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An exploration of teacher perception and practices of using assessment data to improve achievement of equity student groups

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AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHER PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF USING ASSESSMENT DATA TO IMPROVE ACHIEVEMENT OF EQUITY STUDENT GROUPS

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Approval of Dissertation

We, the faculty supervising the work of **Laurie Mazelin**, affirm that the dissertation, *An Exploration of Teacher Perception and Practices of Using Assessment Data to Improve Achievement of Equity Student Groups* meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the EdD Program in Leadership Studies and the College of Education and Professional Development. The work also conforms to the requirements and formatting guidelines of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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Dedication

To my mother for showing me that learning is truly a lifelong journey and to my dad for being willing to step outside his comfort zone to do his best to understand mine. To my brother, always wanted to make you proud; I only wish you could be here. To my daughter, who took away the option of giving up in the gentlest, loving, matter-of-fact way. Breathe in: breathe out...we can do this. To all the teachers and educators who try their best to see the human in their students first and go from there. And to students, I have learned far more from students during my time as a teacher than I have ever taught. To my little girl self. I made a promise to you. Thank you for never giving up on me. Look what you did!

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

While utilizing assessment data has been a pervasive practice in educational reform for decades, and teachers are expected to use assessment data to improve instruction, little is known about how the practice of requiring teachers to review test data affects their perception of effectiveness in addressing the learning gaps of student groups. This qualitative phenomenological research study used open-ended, semi-structured interviews to help better understand how the expectations of teachers analyzing and integrating assessment data translates into teacher instructional practice and self-efficacy. This study aimed to explore the shared experience of teachers required to participate in collaborative planning centered on analyzing common test data. The study also explores common barriers to integrating assessment data into classroom lessons, deficit-thinking triggers, and effective practices for facilitating data meetings, and identifies which types of data teachers find helpful to inform their teaching practice as they work to improve outcomes for their equity student groups. The findings show the practice of having teachers collaboratively review summary test data, also used for accountability and district monitoring, is not perceived by teachers to increase their efficacy in addressing the compounded needs of equity student groups and may encourage deficit-thinking. The study also found specific practices teachers perceive as effective when looking at assessment data to improve instruction for the equity student groups.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified pre-existing inequities in public school systems, and as schools in the United States have returned to normal, teachers are facing insurmountable pressure to work on learning recovery while maintaining competitive student assessment scores (Najarro, 2022). The work on learning recovery has highlighted deep systemic issues and learning barriers that existed far before the pandemic began and, as politics has taken control of the narrative surrounding these issues, equity has been condemned to a subversive topic done more secretively instead of with righteous advocacy. While teachers are expected to focus on the social/emotional and mental health needs of students, they are also teaching the foundations of learning, reading, and mathematics. A Fall 2020 survey by Najarro (2022), found educators were far more concerned about closing achievement gaps in the areas of race, socio-economic levels, disabilities, and English learner status than they were before the pandemic.

Beginning with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), leading to No Child Left Behind (2001), high stakes testing in both English Language Arts and Mathematics increased across the nation. The nation doubled down on these expectations with the continued reauthorization in 2015 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Lasater et al., 2021). From 2009 – 2016, under Barack Obama's presidency, the United States Department of Education emphasized well-being and restorative practices in secondary schools, while the emphasis on academic assessment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization kept equity student group test data at the forefront of school and teacher performance conversations. Unprecedented budgetary allocations tied to racial, economic, and other equity gaps attempted to

fund programs and practices targeted for historically under-resourced communities (Klein & Blad, 2014).

The attention given to equity strategies, such as restorative practices, social-emotional learning, and wellness services, has increased in schools since the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the learning gaps of the equity student groups (Trinidad, 2021; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020;). These student groups include English learners, Black/African American or Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students (Bonilla et al., 2022). The evaluation of these practices is focused on the achievement of equity student groups, already seen as underperforming, and disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 school shutdowns. In addition to supporting the social-emotional needs of all students who have endured this sustained, traumatic event, teachers must work to close the academic achievement gaps (Bonilla et al., 2022; Trinidad, 2021).

Schools have multiple goals, some more measurable and reportable than others. Teachers are expected to address equity and foundational educational lessons simultaneously, and they must consider student assessment data throughout the school year. Therefore, the focus becomes prioritized on what is most easily measured and reported, instead of prioritizing ways to use the assessment data to work toward equity goals (Holmstrom & Milgrom, 1991). As district success is still measured in accountability data largely obtained through assessments, schools conduct data meetings in which teachers review test item data to help guide their instructional decisions. One study found that discussing proficiency, specifically where students show poor performance, while viewing whole-class data sets leads teachers to focus on the item type and the accompanying

responses, without considering the reasons behind those responses or understanding student learning (Little, 2012).

The practice of meeting with teachers to look at test data, identifying a missed skill, and revisiting or reteaching the same skill is a widespread practice. Studies regarding the use of assessment data in team meetings suggest beliefs and attitudes influence the way data are interpreted (Coburn, 2010). With pressures arising for educators to address the mental health and social-emotional equity needs of students, how confident can teachers be in raising test scores? A national study found while more districts are providing training on accessing test data, using data to change instructional practices was far less likely to occur (Marsh, 2012). Other studies found educators use data in ways that are "hasty" (Goertz & Massell, 2005) or "symbolic," or they make decisions without regard to data (Coburn, 2010).

A national study of schools found teachers involved in facilitated data inquiry within a team of colleagues began to align increases in student achievement to their teaching efforts (Gallimore et al., 2009). In contrast, this same study also found teachers not involved in collaborative data teams attributed student achievement, or lack of achievement, to student characteristics or other factors, such as socioeconomic status (Gallimore et al., 2009). When teachers believe student success is within their control, their confidence and efficacy increase. While the findings of many studies (Ingram et al., 2004; Stosich, 2016) around the practice of requiring teachers to use assessment data leave ample room for future research, there is a dearth of information available as to how teachers integrate assessment data with their belief systems and engage in sensemaking, which is an understanding of the "micro-processes" that occur within a given context (Little, 2012). The limited

understanding of how data are processed is common in many fields including educational practices and pedagogy, and how teachers respond to the systemic process of data review (Little, 2012).

Problem Statement

Public schools are expected to raise academic achievement for all students, eliminate the gaps for equity groups, and implement equity practices. Nationally, this conversation continues to be primarily data-driven and focused on student assessment data. The focus on assessment data is pervasive and teachers use mandated data discussions to analyze their academic assessment data. Available research suggests that teacher beliefs and attitudes may influence the way data are interpreted (Bertrand & Marsh, 2015). Repeatedly reviewing the low performances of the equity subgroups without considering the impact of the equity issues, such as systemic racism, economic disparities, collective trauma, learning loss, and social determinant factors, may lead to teacher confirmation bias and/or deficit-thinking, as well as diminish teachers' perceived efficacy to increase the academic performance of those student groups.

If an organization's data review practices do not include discussions on equity goals, and an acknowledgment of some of the prevalent barriers affecting the academic performance of individual students or families, then the equity goals and the needs of those students will be overshadowed by the solely prioritized academic performance standards reflected in assessment data scores (Lasater et al., 2021). Therefore, this study aimed to investigate teachers' inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve the academic achievement of equity subgroups. Secondarily, the study investigates the impact of data collaboration meetings on teacher-perceived efficacy related to using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers define their role in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?
2. What data strategies do teachers perceive as most effective when using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?
3. What role do equity leads/data coaches play in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?
4. What are teachers' perceptions regarding the roles of collaborative data team meetings in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?
5. To what extent do collaborative data team meetings affect teacher perceived efficacy in increasing the performance level of students in equity student groups?
6. What challenges do teachers face when incorporating assessment data into their instructional practices?
7. What are the differences, if any, based on selected attribute factors, in teachers' inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve academic achievement if equity student groups?

Significance of Study

PreK-12 public education organizations are expected to use assessment data to address gaps in performance among student groups. Before the pandemic, there was an emphasis on social-emotional learning and academic intervention to improve academic performance; however, since returning from COVID-19 shutdowns, the need for mitigating the social/emotional, and mental health needs of students is amplified, along with closing the performance gaps. This study examined educators' efficacy in using collaborative assessment data meetings to modify instruction for their lowest performing subgroups, and how these discussions may affect teachers' strategies and practices for improving instructional outcomes for their equity student groups. The study also attempted to learn more about the perception of effectiveness of the current practices and perceived expectations placed on teachers. With teacher burnout being a national issue, making sure expectations are reasonable and feasible is assumed to be a key factor in preventing this. The study also explored the experience of engaging in data collaboration meetings with equity or data coaches intended to reduce gaps in academic achievement and achieve school and district equity goals.

By understanding teachers' perceptions of equity discourse and assessment data during institutionalized practices, we hoped to uncover themes regarding educator efficacy, effective facilitation of meetings to discuss data informing instructional practices, teachers' beliefs, and practices regarding effective assessment data discussions. This information will inform district support staff in the offices of Equity, Title I/ESEA, and the Office of English Language Development (ELD), regarding suggestions on how to best provide guidance and resources to school-based educators while reviewing assessment data, district assessment practices, as well as

help determine best practices for integrating equity discourse with test data to build teacher efficacy in improving student outcomes.

Delimitations

The study population includes a large school district in the Mid-Atlantic region. The sample size includes at least one school in elementary, middle, and high school grade bands. No classroom time was observed, and the interviews took place outside of the instructional day so that no instruction was impacted. Interviews were limited to classroom educators who participate in data collection meetings, and who teach subjects included in the focus of data collaboration meetings, such as mathematics.

Summary

With educator burnout and retention issues forcing school districts across the country to find innovative ways to recruit and retain teachers, leadership should also look at the expectations placed on educators. Supporting the social-emotional/wellness needs of students and gaps in academic achievement, while also addressing the academic rigor of standards in fast-paced curriculums is especially difficult when the needs contend with one another. This research attempted to investigate current practices and expectations which may be contributing to teacher's perceptions of their ability to incorporate data-informed instructional insights while simultaneously supporting the needs of historically underperforming students in the classroom and other pressing demands faced by teacher today.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Collaborative data meetings for teachers to review assessment data began from the centralized use of assessment data for equity accountability data and have evolved into what we see today in schools across the nation. In many cases, these practices may promote deficit-thinking concerning the use of assessment data with K-12 student subgroups, and in determining teacher confidence (Lasater et al., 2021). Both deficit-thinking and teacher efficacy can promote burnout and hopelessness, which may be a contributing factor in the nationwide critical shortage of educators (DeMatthews et al., 2021). By understanding the perceived role of equity practices and the institutionalized use of data to improve student outcomes, we can explore the balance between understanding the intersecting determinant factors and the creation, or perpetuating, of implicit bias for certain historically underperforming student groups. This section will discuss the historical use of assessment data practices in public schools, deficit-thinking regarding equity subgroup performance, and the impact of COVID-19 and other intersecting traumas on students, and teacher confidence in addressing equity needs in student groups.

The Rise of Assessment Data Practices

Beginning with the first federal education act in the 1960s, American policy for public school education has relied on test score-based metrics to identify and close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Jennings, 2012). ESEA Title I, which grew from the Civil Rights Era, anchored on the overall idea that by reviewing current assessment scores, and attaching high-stakes scenarios, such as funding and resources, to those scores, there will be an improvement in teacher practices and student outcomes (Holmstrom & Milgrom, 1991). As

achievement gaps became a national focus throughout the second half of the 20th century, funding initiatives followed. America began to adapt national educational policies after the models of many other nations, which led to increasing the capacity of the federal role in support of state and local schools (Moffitt & Cohen, 2015).

In 1994, President Clinton reauthorized the ESEA Act as the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). The IASA sought to take the reins of school improvement practices into the hands of the federal government and regulate academic standards-based student achievement outcomes, with the achievement gaps at the forefront (Moffitt & Cohen, 2015). Less than a decade later in 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law NCLB, which added penalties, more strict monitoring, and compliance to the IASA reforms, and the standards-based school reform policies and practices shuffled between federal control and state oversight (Moffitt & Cohen, 2015; Reback et al., 2014). There was a trickle-down effect for schools, which created the expectation that not only school leaders analyze their test data for school-wide improvement but also provide teachers the opportunity and training to analyze student assessment data to close the achievement gap. This standards-based reform has school districts around the nation creating data practices for instructional staff to use assessment data to improve instruction.

