Don’t keep data a secret—work together to find solutions

A unique component of Acelero Learning’s data work is the way they bring teachers together to solve problems using data. In addition to training and empowering staff to look at data themselves, Acelero encourages staff to share and discuss data. In one of their professional learning communities, teachers share a problem (and relevant data) with colleagues, who ask questions, offer ideas, and eventually help identify a possible solution. At the programmatic level, when Acelero identifies opportunities for improvement, they use data to constantly assess the success of pilot projects as they move through their “pencil-pen-Sharpie” innovation process.

Data-use can be conducted both internally and externally

CAP Tulsa has an in-house team responsible for data and research. They use data from multiple sources, often tied together, to produce customized reports and to evaluate individual program practices. They also hold regular meetings to share data with different levels of staff in the program. CAP Tulsa also partners with researchers from local universities who conduct independent evaluations of the program’s impact.

Program staff can be leaders in data analysis and utilization

In Fairfax County, data analysis is conducted by the program managers. The district is hiring a data analyst to increase their capacity and turnaround time through the use of dashboards, but it’s these program leaders who analyze data from multiple sources and who slice and dice the data to determine how children are progressing towards school readiness. Fairfax County program managers also use this information to make decisions about professional development and inform program practice.

Data doesn’t happen in a silo—involve leadership and staff

While Utah Community Action has a full-time staff position dedicated to data, the research analyst isn’t the only one in the organization responsible for this work. The analyst works with leadership to monitor the program’s effectiveness and progress towards their stated goals, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses and to plan professional development needs. Coaches use data every week to inform their work with teachers, and teachers use data every week to inform their lesson plans for children.

Customize everything from classroom assignments to professional development

Educare Miami-Dade uses both internal data analysis and external evaluation to assess their implementation and outcomes. Within the program, Educare uses data about children and families to inform everything from classroom assignments to family goals to coaching. With their external research partners, they regularly assess different parts of their program practice to identify opportunities to improve their implementation and their impact on child outcomes.

Key takeaway

Success depends on a program-wide commitment to data so that it is used regularly by staff at every level. Different data is useful for different roles within a Head Start program. Leadership staff will need different information than frontline staff, who need different information from board members—but all of these roles should regularly incorporate data into their practice.