Using Data to Assess High Quality Professional Development

Findings From Interviews With Massachusetts Educators

May 2015

Massachusetts Department of ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION
The purpose of this set of three presentations is to convey key findings from a study conducted by the American Institutes for Research and the Concord Evaluation Group on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

These presentations are one component of a larger project to help Massachusetts educators envision what it takes to ensure that all educators have access to high quality professional development (HQPD).

The focus of this presentation is on how educators in four nominated sites in Massachusetts use data to plan HQPD.
About This Project

What is it?

Case profiles of four sites engaged in building systems to support HQPD. The case profiles are based on interviews and collected documents.

What are the goals of the project?

To highlight for professional learning leaders across the Commonwealth how some Massachusetts educators are working to establish HQPD in their schools and districts.

Which sites participated?

- Cambridge Public Schools
- Easthampton High School of Easthampton Public Schools
- Lexington Public Schools
- Melrose Public Schools

Please see ESE’s Resources for PD Leaders and Educators page for relevant PD resources, including the full case studies.
About the Project

How were sites selected?
Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinet members nominated districts or schools that were making consistent use of the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development to inform professional learning by doing things such as:

- Building internal staff capacity to facilitate high quality, results-oriented professional development in creative ways
- Doing an exceptional job coordinating/managing professional development and creating the conditions for educators to engage in deep learning
- Thoughtfully using educator evaluation data to inform planning and delivery of professional development

ESE, in collaboration with AIR, selected four sites from among the many nominated based on the comprehensiveness of their approach.

What were the key themes observed across the sites?
Seven key themes were identified as important levers in ensuring HQPD; they are listed on the next slide.
Seven Key Levers

1. Instilling a “growth mindset” among educators
2. Collaborating for change using data
3. Making time for learning
4. Embedding professional learning in educators’ daily work
5. Empowering teachers to choose their own path toward growth
6. Using data (including goals, evidence, and standards) to plan HQPD
7. **Using data to assess HQPD**
About This Presentation

★ Some useful definitions (Slides 7–11)
★ How the profiled sites use data to assess HQPD (Lever 7) (Slides 12–25)

★ Please see ESE’s Resources for PD Leaders and Educators page for relevant PD resources, including the full case studies.
What Is HQPD?

★ **High Quality Professional Development (HQPD)** is a set of coherent learning experiences that is systematic, purposeful, and structured over a sustained period of time with the goal of improving educator practice and student outcomes.

★ **Source:**

http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.html
What Are the Massachusetts HQPD Standards?

★ Released in 2013, the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development describe the research-based features of HQPD.

★ For more information visit: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.html)

Massachusetts Standards for High Quality Professional Development (HQPD)

Characteristics of High Quality PD:

1. Has SMART goals relevant to student outcomes
2. Aligned with goals and priorities
3. Designed based on the analysis of data
4. Assessed to ensure goals met
5. Promotes collaboration
6. Advances an educator’s ability to apply learnings
7. Models good pedagogical practice
8. Makes use of relevant resources to meet goals
9. Facilitated by knowledgeable professionals
10. Is coherent and connected
What Is HQPD Assessment?

**Assess:**
- Examining the quality and impact of HQPD for the purposes of improvement and future planning.

**Reflect:**
- Reflecting on the results of the assessment process to inform continuous improvement.

The HQPD Planning & Assessment Process
What HQPD Formats Are Used in the Profiled Sites?

- Courses
- Internally and externally led workshops and summer institutes
- Multi-year induction programs
- Professional Learning Communities
- Action research
- Lesson study
- Coaching

* Some sites use some formats more than others depending on HQPD goals.
What Are Educator Plans?

Part of the 5-Step Cycle of evaluation, each educator develops an Educator Plan, which is differentiated based on experience and past performance, and includes individual or team S.M.A.R.T. goals for professional practice and student learning as well as key action steps for achieving the goals.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

- **S** = Specific and Strategic
- **M** = Measurable
- **A** = Action Oriented
- **R** = Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused (the 3 Rs)
- **T** = Timed and Tracked

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**Educator Plan Form**

**Student Learning Goal(s): Planned Activities**
Describe actions the educator will take to attain the student learning goal(s). Activities may apply to individual and/or team. Attach additional pages as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Supports/Resources from School/District</th>
<th>Timeline or Frequency</th>
<th>Eligible for PDPs²</th>
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**Professional Practice Goal(s): Planned Activities**
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How Do the Profiled Sites Use Data to Assess the Quality and Impact of HQPD (Lever 7)?

Key Cross-Site Observations
Assessing HQPD: Key Observations

1. Site leaders use multiple data sources to assess and reflect on HQPD quality and impact

2. PD leaders in every site use student outcome data regularly to assess the overall impact of HQPD, together with the impact of curricular programs, interventions, and other initiatives

3. Reviews of student work (e.g., unit exams, essays) are used in some sites to assess the impact of HQPD

4. Course and feedback forms are used to assess the quality of individual PD courses, workshops, and events

5. Direct, “ad hoc” educator feedback to (and from) PD committee members is used regularly in assessing district-sponsored HQPD
Assessing HQPD: Key Observations

6. Sites have plans to use performance data from educator evaluations as one measure to assess HQPD

7. One site is working with a graduate student from a local university to design a program evaluation for the site’s teacher-driven courses

★ Each of these key observations is described more fully in the slides that follow.
1. Site leaders use multiple data sources to assess and reflect on HQPD quality and impact

- Course or event feedback surveys
- Ad hoc educator feedback
- Student learning data
- Reviews of student work
- Learning Walkthrough data
- Summative Performance Ratings
2. PD leaders in each site use student outcome data to assess the impact of HQPD

- In all four sites, student outcome data used in HQPD assessment include:
  - Student growth and achievement data (from large-scale and classroom-based assessments)
  - Attendance data
  - Discipline referrals

- These data are examined frequently in Data Team meetings at all sites to take stock of the overall impact of each site’s approach to HQPD, together with the impact of curricular programs, interventions, and other district and school initiatives. (Outcome data are also used to identify continuing HQPD needs and to set HQPD goals.)