Since summative data was not available for teachers to review until much later in the year, or the following school year, many districts responded by creating their own, or purchasing, criterion-based assessments aligned to the standards for teachers to access data more frequently (Young & Kim, 2010). What was, and has been, missing is the evidence of what practices around reviewing test data lead to improved teacher quality and instruction (Park et al., 2013). The purpose of this evolving focus on data was to increase improvements for all students, however, one study

found the lower-performing schools were more likely to focus on the students who were close to showing proficiency, as they were more likely to increase the overall school performance (Reback et al., 2014). While focusing on the student groups with the largest achievement gaps, schools can identify gaps in test results and, in theory, modify (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2020).

In frameworks that allow educators to review data while also discussing the context of history, socioeconomic and institutionalized structures, and the roots of disparities in the US, schools can intervene (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2020). While the federal acts force states and local school districts to disaggregate data by subgroups, there is a process of using the data within larger discussions (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2020). Top-down authoritarian mandates can work against the equity causes in they are attempting to address, without intention, if there is no appropriate guidance and direction on how to engage in equity-based conversations when reviewing data (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). Assessment data review practices are integrated into school staff schedules, and students have returned from the pandemic with amplified social-emotional and mental health needs; teacher confidence may be helping to create anti-deficit-thinking, or at worst, perpetuating deficit-thinking (Lasater et al., 2021). By constructing the meaning, value, and implications of the assessment data, teacher sensemaking during the data review meetings can be a critical factor in deciding between the two.

Deficit-thinking and Equity

The deficit-thinking model has been described as, "positing that the student who fails in schools does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies," (Valencia, p. 2). The language status, limited intellect, poor behavior, and low motivation observed make the students themselves lack what is required to succeed in school (Valencia, 1997). This mindset has been used to excuse the

failure of economically disadvantaged and high minority subgroup populations in public schools according to the deficit-thinking mindset (Valencia, 1997). This goes against the intention of the school reforms that began in the 1960s. The potential positives of reviewing data, despite being theoretical, include identifying curriculum needs, identifying standards not met by students, and motivating teachers to use data to adjust their instructional practices (Jennings, 2012; Reback et al., 2014).

One national study found 90% of U.S. School districts are providing training to teachers on how to access and review assessment data (Marsh, 2012). The pressure to produce more favorable test scores is often the driving factor of the data review practices, not the discussion of individual students or targeted supports (Jennings, 2012). Instead, while engaging in deficit-thinking, the focus may be less student-centered and more on which students would help increase the overall scores (Jennings, 2012). Focusing on who, or what, can increase overall scores quickly can inadvertently remove any incentive for looking at individual students' needs and successes, instead, placing more importance on the teacher's mathematical ability to increase the class, grade-level, or school-level performance. Teachers make sense of test data within the context of their students' needs to determine effective practices in data review meetings that will allow discussion beyond the gaps and beyond the numbers, to avoid perpetuating inequities and minimize "undesired consequence" of the federal accountability system, and the classroom level data practices that have been developed in response (Jennings, 2012).

On the other end of deficit-thinking is the approach focused on the belief that diversity of culture, traits, characteristics, and thinking has a positive impact on learning, which is referred to as asset-based thinking (Lopez & Louis, 2009). Leadership is an essential component in developing

the capacity of educators to engage in collaborative data inquiry, and sustainable dialogue is used to improve the quality of education for each, and every student focused on equity and assets (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2020). Data review meetings can allow for interruptions of bias and belief-confirming sensemaking processes, and interactions between the meeting facilitator and the teacher can support the minimizing of deficit-thinking, which can impact the way that data is understood (Bertrand & Marsh, 2015).

While equity conversations in education are not new, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated equity issues, issues which have also been amplified due to national attention on systemic inequities, such as racism (Pierre, 2020). Discussions around disparities that disproportionately impact poor students, students of color, and language learners from certain countries have been both heightened and discouraged in the dialogue in the last several years. Throughout history in the U.S., policies and laws have perpetuated the deficiency model regarding equity subgroups, such as: the Compulsory Ignorance Laws, which banned teaching African slaves to read or write; forced school segregation, which began in the late 1800s as a way to keep non-white children out of white schools, as well as to keep Mexican American students who had limited English from attending schools with white children; and high-stakes testing tied to funding and school closures (Valencia, 1997).

During the Civil Rights Era, a psychologist named William Ryan was authoring a book titled *Blaming the Victim,* which describes how deficit-thinking explains away the gross inequities that existed, and still exist, by addressing the individual or community as the problem, rather than the structure in which they exist (Ryan, 1976). While Ryan never used the term deficit-thinking in his book, the theory he describes defines what was later termed as deficit-thinking (Valencia, 1997).

The initial ESEA of 1965 attempted to address and call out these inequalities, and each reauthorization recognized the inequities were still existing; the disparity in achievement is ever-present in the landscape of the U.S. schools.

The social-determinant inequity factors also contribute to lower performance in schools (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). While the initial deficit-thinking ideology was founded in a perceived genetic inferiority, the more current deficit-mindset is there is an acquired deficiency, but a deficiency, nonetheless (Ryan, 1976). The ascribed inadequacy is created by poverty, racial challenges, injustice, and environmental factors. This description is similar to the idea certain people were born with defects, and these stigmas are attributed to the perceived deficiency of the individual (Ryan, 1976). When describing the lower performance of English learners, the performance is usually explained by the fact the student is an English learner. In the 1920s in the U.S., these learners were described as having a "language handicap" and were taught in separate classrooms as to not slow other students down (Valencia, 1997, p. 5). In the 1960s, a similar deficit-thinking was expanded to include "culturally deprived," or "culturally disadvantaged" students, who were also deemed to have a "linguistic depravation" (Valencia, 1997, p. 5).

As data review meetings with teachers have become the norm, conversations that end with attributing academic performances to the characteristics of individuals continue the victim-blaming mentality which allows the inequities to thrive. As group-membership-rationalizing continues to feed the deficit paradigm, the chance of improving the performance of those on the receiving end of the ideologies decreases (Valencia, 1997). No matter how well-intended the conversation may be, participation in the victim-blaming approach means the structures and policies causing these conditions to remain untouched (Valencia, 1997). Patterns of discussion around student

achievement that turn into one-dimensional discussions on academic standards and test items excludes student thinking, structural inequities, cultural identities, or strengths in knowledge which students bring attributed to varied experiences (Garner et al., 2017). When attributing the causes of low performance to environmental factors, we can show compassion for the victim, speak about the history of the causes, but all fall short of addressing the current factors that are keeping the conditions ongoing, which are perpetuating the discrepancies (Ryan, 1976).

Teacher perceptions about individual students, student groups, or groups in a larger context can shape how they attribute the data. For example, if a teacher perceives people from certain communities as academically unmotivated, that teacher may dismiss a student's performance data as a lack of motivation. Teachers can also question whether the data presented to them is representative of a student's achievement. Teachers shared there is a need to discuss other roles in student achievement such as motivation, effort, behavior, and family circumstances (Datnow et al., 2018). Without discussing the environmental and historical factors, and by emphasizing test scores of historically disenfranchised subpopulations, perceptions can be reinforced, and deficit-thinking regarding student performance is strengthened (Garner et al., 2017). Teachers can also question whether the data presented represents a student's achievement.

COVID-19 and Intersecting Trauma

Trauma can change the trajectory of lives. When speaking in terms of children, traumatic events are referred to as Adverse Childhood Events, or ACEs (Kataoka et al., 2018). While the national data regarding children who have experienced ACEs is significant and disturbing, the numbers only increase dramatically when disaggregating for children of color (Kataoka et al., 2018) . Black and Latino/a/x children represent over 83% of the children who have experienced adverse

childhood events (McIntosh, 2019). When trauma impacts children, you can see many effects including anxiety, depression, behavior issues, lower grades, lower graduation rates, attention deficit, reading deficits, chronic absenteeism, and higher suspension rates (Kataoka et al., 2018). Educators working with students who have experienced trauma are more prone to burnout, feeling vulnerable, and elevated levels of stress (Berger et al., 2020). Additional responsibilities may feel unmanageable to those with a predisposition to elevated stress.

Educators working with populations of students who have a high number of ACEs will see this in the assessment data and will show up in the daily interactions between staff and students, which may leave teachers feeling ill-prepared to address the overwhelming needs of their students (Berger et al., 2020; Jennings, 2012). Without the appropriate trauma-informed training and supports, educators can also experience negative emotional reactions and have short- and long-term impacts that effect their well-being as they work with children who are living with trauma (Berger et al., 2020). Additionally, if the leaders themselves are not well informed on trauma and its impacts, their mental and emotional strain can prohibit them from being effective as a leader (Berger et al., 2020).

Headlines and initiatives have been smattered with the message of the overwhelming social-emotional and mental health needs faced by students in the U.S. While local and national politicians may be exploiting the term equity, these terms encapsulate the needs of the children. The social-emotional-mental health needs may come from living in communities that are saturated with inequities. Whether it be systemic racism, toxic media images, poverty, bullying, traumatic pathways for aspiring citizens, or any of the other Adverse Childhood Experiences according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), students who experience adverse effects may be bringing with

them to school more than notebooks in a backpack (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). These students may be carrying with them additional needs that present barriers to learning if left unaddressed. Discussing single test data at meetings may overemphasize the importance of that test data and fail to understand the larger context and barriers to high performance that a student may be facing (Lasater et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic worked to deepen the impact of social determinants in minoritized communities (Carter et al., 2023). In communities where there was high eligibility for free or reduced meals, and where there was limited access to technology in the homes, there were more problems in successfully reopening schools after the initial shutdown. More students than before the pandemic would have experienced trauma, so a need for trauma-informed practices is important in schools (Bonilla et al., 2022). Studies of student performance pre-COVID-19 and the initial years following showed there was a much greater gap in performance after returning from the pandemic for students who were of low economic status, of certain races, English learners, and students with disabilities, than before the pandemic where the gap already existed (Relyea et al., 2023). Upon returning in person, schools had no option but to focus on social-emotional learning to address some of the adverse conditions that students had endured over approximately 36 months.

Though the pandemic reached every household, people of color have been disproportionately impacted by the trauma of the pandemic (Keels, 2020). With families of color being overrepresented in the poverty data before COVID, the loss of income and jobs, as well as the loss of caregivers to the virus (Keels, 2020), the pandemic left children of color in a state of additional trauma beyond the impact of the virus. Students with disabilities, students in poverty, and English language learners were also disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in

their individual households and their educational interruption (Bonilla et al., 2022). Home-schooling was particularly difficult in low-income households where creating a learning environment was much less feasible (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020).

Communities that are at higher risk for decreased health and wellbeing can be measured by a variety of risk indicators, and the impact on public education within those communities is deep (Swain & Hollar, 2003). Children returned to schools with both first-hand traumatic stresses, but many also came with secondary traumatic stress. Rates of anxiety, depression and substance abuse amongst Black and Latino/a/x adults increased more than other demographics (Bonilla et al., 2022). The impact on test scores for Black, Latino/a/x, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students had declined more than any other student group during the initial reopening of school, and factors like pre-existing inequalities, such as limited access to technology and family capacity for educational support during in-home instruction, were more prevalent in these groups (Bonilla et al., 2022).

Historically, summer break has shown a rise in mental health issues and decreased wellbeing of school-aged children, which disproportionately impacts students who are economically disadvantaged (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). This break from in-school instruction was magnified by the pandemic, where students in poorer homes faced gaps in learning and resources. The CDC surveyed young adults during the early months of the pandemic and found rates of mental health issues among Black and Latino/a/x youth was growing faster than other groups (Bonilla et al., 2022). Test scores declined more in districts who had less in-person teaching, and this disruption is likely to change the trajectory of student outcomes if not adequately addressed (Bonilla et al., 2022).

The concurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement impelled the discussion about systemic barriers, trauma, and oppression faced by individuals and entire communities contributing to sustained inequities (Carter et al., 2023). In addition to the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement became a global movement, as the murder of George Floyd reached international media outlets. This movement made center stage as issues of systemic racism and white supremacy became daily news topics and the fuel for many debates. Sides were taken, often along political lines, and social media users shared images that captured the scenes of this movement with the globe, also to be seen by young people.

