoolwide data team present the information to the staff?
6. How many goals should the school improvement/leadership team set? What should be the focus of the goals?
7. What are two ways the school improvement/leadership team can drill deeper into the data?
8. How can teams identify evidence-based best practices for school improvement?
9. List two ways to monitor implementation and review results of the school improvement process.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Using Data in Classrooms and Teacher Teams**

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1. What are the characteristics of a teacher team?
2. What resources do both the schoolwide data team and teacher team rely on? How are the two teams different?
3. What people or groups in your school could be called teacher teams?
4. What are the six essential strategies for professional learning?
5. Which professional learning strategies do you think will be easiest to implement in your school or district? Which will prove more difficult?
6. Identify how schoolwide data teams and teacher teams begin to analyze and discuss data.
7. What is the fourfold focus of the student team when discussing assessment results?
8. What information should teacher teams track to monitor student proficiency?
9. How can teacher teams support students becoming partners in their learning?

## **Chapter 9**

### **Supporting Data Use From the District Level**

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1. What is systems thinking?
2. According to the author, balancing district leadership for system coherence and school-based planning is an ongoing issue. Why is this balancing act so critical?
3. What are the characteristics of a successful district data team? Who should be on it?
4. What are the responsibilities of the district data team?
5. What are the implications of data use on curriculum? How do the implications affect the district's and schools' ability to prioritize benchmarks?
6. How is the use of common assessments a reflection on district and school culture?
7. How does data use impact grading and record keeping?
8. How can district teams use data to support principals?

## **Chapter 10**

### **Diagnosing Your Data Dynamics**

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1. What data challenges has your school or district experienced?
2. What elements from *Data Dynamics* can you employ to overcome those challenges?
3. How is your school or district using data productively? Can those methods be improved?
4. What is an Innovation Configuration (IC) Map? Explain the significance of its components as it relates to the ability to use data in your school or district.
5. Based on the results of your IC Map assessment, what aspects of data use do you want to see improvement for?