Data Use in the Classroom: Cheryl and Adrienne’s Perspective

Washington Literacy Center
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Background

- Before WLC adopted Wilson Reading System, curriculum was staff-created.
- WLC hired a consultant to review its program.
- The consultant found that students were not making significant gains.
- An expert advised WLC to adopt Wilson because it had proven successful with students similar to ours.
- Wilson incorporates data collection.
Why We Use Data

- Regular and frequent assessment is a check on our general impression about whether a student has mastered a concept.

- Gut feel about skill mastery is often unreliable.

- Data provide students with concrete indicators of how much progress they are making.
How Our Program Uses Data to Place Students

Intake has 3 strands:
1. Reading and spelling test
2. Fluency Test
3. CASAS
How Our Program Uses Attendance Data

- Computer program reports the attendance rate of each student.
- 75% is our red flag to have a conversation about reason for poor attendance.
- Attendance data helped us to determine the optimal length of our courses.
- CASAS is administered every 40 hours of instruction.
How I Use Data to Assess Performance--Adrienne

- **Check-up** assessment after first half of each unit checks whether students are mastering material. Concepts not mastered are re-taught.

- **Unit Tests** at the end of each unit give a separate score for each skill covered. A spreadsheet calculates the percentage of the class scoring 80+. Students scoring below 80 get extra help. If less than 80% of the class scores 80+, I re-teach targeted skills and re-test.
How I Use Data to Measure Progress—Adrienne

- Each unit starts with a Progress Check, an assessment containing all the concepts taught in the course.
- Students correct themselves with an answer key. As students master more concepts, scores on the progress checks rise.
- Students make a bar graph charting progress. As the bars rise, they are motivated by their progress.
How I Use Data to Teach CASAS Competencies—Adrienne

- We receive a spreadsheet showing the CASAS competencies each student has mastered and not mastered.

- Students are given extra attention in classes teaching non-mastered competencies.
How I Use Data—Cheryl

- Look at the types of mistakes each student is making in daily dictations and adjust the next day’s lessons based on the common mistakes.

- Don’t move forward with our weekly 15 word reading list until a certain percentage of students get the words right.
The Impact of Using Data—Cheryl

- Post-testing helps determine whether or not what we’re doing is effective.
- We used to move forward based on the intuition of the teacher, but now it’s more prescribed.
  - Less subjective
- Teaching is more efficient.
- Students now have a better understanding of how their progress influences the rest of the group.
  - We need a certain percentage to move forward.
  - They know the class needs to be ready based on certain criteria.
The Support We Receive

- Teachers receive an initial multi-day training in either Intensive or Just Words courses, taught by a Wilson trainer.

- Teachers are observed and coached by Wilson trainers multiple times.

- All teachers are given an analysis of CASAS test results, so they can identify areas where students need support.
Our Greatest Challenges

- Overcoming the mental barrier of using data in the classroom.

- Making sure that all students are present for assessments, so we don’t have to repeat the assessment multiple times.

- Convincing students with test anxiety that frequent assessment is in their best interest.
Our Best Tips

- Regularly assess students and track data, so testing doesn’t seem out of the ordinary.

- Establish uniform threshold scores that determine the pace of the class, but be flexible about changing the thresholds if they are unworkable.

- Have easy, manageable tools for testing.

- Don’t move on until a large percentage of the class has achieved mastery.
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