Students who are exposed to repeated images which portray the perception of racism, with their race being perceived as less equal, may be significantly impacted emotionally, mentally, and physically (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). The response, in this country, to the uprising and protests regarding systemic racism and police oppression layered on top of the pandemic has been polarizing, and the media splashes an abundance of both positive and negative images repeatedly. When students feel a personal connection to racial images, whether they are directly related or feel personally connected, they may show a variety of reactions to that trauma (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Children repeatedly exposed to these traumas may be carrying the fear something similar may happen to them or a loved one and feel preoccupied with the idea something similar may happen to them (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). This preoccupation may lead to a child being distracted and/or displaying inappropriate behavior (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Racial trauma is prevalent; however, in urban communities there are also other trauma-causing factors including

generational poverty, community violence, and general feeling of unsafety, which have a cumulative effect from either multiple exposures and/or sustained events (McIntosh, 2019).

As schools prepared to open their doors to students in a face-to-face pre-COVID structure of classes, with differing protocols for safety, there needed to be an abundance of mindfulness regarding the compounded trauma that students would be returning with. School leaders had to become well versed in trauma-informed leadership, trauma-informed strategies for working with children, and self-care strategies to avoid the inevitable burnout of teachers who may be ill-quipped to handle students with compounded and intersecting traumas (Gorski, 2020). However, the accountability systems in this country shaped by the ESEA regulations did not subside. While temporary waivers for requirements were given for the 2020-2021 school year, the expectations of learning recovery and closing the achievement gaps caught right back up.

Often, when schools desire to be trauma-informed, they may find a pre-packaged curriculum, or superficial canned training as part of in-service, while the focus returns to improving test data (Gorski, 2020). Educators were faced with a hotbed of behavioral problems, staff who are mentally and emotionally exhausted, poor academic performance, and they may be thrust into the fatigue associated with sustaining the fundamental state of leadership. Since a teacher's construct of self-efficacy is developed with their motivation for their occupation in context with the environment in which they do it, having additional complex issues in the school build can adversely impact their confidence (Narayanan et al., 2023).

A school leader, who is still carrying the pressure to meet accountability measures, must also adapt to a culture of social-emotional learning and build a trauma-informed culture. As those working directly with the students are likely to be constantly exposed to stories, hear worries, and

witness poor coping, this can have an impact on them emotionally and diminish their effectiveness as a professional (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). This can be due to secondary traumatic stress, compassion disorder, or overall fatigue, which can cause inability to focus, depression, constant worry about their students, lack of appetite, and feelings of not doing enough (McIntosh, 2019).

Teacher Efficacy

With the national awareness regarding students' social-emotional crisis and academic learning loss due to COVID-19, compounded trauma, and systemic inequities, there is room to develop inaccurate attribution of poor performance to outside factors which may lead to lower expectations from teachers and overconfidence in their efficacy (Wang & Hall, 2018). Teachers' confidence in their ability to instruct may be based on their ability to teach the standards-based curriculum alone and that is where their responsibility lies (Ingram, Louis, & Schroeder, 2004). While the messaging in education currently puts the social-emotional and academic needs concurrently on the plate of schools, teachers, since the onset of the NCLB expectations around assessment measures, teachers have shared that there is a discrepancy between the goals of increasing student achievement and the community goals of producing thriving adults (Ingram et al., 2004). With data on metrics such as moral growth, resilience, mindset flexibility, future career goals, and happiness are not available, teachers may only have academic achievement data, despite the belief that it tells only a part of the story of what occurs in the classroom (Ingram et al., 2004). Public education organizations focus on what is easily measured and reported while other goals become secondary (Holmstrom & Milgrom, 1991).

In studying conversations between teachers during data conversations Holmstrom & Milgrom (1991) found that racial, cultural, and home experience backgrounds were rarely a part of the dialogue. When these aspects were included, teachers were very compassionate and respectful; however, these conversations were rare and more typically contained no mention of specific conditions in a student's life (Datnow et al., 2018). By having teachers focus on test data only at the data review meetings, this may inadvertently shift the responsibility for addressing all the inequities faced by a student or students to the teacher. This shift can make a teacher feel vulnerable, frustrated, and defeated rather than part of a collective that can work together to address equity issues caused by the larger context in which we live (Lasater et al., 2021). When teachers view students as low-performing or with additional needs to support, they view the student as less capable academically and decrease the rigor of materials and instructional inquiries (Stosich, 2016). With so many additional needs amplified by COVID-19 and the sustained systemic oppression, combined with historical context and disproportionate social determinants of success, students are showing up to schools with more impediments to reaching academic standards mastery.

A teacher's belief in their abilities and their professional identity is always changing and building based upon their perception of success, the environment, and the interaction with colleagues (Narayanan et al., 2023). Since feeling like an impact can be made in the lives of students is a large driver into the profession of teaching, if the teachers are consistently presented with low-performing data, without skillful dialogue, this practice can undermine their confidence and identity as a high-quality educator (Narayanan et al., 2023). Limited research exists on how attribution, or teachers attributing the student performance to their ability to instruct, shows up in data review meetings, how it influences the data discussion, which students or student groups are

identified, and how this is responded to in collaborative discussions (Holmstrom & Milgrom, 1991). When teachers meet to discuss data, to preserve their belief in autonomy, the conversations often focus on what they need to teach rather than how they should adjust their teaching (Stosich, 2016).

When collaboratively instructional planning, teacher confidence in meeting the needs of all students may increase with collaborative practices that discuss specific resources, lessons, student work, and existing beliefs (Stosich, 2016). During data team meetings when teachers are provided lists of students who performed the lowest and do not go beyond the discussion about expectations, teachers do not increase the discussion of best practices in instruction or individual reasons that may contribute to the student results. This practice did not increase a teacher's confidence in increasing performance, but instead caused the teacher to draw on their perception of their ability to effectively teach (Stosich, 2016). When teachers have negative experiences, such as having failing data placed in front of them, it may make them reflect negatively on their self-efficacy, yet when they have positive unifying experiences, such as collaborating for the mission of social justice or empowering students, they have increased self-efficacy (Narayanan et al., 2023). Often the least prepared teachers are found in the schools with students having the highest needs and, in turn, the highest turnover. Therefore, unstable staffing for the school becomes a vicious cycle, as teachers never get to the point where they can be confident in their ability to meet the needs of their students (Stosich, 2016).

Teachers are constantly negotiating their identity about their abilities, which integrate into their personal and professional identities (Narayanan et al., 2023). Teachers who attribute the student's academic performance to external factors have been shown to have lower levels of efficacy (Wang & Hall, 2018). Conversely, when the teacher attributes the performance of students

to things within their control or classroom context, they have higher levels of motivation and efficacy, which impact their instructional choices (Wang & Hall, 2018). This can lead to the "fundamental attribution error" (Ross, p. 183) which allows the teacher to have a distorted view of their abilities by having overconfidence in themselves or excuses that student performance is beyond their control while blaming the individual students for the needs created by systemic or organizational factors (Wang & Hall, 2018).

Teachers may attribute their own displeasure with their work, stress, and poor student outcomes to many factors outside of their control, but attribute their perceived successes to their skillful instruction and teaching strategies (Wang & Hall, 2018). Newer teachers can have more fears and perceived inadequacies and overlook their own strengths, leading to much lower self-efficacy. This belief requires those supporting the teachers to help shape their teacher identity and confidence through anchoring in issues around equity and social justice, helping to continue their professional motivation (Narayanan et al., 2023). Most education programs treat the trauma-informed, social-emotional learning and academics separately, and only 60% of teachers in one study reported feeling confident in teaching students who have experienced trauma; this number is assumed to be much lower for newer teachers (McClaim, 2021).

Summary

As we near the end of the first quarter of this century, schools are faced with serving students who have been impacted by multiple traumas. The educational civil rights work done in the second half of the 20th century brought the requirements to state and local school systems to use data to measure the progress in mitigating these systemic inequities, forcing school systems to create benchmark tests that can produce data used throughout the school year as indicators to the

summative data gathered to determine success. Teachers are expected to be engaged in conversations about these data and the implications of them, conversations around subgroup data became a prominent fixture in individual school practice and researchers began to look at assessment data and school improvement. Analyzing subgroup data had the opportunity as a tool for change, or as a neo-deficiency building mindset. Teacher leaders all over the U.S. attempt to skillfully lead conversations around standards-based assessment data. Teachers engage in sensemaking of the data which, in hopes, leads to improved instructional practices and increased confidence. As the nation is continually recovering from the pandemic and the prominence of the BLM movement, new expectations compound the teacher's role as a trauma expert, as each child has been impacted by the global crisis, in varying degrees. Since the equity data subgroups, already the national focal point of concern prior to these global events, were disproportionally impacted by these two recent crises, looking at the academic performance during conversations about opportunity loss comes with a heightened sense of urgency.

Chapter Three: Method

This chapter introduces the study methods used to investigate teachers' navigation of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve the academic achievement of equity subgroups. Secondarily, the study investigated the impact of data collaboration meetings on teacher confidence related to their perceived self-efficacy in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals. This chapter outlines the research design, population and sample, and data collection methods. Lastly, this chapter discusses data analysis procedures and limitations of the proposed study.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological design to help gain a richer understanding of the subject (McMillan, 2016). According to *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, qualitative studies are designed to study a particular topic or phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Designing a study for a social justice inquiry can help develop a more complete understanding of complex problems (Charmaz et al., p. 432). Empathy interviews help researchers learn about the experiences of educators who are affected by larger policy issues (Begeman, 2023). This phenomenological study included semi-structured teacher interviews with open-ended questions to help understand the shared lived experience of classroom teachers who are responsible for making instructional changes using assessment data decisions. Specifically, this study focused on using assessment data to improve students' academic performance in equity student groups.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of teachers in a large school district in the Mid-Atlantic region. In the district, over 60% of student households are below the poverty level, approximately 25% of the students are English learners, 11% are students with disabilities, over half are Black/African American, and nearly 40% are Hispanic according to public data (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2023). The district has board policies and procedures grounded in equity practices to address and provide additional supports based on the disproportionate Adverse Childhood Experiences experienced by the student demographic (Swain & Hollar, 2003). A district task force determined the population at-large faced systemic and individual barriers to success, inequitable practices, and adverse social determinants of health and well-being that can prevent students from achieving to their fullest capacity. Strategies to support these policies include the requirements to disaggregate student performance data by student equity group and for school staff to view the data in this way to allocate resources and improve instructional access (Anonymous District Task Force, 2018).

The district employs nearly 6,500 core content teachers and the convenience sample included five schools (See Table 1). The sample included 15 classroom teachers who have been required by employment to negotiate agreements and district data-informed instruction policy to participate in collaborative planning data review meetings in high, middle, and elementary schools, respectively. Over half the students at each school are experiencing poverty and each school has a significant representation of one or more historically under-resourced equity student group by race, economic status, disability status, or English learner status (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2023).

Table 1

2023 Enrollment Characteristics of Sampled Schools

Student Group Populations	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
	n = 459	*n* = 870	*n* = 1271	*n* = 1216	*n* = 897
Free and Reduced Meals	52%	63%	93%	72%	95%
Students with Disabilities	8%	18%	9%	16%	10%
English Learner	17%	12%	49%	16%	20%
Black/African American	81%	84%	17%	65%	64%
Hispanic	8%	14%	74%	32%	34%

Note. Statistics provided by the State Board of Education and National Center for Education Statistics.

To meet the study inclusion criteria, participants had to instruct students in one of the core content areas and be assigned at one of the five schools used in the study sample. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure representation from primary, intermediate, and secondary school levels, years of experience, and contents, or subjects, were represented. There were no inclusion or exclusion criteria regarding demographics, however, a master list of potential participants was compiled from staff listings on the school websites for the initial interview sample pool. Thirty-five potential participants were sent a recruitment email, and 19 teachers responded. Out of those 19 respondents, 15 teacher participants were selected from five schools. Two of the other four teachers chose not to participate, each indicating that they did not have time for an interview and the two remaining potential participants agreed to be interviewed, however, they did not join the virtual

interview nor respond to any follow-up inquiries. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 classroom teachers representing the four core content areas of mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies.

Instrument Development

The *Teacher Data Utilization Interview Protocol* was developed by the Co-Investigators from suggestions shared by the *Learning Forward* organization, and included the demographic information of years of experience, and content taught (Nelsestuen & Smith, 2020). The seven research questions served as the structured questions in the interview protocol for classroom teachers to self-report the practical applications of how they include assessment data into their current curriculum, describe their experience using assessment data, and share how their confidence in teaching has been affected by the real-time incorporation of assessment data into instructional techniques. The *Teacher Data Utilization Interview Protocol* was validated through a pilot study with three educators who represented the population but were not in the study, and their feedback was incorporated as needed. As a result of this discussion, additional sub-questions were added to allow for elaboration of the overarching questions.

