Using Data to Lead System Improvements

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As an educator it is important to be aware of many different things. One of the things that an educator that is wanting to move into leadership needs to be aware of is how data can be used as a means for planning for school improvement. School improvement is important to the success of each individual student and the school district as a whole. The reason is because if schools are not improving and becoming a better place for students to learn then it is possible that the education system is not setting all of the students up for success for after they are finished with their education. It is important that educators know the importance of using data and not using data to make informed decisions within the school system.

When looking at data it is important to understand the differences between demographic, student learning, perception, and school process data that can be used by the governing board to try to improve the school. Demographic data is a subset of data that can be used to determine some important information in regards to the future (Logan & Yishak, 2018). This data is great to use in order to try and determine the school population and makeup of the school in regards to different ethnicities of students (Logan & Yishak, 2018). Another advantage of this data is that it can help school leadership determine based upon future growth trends the amount of teachers might be needed in regards to certain teaching certification such as science, math, social studies, or another type of certification area that might be needed. In other words, demographic data is great to use by leadership to determine what might be needed in the future based upon current and future projected trends of student and staff population.

Another important data set to be aware of is student learning data. Student learning data can be collected in multiple different ways such as benchmarking, end of course testing, pre-test and post-test, and even observations. Student learning data can be used to help teachers and the leadership to determine student learning needs (Stahl & Karger, 2016). This data can be used by leadership and even teachers to determine if the strategies that are being used in the classroom are helping the students pass the assessments that are being given. Leadership and the teacher can then determine if they need to change the strategies that are being used in order to increase student scores and help them learn the material better if the data shows that a lot of the students are not gaining the knowledge from the classroom.

When looking at data that could be collected within the education field one to be aware of is perception data. Perception data is great to be used to get a good understand of the school or school district and the overall health of the school and the district (Falola, Adeniji, Osibanjo, Oludayo, & Salau, 2018). This type of data is pretty much giving out questionnaires and the purpose is to gather opinions, comments, and also to get ideas for how to make the school or district better for students, teachers, and even parents (Falola, Adeniji, Osibanjo, Oludayo, & Salau, 2018). This data can really be used to get a pulse on the stakeholders and find out what they really think about different issues that might be affecting the school as a whole.

School Process Data is another important set of data that school leadership needs to be aware of. This data is great to use in order to determine the process that is in place to teach the students the material at hand (McGuire, 2018). This data can be used to determine what type of curriculum needs to be used to align with any sort of standards that might be in place (McGuire, 2018). This data can be used to also ensure that different types of teaching methods are being used to help meet the many different needs of each student based upon their learning needs. This data can also be used to help guide the school in determining if the mission and goals of the school are being met overall.

Demographic, student learning, perception, and school process data can be used by the governing board, school system leaders, school leaders, and the staff of the school to help determine how the school and district can be improved. It is important that each data set is understood that way it can be easy to determine what type of data is needing to be collected. For example, if a school has a low morale but high student achievement scores on assessments then it would be best to collect perception data from the school. The reason is because the gathering student learning data would not help with trying to figure out morale issues within the school. However, by collecting perception data it can help the school figure out issues that might be taking place or concerns that could possibly be addressed to help with morale.

It is important to understand how the many different types of data can be used in helping prioritizing school improvement needs and opportunities. Within the education system there is a great deal of data that is being collected. It is important that the school leadership and stakeholders are clear on the purpose of the data that is being collected and analyzed. By being clear with good communication with all of the stakeholders such as parents and even teachers it can allow everyone to know why the data is being collected and how it is going to be used to make the school system better. This data is used collaboratively in order to ensure that the school is meeting the needs of the students, teachers, and all of the stakeholders involved. Student learning data and that students are learning the material that is being taught to them. If it is not then the data can allow the governing board, leaders, and teachers to determine that a change needs to be made in regards to teaching strategies. The data such as demographic data is also used to ensure that the future needs of the school system is going to be met. The demographic data is the data that would really be used by the governing board to determine the needs of the district or school in the future in regards to staffing due to the student population. The governing board could start to make plans with that data. The school leadership could really use the perception data to figure out what sort of changes need to be made in order to help with morale within the school for the staff members. The School process data is good to use to determine if proper curriculum is being taught and what sort of resources are needed to ensure that it is being taught in correlation with the standards that are in place.

When looking at the data that can be collected it is important to understand that it can be used to prioritize the needs and opportunities of the school system. The data that is collected can be analyzed to determine where the priorities are at for the school. For example, on the demographic data that could be collected could show that there is a need for more Spanish or math teachers. This can be used to communicate with the governing board the hiring needs based upon the growth within the school. This would be considered a priority because the school would want to ensure that there is enough staff members employed to meet the needs of the students that will be attending the school in the near future. Student learning data is data that is collected that shows if a student is learning and grasping the material that is being taught to them. If the data comes back showing that students are below standards then it would be considered a priority for the school system to figure out what needs to be done to increase this for the students. The school leadership can look to see if new teaching strategies need to be used to help with meeting the needs for the student. If new teaching strategies are going to be used the leadership can help try to train staff on new teaching strategies that could possibly help increase student understanding of the material. In other words, the data that is collected can help the school governing board, leadership, teachers, and even students figure out what needs to be addressed in order to have a good operating school for all of the stakeholders involved.

An educator needs to be aware of many different types of things. One of the things that educators need to have a clear understanding on is the many different types of data that is available. By understanding that different types of data it can allow an educator as well as the leadership of the school to determine if any type of changes are needed to help meet the needs of the students and also staff of the school. If an educator or even leadership is not aware of the data then it is highly possible that areas that could be improved in the school are being overlooked.

**References**

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