- Easthampton High School leaders rely in large part on data on student learning and engagement from their Learning Walkthroughs to gain insight into the success of HQPD efforts in yielding changes in teaching practice and student learning.
3. Reviews of student work are used to assess whether specific HQPD offerings meet goals

PD leaders in Melrose and Lexington report looking at student work together with HQPD participants to see if the HQPD offerings intended to address particular student needs are changing practice in ways that translate into demonstrated student learning. If desired improvements are not demonstrated, they revisit either the intervention or the professional learning about the intervention.
4. Course and event feedback forms are used to assess PD activities

- For example, after the *Lexington Learns Together* event last November, Lexington Public Schools leaders administered a post-event evaluation survey to all participants and facilitators.

- Lexington leaders also provide customizable templates for course instructors to use to assess educators’ current knowledge and skill going into the course, and then reassess knowledge and skills at the end to gauge impact.

An excerpt from the Lexington Learns Together survey:

3. In terms of providing LPS educators with an innovative way to share and learn from one another, what was your overall impression of the day?

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<th>4</th>
<th>5 - most valuable</th>
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4. What are two or three key ‘take-aways’ that you have had from participation in your sessions? How might these impact your daily work with students or colleagues?

   

5. As a result of Lexington Learns Together, what topics or interests are you inspired to learn more about, and would perhaps like to see offered in future professional learning opportunities (e.g. workshops, courses, discussion groups)?

   

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
4. Course evaluation forms provide feedback to instructors as well

- A Melrose Public Schools course survey provides feedback to instructors on how well participants thought the content was presented and whether objectives were met, and includes open-ended items on the strengths and weaknesses of the course.


  1. The objectives of the workshop were clearly stated by the presenter.
     - Strongly Agree _______ Agree _______ Disagree _______ Strongly Disagree _______

  2. The presenter was interesting, enthusiastic and motivating.
     - Strongly Agree _______ Agree _______ Disagree _______ Strongly Disagree _______

  3. The presenter communicated clearly and was easily understood.
     - Strongly Agree _______ Agree _______ Disagree _______ Strongly Disagree _______

  4. Materials were appropriate and covered the topic content.
     - Strongly Agree _______ Agree _______ Disagree _______ Strongly Disagree _______

  5. The material presented was adequate for the time allocated.
     - Strongly Agree _______ Agree _______ Disagree _______ Strongly Disagree _______
4. Course feedback survey data inform continuous improvement decisions

- For example, the positive results from the Lexington Learns Together feedback survey informed district leaders’ decision to repeat the unique format again.
  - Lexington leaders are also adding sessions based on the suggestions educators provided in the survey on the educators’ desired content.
5. Direct educator feedback to (and from) PD Committee members are used regularly in assessing HQPD

- Members of the PD Committees in several sites are participants themselves in the HQPD, so they report back informally on the quality of particular offerings, either verbally or in the form of written letters and email. These reflection discussions based on anecdotal data inform decisions about:
  - Using the same instructor again
  - Providing the offering again
  - Changing the format

- They also may discuss what feedback to provide the instructor for the next time.
6. Sites plan to use performance data from educator evaluations to assess HQPD impact

- Performance ratings from educator evaluation are not yet used to evaluate the impact of HQPD on teaching practice in any of the sites, but there are plans to do so.

- The Melrose Public Schools District Leadership Team plans to compare this year’s performance rating data against last year’s to better understand the overall performance of its professional development efforts and support planning for upcoming programming.
7. One site is working with a graduate student on a program evaluation for the site’s teacher-driven courses

★ Cambridge Public Schools is working with a graduate student from a local university to design a program evaluation for its in-house, educator-choice courses.

★ This is designed to get feedback from all stakeholders on what worked, what needs to be adjusted, and what is missing.

★ This feedback effort explores overarching questions such as these:
  o How does the current set of choice courses align with a school’s and district’s improvement plans and initiatives?
  o Are there too many options?
  o How can the Professional Development Committee further support school-based professional learning?
Future Directions: Using the HQPD Standards to Assess and Reflect on HQPD Quality and Impact

Although site leaders and PD Committee members at each site had read and discussed the HQPD standards and believed that much of their PD met the standards, each planned to use the standards more systematically to assess PD in the future.

For the first time in 2015, for example, Melrose Public Schools asked teachers to rate the quality of their PD against each standard (see next slide for a screenshot of the survey they are using).
Future Directions: Using the HPQD Standards

- The Melrose Public Schools teacher survey is administered by the PD Committee to gather data on educator perceptions of district-sponsored PD. It asks teachers to rate PD on the extent to which it meets each HQPD standard.
For More Information About This Project and to Read the Site Profiles:

★ Please see ESE’s Resources for PD Leaders and Educators page for relevant PD resources, including the full case studies.

★ Email: Profdev@doe.mass.edu