Data Collection

Before the data collection, the Primary Investigator and Co-Investigator of this study requested permission to conduct research with the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix A). Once approval was received, the researcher applied to conduct research in the participating district through their External Research Application and received approval to begin collecting data (See Appendix B).

Once participants were identified and agreed to participate, the teachers were contacted via email to set up the interviews. In compliance with the district's policy where the research was conducted, signed consent forms and verbal consent were obtained. The interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams or Zoom meeting software, and the transcription was stored on a password-protected secure drive. The data collection sample includes 15, one-hour long interviews with teachers assigned at five schools. Data were collected using transcription functionally available in the virtual meeting software. Participants were informed of the verbatim transcription that was enabled at the start of each interview.

In addition to the verbatim transcription, researcher comments and field notes were taken on the *Teacher Data Utilization Interview Protocol* margins with time documented to assist in the data analysis. Except for two interviews, all the interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams; the remaining two took place over Zoom. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) reference the reflective aspect of using field notes reflexively to record personal feelings, with reactions in the margins to help control for personal bias, experiences, and thoughts of the qualitative researcher. Interview data were transcribed by the virtual meeting software, then coded, organized, and themed for patterns by the researcher, using keywords and phrases. The interviews were approximately one hour in length and did not include personally identifiable information. Clarifying questions or additional probes were used and the transcript of the interview was returned to the interviewee for review to ensure the responses were understood.

Anonymity of the participants was maintained by removing any identifiable information from the data and privacy protections were put into place using password-protected locations to store the data within a locked location. Interviews were completed in October and November 2023.

Data Analysis

Responses were analyzed through an in-depth review of the open-ended, qualitative responses using field notes and transcriptions from each interview. Inductive reasoning was used to code the participant responses. This approach allows the researcher to describe the phenomenon being studied by searching for patterns to determine themes and determining a generalized analysis from those themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Using the Thematic Analysis approach, responses were sorted into categories using coding to identify themes. The identified themes, commonalities, and patterns within the participant responses were then synthesized to interpret the data for overall findings (Terry & Hayfield, 2021).

Limitations

The limitations to this study are aligned with limitations found in most qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The quality of the research is dependent on the individual researcher's skills and may be influenced by the researcher's personal biases and experiences. Likewise, the researcher's presence during the observations and interviews can affect participants' responses. The interviewer's career of being a public-school educator and currently district staff in the participant district allowed for empathy and awareness of the teacher responses. This helped to provide an increased understanding in context of what was shared in the responses, which led to effect inquiry and increased the ability to understand perceptions; however, it may also be viewed as a potential source of bias. Additionally, the researcher's role in the district as an administrator could have increased reluctance for full transparency in the interviews.

Potential limitations of this study also include the inclusion of classroom teacher perceptions of mandatory data collaboration meetings in the interviews at the five schools. Specific school and

district leadership may have a direct effect on how the study sample relates to both the assessment and equity goals of each school. Issues of confidentiality may be influenced by the system culture, and the data collected may be influenced by participant bias and the inclination of participants to provide systemically desirable responses or perspectives. This is particularly true because the nature of the research is of a potentially sensitive topic: participants may feel their behavior, choices, beliefs, and statements are high-stakes, and they could potentially appear as non-compliant to state and district initiatives if they answered honestly. The research intentionally attempted to build trust by spending extra time empathizing with the teacher, sharing researcher's own experience as a teacher, and reiterating the purpose of this study with the intended benefit to the field.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings

Introduction to Interview Findings

The purpose of this study was to better understand how teachers use assessment data to help improve academic outcomes for the historically underperforming student groups; multilingual or English learners (ELs), Black/African American or Hispanic students, students experiencing poverty, and students with disabilities (SWDs), which represent groups who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic school closures, remote learning, and systemic inequities. During the data analysis process, it became clear many of the responses overlapped or related to other questions from the interview. Therefore, the findings are provided as themes using a combination of responses to more than one question. This allowed the researcher to better describe the shared experiences of teachers who participate in collaborative meetings to review assessment data to improve instruction for students and equity student group goals. Characteristics and participant attributes are displayed in this section to allow for additional background of the teachers in this study (See Table 2). To better understand the content of the collaborative data meetings, the attributes of the data which are discussed at those meetings are shown (See Table 3).

The findings in this section are organized by using subheadings titled by the emergent themes discovered when analyzing the data. These themes are: Shared Accountability, Expectations, and Teacher Practices (related to Research Question 1, 6), Perceived Effective Data Strategies to Inform Instruction (related to Research Question 2, 5, 6), Teacher Perception on Modifications to Instructional Lessons Based on Test Data (related to Research Question (4, 5), Facilitation of Data Meetings for Increasing Equity Student Group Performance (related to Research Questions 3, 4), Teacher Efficacy, Deficit-thinking, and Belonging (related to Research

Questions 5), and Technical Learning Gaps for Teachers (related to Research Question 2, 6). Findings for Research Questions 6, which explored challenges to integrating test data into instruction, and Research Question 7, which looked at interview responses by respondent attributes to see if there were differences in the shared experience, are embedded in all the following subsections. The interview data showed the responses to these two questions related strongly to all research questions posed; therefore, there are no separate findings sections for Research Questions 6 and 7.

Characteristics of Study Participants

Two of the 15 teachers interviewed had less than five years of teaching experience, five of the 15 had between 5-10 years of teaching experience, four had between 11-20 years of teaching experience, and four teachers had more than 20 years of experience as a teacher in a public school system. Study participants were also characterized by the content in which they teach. Four teachers provide instruction in all content areas, with one exclusively instructing multilingual learners, three exclusively teaching mathematics, three exclusively teaching English language arts, three teaching science, and the last two exclusively teaching social studies. Lastly, participants were characterized by the grade band in which they currently teach. Five teachers were assigned to teach in an elementary school, six were assigned to teach in middle school, and the remaining four were high school teachers.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Participant Sample

Characteristic	Description	*n*	Percent
Years of Teaching Experience	<5	2	13.3%
	5- 10	5	33.3%
	11-20	4	26.6%
	>20	4	26.6%
Content	ALL Core Contents	4	26.6%
	Mathematics	3	20.0%
	English Language Arts	3	20.0%
	Science	3	20.0%
	Social Studies	2	13.3%
Grade Band Teaching	Elementary (K-5)	5	33.3%
	Middle (6-8)	6	40.0%
	High (9-12)	4	26.6%

Note. Total response N = 15.

Table 3

Attributes of Data Discussed at Collaborative Data Meetings

Data Type	Teachers Discussing Specific Data Types	Teachers Who Discuss Equity Student Group by Data Type
State Tests Summary Data	15	12
Benchmark/Interim Assessments Summary	13	10
Classroom Assessments Summary Level	0	0
Other District Required Summary Level	8	0
State Tests Student Level	6	2
Benchmark/Interim Assessments Student Level	6	4
Classroom Assessments Student Level	5	3
Other District Required Student Level	4	2

Note. Total response N = 15.

Table 4

Attributes of Collaborative Data Meeting

Attribute	Description	Count	Percent
Frequency	Weekly	2	13%
	Bi-Weekly	5	33%
	Quarterly	1	<1%
	As Needed	5	33%
	Annually	2	13%
Facilitator	No facilitator	2	13%
	Principal/AP	3	20%
	Department Chair/Instructional Lead Teacher	7	47%
	School Testing Coordinator	3	20%

Note. Total response N = 15.

Shared Accountability, Expectations, and Teacher Practices

Research Question 1 asked teachers to define their role in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals. Participants were also asked to describe the expectations placed on them for meeting collaboratively to discuss assessment data to plan for instruction. Findings were categorized as compliance versus practical applications. Despite awareness of firm expectation at the district level to do so, over half of the participants indicated they do not use assessment data to make instructional decisions. A teacher expressed this sentiment as, "District leaders, national leaders look at numbers, they need a metric. They need a hard number to attach to findings, so they get these hard numbers with the test data." The compliance requirement placed on schools from the district trickled down to the expectations of the school leadership, often the principal. Therefore, the role of using assessment data often boiled down to being forced to attend "sit-and-get" meetings, rather than organic or meaningful practices of discourse around how to use the data in assisting them with instructional decisions. Two teachers shared they do not believe using data analysis to modify their teaching is included in their job requirements and is an arbitrary expectation placed on them, one they are not bound to comply with. One teacher shared this viewpoint:

> I just want to come in, do my job, and do that well, not bother with the data part.
>
> I fill the data forms that they make us, but in terms of my teaching, unless I am forced in a meeting, it is not something I will ever do to help me be a better teacher.

While many teachers expressed that they believe in the potential of using data in their role to address performance gaps, the current practices are described in many similar teacher comments. One statement from a high school teacher was, "There is theory versus reality. It is, you know, part

of the game, I guess. You know, it's just part of the job." Another elementary school teacher participant shared, "Teachers don't ever really use data in the way that people who work with data envision us teachers using it." Lastly, another elementary school teacher expressed their desire to go along with the rules, "I don't use it. I only do it to be compliant."

All teachers interviewed described a school-wide assessment accountability compliance practice, which included a staff meeting held at the beginning of the school year to review the previous year's state summative assessment results. During this annual meeting, state accountability test summary data were shared with teachers for all students overall, by grade-level, and by student group, including data for ELs, SWDs, economically disadvantaged, and data by race. These data are presented at the summary level and data for individual students is not provided. The data is based on students meeting proficiency as one teacher expressed:

> We are using it to look at all students to see if they are proficient or not, not looking at what skills they still need to catch up on. If they aren't getting it the year before, how can they become proficient in the next year unless we look at the skills they are missing? It is grade-level skills, but what if they are behind like most of my students? So, we are not even using the assessment in the right way to make it meaningful for teachers and students. No, they are not proficient, we already knew that they are behind.

The purpose of these annual meetings is to discuss state test results to define the annual focus of the whole school, often tied to one instructional learning objective, and/ or content departmental goals. Many teachers shared that overall, a teacher's role is to be aware these are the focus areas in case they are asked about it, and to look at patterns and trends that are displayed

during the meetings. Because state testing for content areas begins in third grade, the beginning of the year data meetings was sometimes exclusive to those grade-levels. One teacher shared:

> It is only three through five in those meetings. He just called those grades because they were the only ones who took the state test the year before. And I know the other teachers felt relieved they did not have to sit there. The rest of us had to sit there and feel like it is all on us.

During this collaborative data meeting, another accountability requirement, the School Performance Plan (SPP) goals is shared, usually focused on SWD and/or EL students. These plans are grounded in accountability requirements and are not used in instructional planning, according to several teachers interviewed. Several teachers shared the principal or assistant principal facilitated this data meeting, and this meeting is where they first hear each year about the expectation of using the data to inform instruction. This expectation is also shared in written form throughout their online curriculum resources. Another teacher shared a similar experience:

> I can't honestly say we look at data to have actionable things for particular students. If I am not mistaken, I think some of the data was on individual students. But professionally speaking, it is a waste of time for our low-performing students. So many of them are too behind to show their strengths and weaknesses in the data. Like, I have some newcomers that have skills, but those don't show up in the data.

A few teachers shared this annual state summative data meeting was facilitated by the person who oversees state testing in their building. That person is often a part of the leadership team that monitors the SPP, as one teacher shared, "I often wonder if the meetings are to help us use the data in the classroom or if it is just her doing what they do at the district level." The rest of the data

meetings are held as collaborative meetings by the content department, if applicable, meaning they occur only if there are state data to review. State testing for reading and math begins in grade three and continues through some high school courses, science is exclusive for grades five and eight and a single course in high school, while social studies is assessed by the state in grade eight and a high school course. According to several responses, teachers outside of these courses or grades may or may not be present for these meetings, however, if they are in attendance, they do not have data for students whom they teach. These teachers must create their own assessments as described by the following teacher:

> The majority of our students are struggling, and we already know that. But we need to meet to discuss data, so we need to be able to prove that our kids are struggling or show the standards that they fare well with. So, we come up with formative assessments so we can show what our students need help with, and then we can come up with strategies together for the prerequisite skills for that standard. I am not sure how much I use these conversations because I already know they are behind and that I need to try to fill in the lacking skills.

