

DAF #6

Using Evidence Critically

What It Is

- ▶ Build an evaluative mindset to use evidence to identify what is working well and what needs to change.
- ▶ Help teachers to select and collect a range of relevant evidence about student progress to answer important questions.
- ▶ Help leaders and teachers to collect relevant evidence of changes in teaching practice to explain student progress.
- ▶ Develop skills in analyzing, interpreting, and using evidence through a critical lens to inform all levels of decision-making.
- ▶ Create an awareness that the evidence selected and how it is interpreted may be influenced by biases and assumptions that have implications for social justice.

Why It Matters

- ▶ Engagement in PL does not guarantee improvement in outcomes for students; these improvements need to be assessed with evidence.
- ▶ Standardized tests are usually insufficient to make ongoing judgments of improvements in student learning; a range of more relevant evidence is needed.
- ▶ Changes in student progress coupled with evidence of changes in teaching practice unpacks teaching or learning links.
- ▶ Evidence of improvements in student learning can be a motivating tool for getting teachers on board and keeping them on track.
- ▶ The evidence selected and how it is interpreted is rarely neutral and requires careful unpacking for potential biases and assumptions.

How I Do It

- ▶ Use evidence of student learning profiles as the reason to engage in PL and to check ongoing progress.

- ▶ Help teachers to identify the evidence they value as indicators of progress and to collect it systematically throughout the process.
- ▶ Work with teachers to collect evidence of changes in teaching practice so that they can see the links to improvement (or lack of it) in student learning.
- ▶ Make sure that evidence is used to make decisions and drive change rather than just collected, collated, and analyzed or used to justify current approaches.
- ▶ Ensure that interpretation of evidence is a collaborative process that deliberately invites alternative viewpoints.
- ▶ Keep asking, “What is your evidence for that?” in response to untested assumptions.

Key Challenges for Me

- ▶ Creating the mindset that using evidence is central to the development of adaptive expertise
- ▶ Helping teachers to identify a range of valid evidence that they value sufficiently to pay attention to
- ▶ Getting caught in the busywork of change and not taking the time to test the efficacy of that change
- ▶ Dealing with contradictions in evidence and prioritizing many directions that could be pursued
- ▶ Understanding the purpose and limitations of tools for evidence gathering and using these appropriately
- ▶ Finding the collective story in the evidence that promotes rather than undermines social justice

What I Should Notice

- ▶ How is evidence being used currently—critically, uncritically, or not at all?
- ▶ What are teachers’ past experiences of and current attitudes to the use of evidence?
- ▶ Who owns it? How is it used? Is it facilitating the development of adaptive expertise?

Retrieved from the companion website for *Leading Powerful Professional Learning: Responding to Complexity With Adaptive Expertise* by Deidre LeFevre, Helen Timperley, Kaye Twyford, and Fiona Ell. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, www.corwin.com. Copyright © 2020 by Corwin Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction authorized for educational use by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book.