National Study of Education Data Systems and Decision Making

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

The following is a suggested introduction. When you begin the interview, make these points, but use your own words for a more personal introduction:

> *The National Study of Educational Data Systems and Decision Making is a large-scale project sponsored by the US Department of Education to look at the ways that states, districts and schools are using data in their educational decision making. The project studies the prevalence and quality of both the data systems that are in use nationwide and the supports in place for educational decision makers to use them. In particular, we are interested to learn about how teachers are using data from these systems to make decisions about their instruction, and what types of professional development and support teachers are receiving to learn about the systems and their applications.*
>
> *We want you to know that this project does not evaluate you or your school; we're looking to learn from your experiences to get a better understanding of how teachers and schools across the country use data systems for teaching and learning.*
>
> *Before we start, I need to have each of you review and sign this consent form.*
>
> AFTER THEY REVIEW CONSENT FORM: *Do you have any questions before we get started?*

Information from school leader on how teachers were selected for participation in the focus group: [describe]

Background

Let's begin by going around and saying names and your position(s) in the school.

Data Use for Instructional Decision Making

We'd now like to learn about your school's use of the [insert name] student data system and the nature of your access to the types of data provided by the system (individual or group reports, queries, etc.)

1) What types of data (e.g. student attendance, standardized test scores, student grades, student demographics, etc.) do you have access to in [insert name of school's data system]?

2) How often do you access the system?

3) For what purposes do you use the data in this system?

4) Of those data you have access to, which data are useful to you for instructional purposes, such as planning lessons or intervening with underperforming students?

Support for DDDM

In this last section we're interested to know more about the training you have received to implement data-driven decision making in your teaching, as well as the additional professional development you feel you need. We are also looking at administrative supports.

5) How much support have you gotten from your school leaders to learn how to use data in instructional decision making?

6) How much support for data-driven decision-making do you get from your district? PROBE:

   a. How do school and district leaders communicate their support for data-driven decision-making?

   b. Are school and district leaders active data users?

   c. Is data an important element in school improvement planning and monitoring of progress?

   d. Is time allocated for discussing/reviewing data?

7) What types of professional development on data-driven decision making have been offered to all the teachers in this school? *Probe for details on the following:*

   a. What was the focus (e.g., state assessment data, subject-specific topics)?

   b. How was the professional development delivered (on-line, lecture, hands-on)?

   c. When was it offered, and how long did it last?

   d. Was there any follow-up?

   e. What kinds of skills did you gain?

   f. How have you used what you learned?

8) How many of you participated in this professional development?

9) How many of you have had other professional development on data-driven decision making, outside of the school? Possible Probes:

    a. Why did you decide to take that course or workshop?

    b. So far, which professional development experience has been the most useful for using data in your teaching? Why?

10) Do you feel you have had enough training in data-driven decision-making? What further training would be helpful to you as you implement the use of data into your teaching practice?

11) When you have questions or need help interpreting data, whom can you turn to in your school or district? Specifically, did you turn to:

    a. For technical assistance with the data system?

    b. For questions regarding data interpretation?

    c. How quickly do you receive responses to your requests for assistance?

    d. How would you rate the quality of the assistance you receive?

12) Do you feel you have enough support or help for integrating DDDM into your teaching?

Reflections

13) Overall, do you find the training and [insert name] data system have changed what or how you teach? [IF YES] **Describe how.**

14) What has been the biggest factor in encouraging your use of data for instructional purposes?

15) How could [data system name] be more useful to you as a teacher?

    a.   What other kinds of student information would you like to be able to access?

    b.   In what ways could the system be easier to use?

16) Are there any other barriers or challenges you face in using data for instructional purposes?

Closing

17) Is there anything else you would like us to know about the use of data in your teaching?