However, across all contents, the more frequent collaborative planning data meetings only happen if there are mandated tests associated with the course. This left some interviewed teachers feeling relieved they were not "required" to look at data for those untested classes, and other teachers feeling they have 'extra responsibilities,' an additional role that is not required of their peers.

Many interviewees shared having lagging state accountability data presented at the summary level, even if it shows equity student groups, does not help them plan instruction. Instead,

most participants shared they use classwork and informal observations as their source of understanding the needs of their students. One middle school teacher shared:

> I think we just kind of look at the summary data. We never get to look at the items to see kind of how they performed on them. I think that exists but we don't get to see that. We don't look at specific students, but they are last years' students anyway. We go into a high-level view of how all the school did, how the data shows how our school and then our county did. We are really just looking at how our county compared to another county.

While all the teachers engage in at least one annual collaborative meeting to discuss assessment data, all of them have expressed they are aware there is a stated expectation to use assessment data while planning for instruction, to set departmental goals, and to determine what they need to reteach. One participant shared, "Data-driven instruction. That phrase has been drilled into my head." The perceived role in using assessment data to improve academic outcomes and achieve equity goals did not vary by content, experience, or grade-levels taught.

Perceived Effective Data Strategies to Inform Instruction

Research Question 2 addressed strategies teachers perceive as most effective when using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals. In presenting the findings in this section, it is important to note while there were data strategies shared those teachers perceived to be effective in improving academic achievement, 13 of the 15 teachers interviewed did not know the equity goals of their schools. The focus of their data strategies was on the academic achievement of all students. One teacher shared, "If you know good teaching strategies, you just apply best teaching practices that are kind of good for everybody." Required equity goals for schools in this district include any two of the following: Academic performance gaps of Black and

Brown Boys, Newcomer and EL Academic Performance, Restorative Practices, LGBTQAI+ Students, and Students with Disabilities Academic Performance. Two teachers knew their school had equity goals, however, only one teacher knew what their school's equity goals were. When asked what the equity goals were, one teacher said, "Equity goals? I don't know. I think that may be something the school leadership team does." Additionally, the findings shared for this research question are based on the perceptions by teachers on what they view as effective data strategies to address academic equity goals, regardless of whether they engage in the strategies.

Five teachers shared their strategy for looking at student-level assessment data is to look at grade-level comparison data to help them identify the 'bump kids," which are also referred to as "yellow-band, or golden-band kids," a reference to the color used in the state reporting of the data to indicate the students who are closest to showing proficiency. This concept is like what was once called the "bubble kids" over the last few decades in education, which was a well-known concept in the field used to encourage teachers to focus their efforts on students closest to proficiency, in hopes their overall data will show an increase in proficiency once those students make "the bump." A teacher described the process of identifying the students in the data:

> We've already got them color-coded in the system and that is what we look at in the data. So, when we put the numbers into a planning chart it will help us identify the kids who need extra help to get them to score higher.

One comment made regarding the teacher's role in using data to identify the students close to meeting proficiency on tests is, "The yellow, or bump kids, are the ones that, with an extra push, they can get from, you know, not quite proficient to getting proficient." However as one

interviewee said, “I am always thinking, but what about the kids who don’t test well or are just completely struggling? May we talk about them and not just the kids who were close?”

While this strategy may not help teachers to identify and address gaps in their lowest-performing groups of students, it does help teachers figure out where to focus their instructional strategies to help them show they are effective educators at teaching specific skills or standards. Another teacher who also shared this as an effective strategy to improve the overall data stated that looking at data regarding a specific skill or instructional standard helped to allocate intervention resources and time. They shared, “The yellow band kids, so those are the students who, with a little intervention or a little bump, a little push can get them to where they need to be.” Another middle school teacher shared the following belief about using this data strategy of identifying the students who are closest to meeting proficiency on a standards-based assessment. They shared, “No one would ever outright advise us to cast aside the kids that are so high, or so low, but we are definitely encouraged to focus on the golden-banded kids.”

Once the teachers use the assessment data to identify these “bump” students, all five teachers shared they would then drill deeper into their students’ performance on items on the assessments to see what skills could help move the data toward proficiency on the next assessment. A teacher described their experience with the “bump” kids as, “Then I look at my bump kids and then I’ll be pulling them out for the next couple days into a small group to just look at a few things we can improve on to help their score.” They did not look at student-level data for all students, for reasons which will be discussed further in later sections. Other teachers shared they would determine which skills their “bump kids” need and use that as the highest scaffold needed during

instruction. As one teacher put it, “I’ll make sure whatever those kids need are available to everyone.”

Several teachers, covering various contents and years of experience, shared their use of reflective questioning as a strategy while looking at the data to help integrate assessment data into instruction to improve academic outcomes. The types of data vary by content, but for teachers finding this to be an effective strategy, reflective practice is essential, and asking questions of themselves based on the data can improve their adult practices. These reflective questioning strategies often happen during collaborative data planning meetings, where they reflect on their adult practices and each other’s collective practices for teaching a specific concept. For these teachers, the collaborative planning meetings help in vertical teams. These teachers will look at assessment data before lesson planning, and then reflect on what instructional practices effectively help them to differentiate their instruction for the next lesson. Ideally, they would have more time to discuss adult practices, as described by this teacher:

> If you want to develop critical thinkers, we need to reflect on our practices that can get them there long term. Bi-weekly meetings are not often enough but we do what the union allows. It is not enough. We have to be able to support each other and talk about our professional practices and ask each other how we can do better to get the kids more on track.

Two participants believe looking at overall test summary data is an effective strategy, specifically, by looking at outliers and then further investigating the individual needs of those students by looking at additional data points, such as classwork or conferencing with the student. The remaining 13 teachers shared they do not have the time allotted during their workday to do this additional digging. Looking at summary data can help to clear up the teacher’s misconception of

student performance, or to identify where the test itself needs improvement. Another common strategy shared was to look at summary data to find discrepancies between their professional instincts and the data, according to one teacher who said:

> Like, what is reality, based on what I see in class and the data? Sift through the data to look for patterns and to try to use the data to support what you see or challenge your assumptions. I can complement professional instincts.

Six teachers believe looking at assessment summary data at the standard level is enough to be able to improve academic outcomes for classes, however, none of the teachers were able to elaborate through probing on how looking at the standard summary data helps them to improve academic outcomes for equity student groups. Instead, they shared that looking at summary data by standard allows them to see where the whole class might benefit from reteaching. This was described by one teacher as:

> I can look at the standards on a test to just see where everyone is at, you know, and if the majority of the class didn't do well on a standard I know that I can reteach that standard to the class, maybe in a different way.

Nine teachers believed that looking at the assessment data at the item level is effective in improving academic outcomes. This varied slightly by content in that both English language arts and social studies teachers stated by focusing on looking at the data for the constructed response items, they can gain better insight into the individual or collective process of a student's thinking through their response. Using the test data with the scoring rubric allows for more meaningful data analysis for them as teachers, and then allows them to engage the students into data analysis strategies. One high school social studies teacher shared that:

> By looking at our benchmark item data across our department, we can identify where the struggle areas are and it is usually the writing portion with a rubric. So, we can work with teachers from other departments and see how the rubrics for their writing tasks are. And we can help the kids be more consistent.

Looking at item-level data across all content areas and school levels also leads to better collaborative discourse amongst teachers regarding appropriate scoring and instructional strategies. While mathematics and science teachers also felt looking at item-level data for students' written or constructed responses was a highly effective strategy, the teachers of those content areas pointed out other item types were also important to look at as well. One teacher noted:

> Let's say most of the class did not do well on an item type. We can use that in instruction, go over common misconceptions, and find out from the students where things went wrong for them. You don't get that with just an overall number, you have to go item by item where they did not do as well.

A couple of teachers indicated they do use the item data itself as an instructional tool with their SWDs or ELs. One math teacher described how they approached this task, "By finding out which items they struggled with, I can put them in small groups and give them manipulatives, visuals, and more examples of so that they can get more confident in those test item types."

Eight of the teachers shared the only way they can really address the needs of equity student groups using assessment data is to be able to look at individual student-level item data. The item level data informs the instructional questions asked in the classroom and how certain topics are revisited. Another teacher shared that looking at the way students respond to specific items on a test informs future discourse in the class. One participant said:

> This is how I understand what my child was thinking by reviewing what they put on the test. When there are a lot of students who get it wrong or right, it can help me to know what to do for my next warm-up lesson.

Teachers in the sample who are assigned to work with beginner or newcomer English learners say the data reviewed in collaborative meetings is seldom, if ever, disaggregated by EL level or any demographic data. One teacher shared their perception about the need to look at individual student data:

> Actually putting students' names and having an understanding of who they actually are, is everything to be able to help them. Do they have a disability? A 504 plan? Are they economically disadvantaged? EL? Are they in a historically marginalized group? So, their parents may have just died. I mean, what's going on with this kid that's affecting their ability to demonstrate their understanding on this particular assessment or being taught in the class? We just don't do this though.

Four teachers, each with more than 10 years of teaching experience, described participating in meetings where they do discuss individual student performance, and then look at several factors which may contribute to low performance; however, they also indicated this is not the customary practice and may have only happened once or twice over their careers. One teacher reflected, "We will look at summary data and compare within our school or the district, but we don't look at single students. I do not think we spend enough time discussing our most fragile students individually."

Most of the participants felt the strategy of looking at data specific to individual students would be an effective strategy, but none of the participants reported access to student-level data unless they specifically sought out the data, a process which time prohibits. One teacher suggested,

"If we could just focus on one or two data sets each year and then go deeper, really focus on them, that would be more effective than trying to look at all the data for all students." Without this level of data analysis, using assessment data to improve instructional outcomes for equity student groups does not happen. Instead, teachers return to whole class reteaching, or teach to the majority in the classroom.

The idea of going deeper into the data for specific students that need the most intervention rather than trying to look at all data at a high level was a common suggestion across grade bands, years of experience and contents. Several teachers across content areas, grade-levels, and years of experience reported the desire to look at multiple student-level assessment data, for students who are in the equity student groups. One teacher explained:

> I think the assessment data we look at in these meetings is limited. They don't give me enough of a picture of what mathematical skills a student has or not. I need to look at more, like the student's language skills, the IEP goals, what they are doing in class and other tests, if I really am trying to help this student.

While this does not translate to practice, many of the teachers believed they would get a better picture of how to help students if conversations included more than one assessment at a time.

While it is commonly suggested to triangulate data, the data strategies in the collaborative meetings have not included multiple assessments, even though many of the teachers perceive this method to be an effective strategy for using data to improve the instructional outcomes for equity student groups.

Teacher Perception on Modifications to Instructional Lessons based on Test Data

Most of the teachers interviewed do not believe the curriculum allows for the integration of assessment data into the lesson planning for two reasons: the pacing of the curriculum is far too aggressive, and the skills or standards being taught do not match where students' academic levels knowingly are. Post-COVID assessments, according to one math teacher, put most of their students several grade-levels below what they are teaching, yet they are not to deviate from the grade-level curriculum. A teacher described the problematic nature of this experience in the following manner, "If you were at a kindergarten level, but you are expected to do the skills in fourth grade, how well do we really expect you to do?"

All but two of the participants believed they are not permitted to modify the curriculum, despite the calls to address the performance gaps of the equity student groups. The shared understanding gained from the interviews is that, aside from allowing students to use graphic organizers, manipulatives for math, and small groups, the lesson itself should not be modified from what is written in the curriculum. Another teacher described the inherent conflict this way:

> Since we cannot modify or deviate from the lessons in the curriculum that we are required to follow, no matter how comprehensive the data analysis is, if we are not going to alter the lesson for the students who don't have the prerequisites, then it's nothing but numbers.

The message and practice regarding modifying instruction to meet the needs of the equity student groups seem to be incongruent across the board. While the statements about data-driven instruction and differentiating for diverse learners seem to be prevalent for all teachers, the practical application of this message is an impossible task. One teacher's statement captures the essence of this conflict:

> Well, point-blank, we are unable to modify the curriculum. They give us a little calendar and they include lesson plans. If someone visits my room, I am expected to be on such and such lesson on a specific date. There may be a day or two wiggle room. They insist we stay on track. But then they say you are supposed to adapt everything for your student. It is not possible to teach like this.

The pacing of the curriculum, specifically for math, seems to present an additional obstacle to using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity student group goals. As one math teacher described the prevailing climate, regarding the pressure to keep up with the pace of the lessons, "you're always kind of behind the 8-ball." Several teachers shared how they knowingly administer assessments before they teach the content because the classroom tests have become so heavily monitored. One teacher lamented they are "not surprised the data looks that way when it came to this concept, and the kids did so poorly because I hadn't taught it yet."

Interviewees routinely reported, they are told they must give the tests according to the calendar and not based on their individual classrooms. With the school and district-level monitoring of the curriculum implementation, teachers referenced a perception of fear about not being on the current lesson according to the calendar day. This pressure is indicated in the statement by this teacher, "I hate to move on when I don't think my class is getting it, but we are given a curriculum with a calendar that says lesson 27, by the 13th." In response to these curriculum expectations, teachers are trying to squeeze teaching a concept they should have already taught into the curriculum, as they still had to test the students on what should have been taught. A teacher further described the issue with the pacing of the curriculum as:

> Post-COVID, there was an understanding that student, like our disability students and our FARMS kids, oh and our English learners, that they fell even further behind. They already were not on grade-level. So, in my class I have multiple grade-levels. Okay? I can be okay with that, but I am only allowed to teach them the grade-level of the class. And that is what they are tested on, so what do I do? And they know this, but it happens anyway. So, they were behind before, and even now, you know, then you add on a disability and they get even further behind.

This issue appears to be the most problematic for math and science teachers. Social studies teachers had fewer monitored assessments, so these teachers could use departmental or teacher-created assessments to produce more meaningful data, which could in turn be used to revisit concepts students were not grasping. A social studies teacher reported, "They're definitely not coming from the top down from the Social Studies Office like they do for math and English. So, we get more of the chance to have authentic conversations about lesson planning." English language arts standards spiral and repeat throughout the year, and over the years, so teachers can revisit frequently to modify their instruction and bring in new strategies to reteach concepts, giving students have several opportunities for testing throughout the year. One teacher described her use of data to revisit teaching cyclical standards for ELA but not for math:

> The math standards do not build upon each other from unit to unit like they do in Reading. So for math, I can only do so much if a student doesn't get it. So as long as a good percent are getting it, we have to keep going. For my reading though, I can look at the data from an assessment and use that to revisit for the next cycle and pretty much it is going to repeat the skills and I can get better at teaching them.

Four teachers indicated they do use assessment data to inform their instructional decisions and make modifications to their lessons. These teachers accomplished this by looking at the data for the purpose of grouping and helping them to determine what small group instructional activities they can plan, or which whole class warm-ups they can use to begin their lessons. Those teachers indicated that this is usually accomplished with the data from pre- and post-tests that are in the actual curriculum, or through teacher created tests. However, it should be noted only science teachers shared they have pre- and post-tests data available to them.

Facilitation of Data Meetings for Increasing Equity Student Group Performance

Research Questions 3 and 4 addressed the roles of equity leads and/or data coaches, and teacher perceptions of the collaborative team meetings in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction. Research Question 6 explored challenges faced during these meetings and Research Question 7 looked at respondent attributes.

None of the teachers interviewed have ever worked with their Equity Lead in reviewing performance data. In fact, only two were aware their school had an equity leader, and none of the interviewees knew there was a required equity team at each school. One teacher, who was aware of their Equity Lead, explained when asked about the equity goals, “So I know our focus areas are Restorative Practices and the other is Black and Brown boys. To tell you honestly, though, the only data we ever discuss is in the state school report data, like how the school is rated.” Another teacher was unsure of the goals, but expressed, “We always have a focus on Black and Brown boys and, because our ESOL population increased, it is probably that too, but it isn’t talked about when we look at our data.” Despite the school board administrative procedure requiring an Equity Lead and School-Based Equity Team, and the district goals of reducing the disparities in academic

performance, there was no connection shared between this work and the teachers' collaborative assessment data meetings. None of the participants worked with Data Coaches, either, though one participant had in the past when the position was funded at the district level.

Several teachers noted the importance of effective facilitation of the meetings as a critical factor in being able to integrate the assessment data into instruction. The facilitators perceived to be effective were experts in pedagogy and strategies for underperforming learners. One interviewee spoke about the role of the facilitator by stating, "She suggests ideas for the ELs and for those with IEPs, she knows what she is talking about, and how to respond to the data. She is very good at offering, ideas of, like, supports for instruction."

Teachers shared that in meetings where the conversations spanned from looking at numbers, to determining specific strategies they can immediately integrate into their instruction immediately, those meetings were seen as useful. In other meetings perceived to be effective, the facilitator also provided specific sets of data already prepared, allowed the teachers time to reflect on the data, and had ample time to discuss with other team members across grade-levels. Together, they would then determine specific EL instructional strategies, or strategies for any struggling student, which could then be applied to multiple contents.

However, in all these experiences, the conversations and support are usually cut short, leaving the discussion underdeveloped, or not enough time is initially allocated. The infrequency of the meetings can also cause the suggested instructional strategies to not be implemented with fidelity. For most of the teachers in this study, the meetings either have no clear facilitator, or the facilitator does not have a specific agenda for the meeting which includes looking at assessment data to improve instructional outcomes for the lowest-performing students.

The meetings throughout the school year are often led by a department chair, or lead teacher, who also teaches classes. Four of the teachers interviewed were department chairs or lead teachers, and they were tasked with facilitating the meetings for the other teachers in their department in addition to teaching their classes. All four of those teachers shared they have little to no training on how to look at the data, are unsure how to access data beyond the overall school performance and have no additional preparation time to prepare for the data meeting. One teacher who also serves as the department chair described the challenges:

> Yelling the word data and data-informed instruction, if they want it done legitimately, then there needs to be training on how to interpret data. Not once in my life have I received training on this. It is a skill, and the assumption is that we just know it.

Admittedly, they do not go into meetings with a clear objective. For the teacher that is facilitating the meeting by the content department at the middle and high school levels, the buy-in from teachers in social studies, English language arts, and science seems to be the most difficult due to the lack of common assessment data. One teacher who was tasked with facilitating assessment data meetings described the challenge, "I have not really been able to get my team to have actual authentic conversations. The data we have to use is not very actionable." The lack of time for planning an effective meeting is not only an issue for those facilitating the meetings, but for those who participate in the collaborative data meetings at their respective schools. One teacher explained how this lack of planning results in disengagement:

> Sometimes we get to the meetings and she has not even given us the data and expects us to get it. This does not help with the buy-in. The accessibility of the data is a challenge and making us get the data ourselves when we get to the meeting seems like a waste of time.

Several participants shared if there was more pre-work involved before the meeting to access the assessment data for preliminary review, if the meetings were facilitated by an instructional expert on differentiation strategies, if the meetings were held every week allowing for follow-up, and if the meetings allowed for continued dialogue amongst their peers, then the collaboration would be effective in helping teachers integrate assessment data into instruction. Many of the teachers in this study also believe interdisciplinary team meetings, including the special educators and teachers who specialize in English learner instruction, would be more productive and lead to changes in instruction. A teacher described how this could look:

> If one student is struggling with an idea, like determining main idea, we can look at the IEP goals, how the student is doing in other classes, and determine, what the next steps are going to be. The special educator can help us figure this out. We are not doing this, but this is what we are moving towards, that route.

Another teacher shared how when they do engage in meetings about assessment data, they get hung up on looking at the numbers in the data. They described the challenge in the following manner:

> There's always a focus on looking at the data, but then, what's the follow-up action for us teachers? It can be pretty frustrating for us because often we are told we must look at the data, the data, look at the data, but then we don't get into the practical side of what we are going to do now to reach these learners.

For four of the other teachers, the lack of involvement from the school leadership sends the message the facilitator does not have any positional authority and, therefore, the meetings are not taken seriously. The idea that only what is presented by the leadership team holds any weight is

shared in this statement from one of the middle school teachers, “They (the leadership team) ask us, ‘Are you using data to inform instruction?’ etcetera, and they just expect it to happen in response to that, yet there is little to no involvement on their end.”

A high school teacher shared a similar sentiment from having one of their teacher peers facilitate the meetings:

> Sometimes, I am like, is this coming from somewhere or if this just coming from her? I mean it is hard enough in the classroom to do anything extra and if it is just coming from her, I am not going to be rude or nothing, but I don’t take it too seriously.

In most of the interviews, the participants shared the credibility and positional power of the meeting facilitator, the instructional strategy expertise of the facilitator, the time allocated to the discussion, the structure of the meeting, the type of data and format in which is provided, were all essential components of an effectively facilitated collaborative data meeting. For most teachers, the lack of any, or all, of these attributes leaves the facilitator ineffective at leading teachers to integrate assessment data into their instructional planning. One teacher described a facilitator who discredited the process by opening the meeting 8th grade teachers with, “You know our kids are really at a 5th grade-level so we need to look at the data.” This statement by the facilitator caused the teachers in the room to “feel frustrated and hopeless.”

Two teachers in this study reported that collaborative data team meetings help them integrate assessment data into their instruction effectively. These two teachers have strong facilitators, look at multiple sets of data, and discuss strategies specifically targeting the equity student groups. An elementary teacher expressed appreciation for the time to attend the collaborative team meetings to discuss data, and felt the experience helps them to not feel alone

with the work. However, apart from feeling in good company as a teacher, the meetings do not help to them to modify instruction:

> We don't do a lot of application and discussion. We do our quick little acronyms and say things you are supposed to say in those meetings. But how we change our instruction? Those are the conversations that don't get had in these collabs, they just don't, they take a while and you have to understand the data better, which I don't think we really do.

Math and science teachers at all school levels generally feel the meetings are helpful, and the teacher discourse and exchange of ideas on how to teach a specific skill or standard helps them to improve their instruction. However, this is overall student performance, not specific to addressing equity student groups' needs. One teacher described how this is frustrating to them:

> We look at this data that does not look good, not yesterday or the day before, but we keep just looking at it to show that this group isn't successful. Then, it's like I am not successful. Even though there is success going on in my class, it doesn't show in the data we are looking at. Like in a general sense, my IEP students are low, and they never grow according to the data. But they do, we just don't look at data that way to show it. And I can't teach below grade-level anyhow.

For social studies and English language arts teachers, there was less of a belief that meeting to discuss assessment data is helpful. The most common reason given was that the assessments do not provide any new information, or they do not have enough current assessment data to discuss, and to continue discussing lagging data is not useful in addressing instructional needs for specific student.

Teacher Efficacy, Deficit-thinking, and Belonging

Research Question 5 focused on the role of collaborative data team meetings in developing teacher-perceived efficacy in increasing the performance level of students in equity student groups. Research Question 6 explored barriers to increasing the perceived efficiency of teachers attempting to address the achievement of equity student groups, and Research Question 7 looked at common attributes of the respondents.

Teachers' belief in their ability to motivate and affect learning impacts the environments they create in their classrooms and the levels of academic achievement of their students (Bandura, 1993). While the teachers in this study believed it was possible to have collaborative meetings that help build their confidence in addressing the academic underperformance of all their students, specifically the multilingual learners and students with disabilities, only two teachers stated their current practices in looking at data helped them be better prepared to address the needs of the students. Fourteen of the 15 teachers interviewed indicated that when they did meet collectively, their perceived overall professional efficacy increased by increasing their sense of belonging. One elementary school teacher with eight years of experience stated, "It builds like a bond."

According to several of the participants, the meetings did help with the general feeling of belonging. One high school English language arts teacher applied biblical scripture to their perception of these meetings, and despite not feeling the data meetings get to the point where they change instruction, they do believe they make teachers better overall. They shared, "I still think it's important for us to meet, collaborate, and discuss our students because, you know, I'm going to use scripture to say, 'iron sharpens iron'."

While union restrictions put limits on the frequency and duration of the collaboration meetings to discuss data, teachers indicated they would like to meet more frequently to collaborate with their colleagues on how to best use data to improve their instruction, plan common instructional strategies, and better address the needs of the equity student group performance. One teacher expressed that sentiment in this way, “I love data. Like, I love looking at the numbers because I know that I will be able to do something about that data instead of me just talking.”

This upbeat view of the data meetings was a sentiment shared by only a handful of the participants. The years of experience, content taught, and grade-levels did not seem to influence teacher views. Practices that did increase overall self-efficacy included when they discussed data to determine a schoolwide or department-wide goal, or to identify ways in which interdisciplinary teams could thread strategies within several content area to provide opportunities to apply specific strategies. One teacher explained how this should look from their perspective:

> It is important that we meet in teams so we can attack it holistically as a department or even as a grade, talk about where the students are having issues, then come up with a plan of action to use strategies across the board and hold the whole department to it. It has to be a common thing that we are all doing.

However, 12 of the 15 teachers interviewed indicated that these conversations either happened only one time per year or were not held with fidelity because of vacancies and lack of structure, time during the day, and teacher access to the data. The perception is that by approaching strategies as groups of interdisciplinary teams, the students would be more receptive, and there would be more shared accountability.

Teachers reported the current practices around looking at summary data of student overall performance isolated from one test, was discouraging. Teachers found this practice to be more disheartening than instructionally informative and this strategy certainly did not build self-efficacy. A few comments expressed by one teacher included, “You never feel good about it. You never say that, but you never feel good about the data. You know this is not a strong performance, but now what?”

Reviewing low-performing data repeatedly is not seen as helpful to supporting teachers’ struggling learners. One teacher shared they cope with the expectations by relying on their own assessments through observation and professional instincts:

> Oh my God, look how much progress this kid made even though he is still very below and very not proficient! But, you know, seeing the progress, numbers don't show that. I don't rely so much on standardized tests. I think [it] just limits so much and I think I'm more qualified to listen and observe.

More than half of the teachers participating in the study felt disheartened and, in some cases, felt a sense of shame when they met collaboratively to review assessment data. When asked to describe how they felt the last time they met to discuss student assessment data for their students, one teacher stated, “I kind of felt down about myself a little bit.” Another teacher, discussing the overall feeling that comes with looking at the data for their consistently low-performing students, shared, “So, it’s kind of a malaise, if that’s the right word around it.”

By meeting every other week to look at some type of assessment data, as several teacher participants do, many teachers hear the continuous message their students are failing, underperforming, or not meeting proficiency. With the range of needs in the classroom, teachers say

they struggle to differentiate based on overall low-performing data. Even before COVID-19, equity student groups performed lower than their peers. The data have not improved over the pandemic and for some groups of students, such as English learners and students with disabilities, many teachers find the practice of reviewing the low-performing data to be, as one teacher put it, “a waste of time for the students, and a waste of time for me.”

The overall perception is that teachers already know what that data will say before they go into the meeting, and to gather and look at the data together not only makes many feel a sense of apathy, but for some, a sense of anger, and still for others, a sense of hopefulness. Most of the required assessment data are standardized grade-level tests. One teacher referenced a ‘mathematically gifted’ student whose language barrier and limited vocabulary causes him to perform poorly on tests. Even though the teacher is aware of his struggles and capabilities, there is nothing they feel that they can do. The student is consistently labeled low performing, even though the teacher knows different. In this case, the teacher is frustrated this student is clumped in with the other students who do not grasp the concept. The teacher described this as an example of how analyzing standardized test scores in schools can lead to other issues, such as this student being labeled as under-performing overall.

As Bandura (1993) shared, the stronger a person’s self-efficacy, the higher their goals will be, and the stronger the commitment. Twelve of the 15 participants did not feel confident in their ability to modify lessons to meet the needs of equity group students. The same participants shared the students receive specific services from the English Language Development (ELD) teacher, and/or the Special Education teacher, and the range of learners is so broad in their classes they did not feel it was possible for them to address those specific needs. In most experiences shared, the

conversations around test performance data for EL and SWD occur separately, and only with the staff designated by position to support these learners. Several teachers shared that no matter what the data say, they are "told to use graphic organizers, sentence frames and sentence starters" with all EL and SWDs. Without their expertise, most of the teachers explained they identify only one instructional goal for all students in their classes. Even at that, the implementation of the strategy provided from the meeting does not get implemented into practice during instruction, rather, it stays behind at the meetings. One teacher expressed this by stating, "I don't know how much I ever use the conversations from those meetings. I kind of do my own thing after the meeting is over based on who I know the kids are."

Several interviewees expressed deficit-thinking when asked questions related to their perceived efficacy in increasing performance of equity student groups. The shared belief, especially in math, is there is little to no hope of addressing the needs of the lowest-performing students. With most of the class several grade-levels behind, it is just not feasible to address while teaching grade-level standards. Math teachers have little confidence in their ability to bring students who are below grade-level to grade-level by teaching the content they are not prepared for, and so the SWD, EL, and economically disadvantaged students do not get additional attention. The equity student group students become lost in the low-performing data, while the hope seems to fall on the "bump kids." One teacher shared, "I know you may be far behind, but I got 29 other kids in here."

A few teachers shared they have a sense of resentment towards the EL and SWD students in their classroom, who are" bringing down" their data, something of which they are ashamed. One teacher blamed the parents of the EL students whom they assumed were not appropriately assisting their student at home and "picking up the slack." Noting the additional issues of absenteeism and

lack of family support, several of the teachers also shared the special educator and ELD teacher should be addressing these additional needs, and as the general education teacher, this is not realistic for them to bring them up to meet grade-level standards. Overall, the expectations for EL and SWD students are that they will always be below grade-level across grade bands, contents, and years of experience.

Technical Learning Gaps for Teachers

Teachers shared several experiences when asked about their perceived barriers to using assessment data to inform instruction there were several shared experiences, which was a focus of Research Question 6. The experience shared regarding technical barriers did seem to influence the responses to Research Question 2, which focuses on effective strategies to using assessment data to modify instruction. The technical gaps did not vary based on any of the teacher attributes explored in Research Question 7. Pacing and district-wide restrictions on modifying the curriculum, lack of awareness of instructional strategies that can be applied to lessons to differentiate for SWD, ELs, or struggling readers, the lack of consistency or frequency of the meetings, and meetings lacking structure and/or follow-up were the most commonly barriers expressed. In addition to those issues, most of the teachers shared they lack the technical skills needed to access and/or analyze the data. Much of the meeting time was spent accessing data, and since the overall summary data seemed to be the easiest to access, that became the data looked at. Since these data only affirmed what they already knew about their students or continued to paint a bleak picture for equity student groups, conversations became something teachers suffered through as often as weekly, or as infrequently as annually.

Without the technical skills to access data meaningful to classroom instruction, the data looked at was often outdated, and in the perspective of several teachers, not helping them to meet the needs of the students. With assessment data appearing on multiple platforms for teachers, the minimal time they have for planning is a barrier to attempt to figure out how to access the data. Without a designated data staff member at their school, many teachers shared they do not have sufficient help to figure it out alone. Training opportunities may be available, but admittedly, many teachers did not see the value in attending a one-off training instead of attending professional development that feels more meaningful. Since there are various platforms, they may become better oriented with one of them, and therefore that becomes the data they use the most.

While some of this is lack of training on the platform to access data, for those teachers familiar with the district's main assessment platform containing test data for multiple contents or subjects, teachers shared they find it frustrating with "too many clicks" to get any useful data. With the pacing and curriculum timelines mandated, another teacher shared, "There is no time to follow the 1,000 clicks and finally get the data for a question to know what my students need for immediate feedback."

For the demands of teaching, the perception of lack of user friendliness, has most of these teachers relying on their own assigned classwork. There is an unacknowledged learning curve for the teachers that all teachers shared. One teacher commented:

> If you dig into our current data system, which I really have never been trained in, the current software does not necessarily make the data accessible. I guess it is not in a user-friendly way for teachers, even those who are savvy in technology. They stress that we use data, but then getting the data causes us stress.

Several teachers shared that they felt on their own navigating the data systems and did not feel successful in doing so. With the infrequency of the data meetings, teachers shared they felt it was left to them to attempt to access the data. One elementary school teacher noted, "I would expect to receive multiple mandatory training courses throughout the year on accessing student data and using it to inform instruction so support the expectations to do so."

Aside from learning how to access meaningful student-level or item level data, several of the teachers expressed frustration they never learned how to analyze data and apply it to instruction. One teacher shared:

> Yelling the word data at you and that you need to have data inform instruction, well I do legitimately believe it is important they do insist on this. But there is no awareness, or no action taken that I have seen show an awareness of the fact that data analysis, data science is a separate learned skill that, like anything else, needs to be taught. And not like once, but often. And not once have I received training on how to interpret student data.

Several teachers shared this same experience and because of this experience, they only look at data when they attend a required meeting. When those meetings occur, they look at whatever data are presented and do their best to respond to it.

Summary

In summary, there is a perceived incongruence between what is expected of teachers and what teachers feel they can do with the data they are given. To provide students with appropriate supports to achieve the equity goals of reducing the achievement disparity, and to mitigate learning barriers disproportionate to the student demographics, teachers are expected to use academic assessment performance data to guide their decision making. With barriers to accessing, analyzing,

interpreting, and integrating the assessment data, there are many teachers who comply with giving their students the assessments required, but struggle to integrate the data in a meaningful way to make real-time instructional adjustments for their students. According to data from this study, the additional academic needs of students represented in equity student groups are not properly identified through current data practices.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' navigation of the inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve the academic achievement of equity subgroups. Secondarily, the study intended to investigate the impact of data collaboration meetings on teachers' perceived efficacy for using assessment data to improve academic achievement and equity goals. Having a better understanding of the shared teacher experience of using common assessment data can help refine expectations, inform facilitation practice for the meetings, inform policies, and know more about support teachers may need to be successful in this endeavor. Chapter 5 provides conclusions and recommendations based on study findings, and includes the following components: problem statement, research questions, respondent characteristics, method, a summary of the findings, conclusions, discussion and implications, administrative applications, and recommendations for future research.

Problem Statement

Public schools are expected to raise academic achievement for all students, eliminate the gaps for equity groups, and implement equity practices. Nationally, this conversation continues to be primarily data-driven and focused on student assessment data. The focus on assessment data is pervasive and teachers in the core contents use mandated data discussions to analyze their academic assessment data. Available research suggests that teacher beliefs and attitudes may influence the way that data are interpreted (Bertrand & Marsh, 2015). Repeatedly reviewing the low performances of the equity subgroups without considering the causes of the equity issues, such as systemic racism, economic disparities, collective trauma, learning loss, and social determinant factors, may lead to confirmation bias, deficit-thinking, and diminish teacher confidence. If data

review practices do not include discussions around the equity goals, or the barriers for individual students and their academic performance, then these needs and goals may risk being overshadowed by the prioritized academic performance standards reflected in assessment data scores.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers define their role in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?
2. What data strategies do teachers perceive as most effective when using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?
3. What role do equity leads/data coaches play in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?
4. What are teachers' perceptions regarding the roles of collaborative data team meetings in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?
5. To what extent do collaborative data team meetings affect teacher perceived efficacy in increasing the performance level of students in equity student groups?
6. What challenges do teachers face when incorporating assessment data into their instructional practices?
7. What are the differences, if any, based on selected attribute factors, in teachers' inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve academic achievement if equity student groups?

Characteristics of Study Participants

Two of the 15 teachers interviewed have less than five years of teaching experience, five of the 15 had between 5-10 years of teaching experience, four had between 11-20 years of teaching experience, and four teachers had more than 20 years of experience as a teacher in a public school system. Study participants were also characterized by the content in which they teach. Four teachers provide instruction in all content areas, with one exclusively instructing multilingual learners, three exclusively teaching mathematics, three exclusively teaching English language arts, three teaching science, and the last two exclusively teaching social studies. Lastly, participants were characterized by the grade band in which they currently teach. Five teachers were assigned to teach in an elementary school, six were assigned to teach in middle school, and the remaining four were high school teachers.

Method

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological design to help gain a richer understanding of the subject (McMillan, 2016). This phenomenological study included semi-structured teacher interviews with open-ended questions to help understand the shared lived experience of core content classroom teachers who are responsible for making instructional changes using assessment data. Specifically, this study focused on using assessment data through collaborative planning meetings to improve academic performance of students in equity student groups. Empathy interviews help researchers learn about the experiences of educators who are affected by larger policy issues (Begeman, 2023).

The study participants were teachers in a large school district in the Mid-Atlantic region which serves over 60% students from households below the poverty level, a 25% and growing

population of multilingual learners, a significant population of students with disabilities, and a racial demographic that is almost entirely consisting of Black or brown students. The sample included fifteen core content classroom teachers in high, middle, and elementary schools, who have been required to participate in data review meetings. Each school in the sample has high poverty enrollment and a significant representation of one or more historically underperforming equity student group by race, disability status, or multilingual learner.

Summary of Findings

The findings shared that the practice of having teachers collaboratively review summary test data, also used for accountability and district monitoring, is not perceived by teachers to increase their efficacy in addressing the compounded needs of equity student groups and often leads to discouragement. Discussions around data become conversations around learning standards and test items. These types of discussions exclude the individual student perspectives, strengths, and experiences that contribute to student learning (Garner et al., 2017). Additionally, the use of accountability data without discussing individual students or student groups in collaborative meetings may encourage deficit-thinking.

Without the discussion beyond the numbers and percentiles, the emphasis on test scores strengthens perceptions and reinforces deficit-thinking around the performance of the historically disenfranchised (Garner et al., 2017). Since these discussions happen in groups, the data may be rationalized and become one-dimensional conversations which are unlikely to reduce the structural barriers that cause the conditions that work against student achievement (Valencia, 1997). With the COVID-19 pandemic prompting school closures, and the concurrent societal uprising against systemic injustices, there are additional factors potentially affecting the academic performance of

equity student groups that are not being discussed, which may be attributing to lower performance (Lasater et al., 2021). Economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and students of color who were already overrepresented in those groups, as well as multilingual learners had more interrupted learning and more trauma due to the social inequities and systemic barriers (Bonilla et al., 2022). These factors are not discussed along with the test data, and the accountability system in the county did not adapt. The study also found specific practices teachers perceive as effective when looking at assessment data to improve instruction for the equity student groups. Specifically discussing single tests for the entire class may cause that test to take on overestimated importance (Lasater et al., 2021). Teachers perceive looking deeper into individual students, across multiple content areas, and utilizing multiple data points, as more effective to supporting their equity student groups.

Conclusions

This chapter section uses the study findings to provide conclusions for the seven research questions. Research Questions 1-3 relate to teacher perception of best practices and strategies for looking at assessment data to improve instructional outcomes for their students and the equity goals for their student groups. This category will be discussed with three subheadings. Research Questions 4-5 addresses teachers' perception of effectiveness of the practices and processes during assessment data collaboration meetings on increasing their self-efficacy. The second category is divided into three subsections. Research Question 6, which discusses challenges to the integration of assessment data when modifying instruction, is its own section. Research Question 7, which summarizes differences in experiences based on teacher attributes, is discussed in three subsections.

Research Question 1: Accountability, Expectations, and Classroom Practices

Teachers define their role in integrating assessment data to inform instruction in two ways; one in terms of what is expected of them and the other in what they actually do in practice to help them address the needs of their students. The systemic practices of meeting to discuss required data for state accountability and interim/benchmark assessments are seen as "part of the job" requirements, yet teachers do not believe this data will improve instruction. Teachers define their role in using accountability assessment data as being passive participants looking at data for compliance and not engaging in discourse. Teachers were not aware of their school's specific equity goals, nor the district equity goal of looking at data by student groups, as per the district equity plan. As for the school board's equity-intended outcome and strategy of having schools and individual staff analyze performance data to identify the achievement gaps and reduce the performance gaps for equity student groups, if these practices are happening at all, the teachers at these five schools are unaware of them.

Research Question 2: Modifications to Instructional Lessons and Strategies Based on Data

Teachers prefer to use assessments that are less-structured and less-rigidly scheduled to improve academic achievement for their students, and specifically their equity student groups. Assessments such as observations, classwork, short-cycle assessments, and pre/post-tests for lessons provide teachers with data that becomes actionable based on the unique needs of the students in the class. Collaboratively looking at student-level data for common assessments at the item level is believed to be the most effective assessment data. Teachers believe when they can review items with each other, and with students, it allows them to clear up misconceptions. When this can be done in interdisciplinary or on grade-level teams, it allows teachers to select specific

instructional strategies that can be applied through all the classes that the student attends throughout the day. The shared experience of teachers in this study was interdisciplinary planning seldom, if ever, occurs. Using data strategies which encourage robust dialogue on how to integrate the information into the student's day holistically, rather than in one content, is perceived as effective. Carefully aligning the assessments, whether they are classwork or more formal, with a baseline to show growth, is considered more effective than using grade-level interim data, which teachers already know many of their equity group students are not prepared for instructionally. The perception of the teachers is by looking at data which collectively measure academic grade-level content they know the students already lack the prerequisites for, is not useful in modifying instruction.

Research Questions 3: Facilitation of Data Meetings for Increasing Equity Student Group Performance

Teachers in this study shared the belief, if facilitated correctly and with fidelity, there is potential in using the collaborative data team meetings to improve instruction for all students, including closing the gaps for their equity student groups. Effective facilitation includes having the data provided in advance and making sure the facilitator is also an expert in pedagogy, especially in working with, and differentiating instruction for, struggling learners. To be effective, the teachers believe meetings should be frequent and consistent, but they do not believe the current collaborative planning meetings for common assessment data are frequent or consistent. Additionally, the teachers feel the agenda structure needs to include follow-up from previous meetings, a significant amount of time for teacher discourse leading to determining instructional strategies, and next steps, which should be followed-up with at the subsequent meeting. The shared experience of these

teachers was that Equity Leads do not participate in meetings with teachers to discuss the academic performance tied to equity goals, and data coaches were present in only one of schools represented in the study, so neither play a role in integration of assessment data into instruction to address the gaps in performance of the equity student groups.

Research Question 4 and 5: Teacher Efficacy, Deficit-thinking, and Belonging

Teachers participating in collaborative data team meetings did not view them as helpful in supporting the modification of instruction. Major concerns were the type of data being examined and the infrequency of the meetings. Since the teachers often looked at mandated assessment data during these meetings, the data were often lagging, which teachers described as useless for addressing students who were not meeting learning outcomes, or the data reviewed was not telling the teacher anything other than what they already knew regarding student performance. When data were shared, usually state or interim assessment data, it was often at the summary level. The summary grade-level data was not available at an instructionally useful level, including learning outcomes, and did not help teachers identify specific instructional needs for individual students. In general, data meetings gave them a warm-up activity to do with the whole group and helped them to identify the kids who performed nearest to proficiency. As a result of the collaborative data meetings, instruction was sometimes modified based on where the data indicated most of the class was in need of support, and teaching to attempt to move "bump students" to proficiency was the most common data-based outcome. These findings relate to similar findings of a study done by Reback et al. (2014), which found the lower-performing schools were more likely to focus on the students who were close to showing proficiency, as they were more likely to increase the overall school performance.

With the national awareness regarding students' social-emotional crisis and academic learning loss due to COVID-19, compounded trauma, and systemic inequities, there is room to develop inaccurate attribution of poor performance to outside factors which may lead to lower expectations from teachers and overconfidence in their efficacy (Wang & Hall, 2018). Teachers indicated meeting with their peers positively influenced their sense of belonging and self-efficacy. With today's national teacher shortage, this is certainly viewed as positive, however, when it comes to perceived self-efficacy in addressing the academic gaps of their equity student groups, the collaborative meetings regarding data did not translate into an increased belief in the ability to instruct those student groups more effectively.

The meetings often left teachers feeling they should focus their efforts on the students who were closest to proficiency and, in essence, leave out those lower or higher achievers. The "bump" kid concept was a shared experience described when asking teachers about their ability to address the needs of their students and they commonly stated that equity student group data were rarely reviewed. Lower performance of the equity student groups was often an expectation, and the data were seldom disaggregated, nor supplemented with additional data points beyond a single assessment. Most of the teachers relinquished their responsibility to those students, feeling that it was beyond their capabilities to address their needs and attributed the responsibility to improving their academic performance to a special educator, an ELD teacher, counselor, or parents.

Teachers' confidence in their ability to instruct may be based on their ability to teach the standards-based curriculum alone and that is where their responsibility lies (Ingram et al. 2004). In studying conversations between teachers during data conversations Holmstrom & Milgrom (1991) found that racial, cultural, and home experience backgrounds were rarely a part of the dialogue.

When these aspects were included, teachers were very compassionate and respectful; however, these conversations were rare and more typically contained no mention of specific conditions in a student's life (Datnow et al., 2018). By having teachers focus on test data only at the data review meetings, this may inadvertently shift the responsibility for addressing all the inequities faced by a student or students to the teacher. This shift can make a teacher feel vulnerable, frustrated, and defeated rather than part of a collective that can work together to address equity issues caused by the larger context in which we live (Lasater et al., 2021).

Research Question 6: Technical Learning Gaps for Teachers

Accessibility to data that would give teachers insight into the individual student's needs is limited. Teachers also identified limited time, lack of strategies, and a curriculum with learning objectives for which students do not have the prerequisites, as barriers that prevented them from appropriately addressing the learning gaps. However, if those barriers were somehow magically eliminated, we are still left with teachers who do not have access to, or the technical skills necessary to access the systems used to interpret the data. Multiple data systems that do not feel user-friendly, nor intuitive to teachers become inhibitors to attempting to integrate assessment data into instruction. Aside from school systems using multiple data platforms, the data are often most easily accessed as summary data, which only reaffirms what the teacher knows in terms of determining overall student performance. To dig into the data using multiple data points to create a meaningful and actionable data story, would require the data systems to be flexible, intuitive, and integrated into the many other instructional software programs the teachers use. When the teacher attributes the performance of students to things within their control or classroom context, they have higher levels of motivation and efficacy, which impact their instructional choices (Wang & Hall, 2018).

With the amount of focus on data-driven instruction, teachers also noted lack of basic data statistical skills needed to interpret and integrate the data. Teachers are not receiving the training necessary to make insightful interpretations of the data, and therefore lean into the obvious patterns in the data, like determining where most of the class is so they can reteach the concept needed for the bulk of the students thus allowing them to identify who the "bump" kids are so those students can receive the most individual attention. The systems do not currently support teacher access and interpretation of data needed to improve academic performance of their low-performing equity groups. Since a teacher's construct of self-efficacy is developed with their motivation for their occupation in context with the environment in which they do it, having additional complex issues in the school build can adversely impact their confidence (Narayanan et al., 2023).

Research Question 7: Differences Based on Selected Attributes

Most of the interview research questions did not elicit responses that varied by years of experience, content, or grade band teachers taught. There were a few questions where the shared experience did seem to vary slightly by one of these attributes, discussed below.

Shared Experience Differences by Content

Social studies teachers who did not have common assessments rely more on written works of students and teacher-provided data, which implied more meaning to the assessments to implement instructional strategies. While those teachers wanted more access to common data, they expressed the least stress and shared the most confidence in meeting the needs of all their students. These social studies teachers also felt they could modify instructional materials and curriculum plans since they were not heavily monitored and entrenched in the accountability systems.

Science teachers felt their common assessment data has more meaning because they had pre- and post- test models. These science teachers also felt less daunted by the accountability and monitoring practices their math and English language arts colleagues had to deal with. The English language arts teachers felt their assessments, which were heavily focused on constructed responses, did not provide additional meaningful data and administering, scoring, and discussing them was bothersome and did not help them modify instruction.

For mathematics teachers, the assessments were seen as the curriculum driver, and they felt the most limited to make any modifications to the pacing, materials, or content. Accountability practices seem the most present in the experience of math teachers, and mathematics teachers felt it was more important to give the test than to make sure the students were ready to learn the content. Math teachers expressed the most frustration at the assessments which measured content known to be more difficult than their students are prepared for, especially considering the learning impacts from COVID-19.

Shared Experiences by School Level

High School teachers had fewer meetings to discuss accountability data and have the least amount of state testing since they facilitate end-of-course assessments. The high school teachers who served as department chairs expressed more desire to have common assessments so teachers can collaboratively look at the data. The high school and middle school teachers displayed the least confidence in addressing the needs of the equity student groups, often believing it was not their job, and in some ways, it was too late for those students to catch up.

Shared Experienced by Years of Experience

For the most part, any differences based on years of experience were not reflected in the data, except teachers who had over 20 years of experience feel more willing to reject expectations and do what they feel their students need. A teacher's belief in their abilities and their professional identity is always changing and building based upon their perception of success, the environment, and the interaction with colleagues (Narayanan et al., 2023) The teachers with less than five years' experience were most concerned with pacing. All teachers felt disheartened when they look at the equity student group data, however, the teachers with over 20 years' experience also had an undertone of anger as they reflected on days past when they were not required to stick to rigid curriculum and administer tests in which they did not find value in the data. They shared those days of field trips and learning through projects seemed to be in their rear-view mirror and they blame the culture of over-testing students and holding students to standards for which they are not prepared.

Discussion and Implications

Good intentions do not always produce good results. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and subsequent reauthorizations of the Improving America's Schools Act (1994), No Child Left Behind (2002), and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) required the increased use of test data in public education to inform instructional decision making with the goal of reducing barriers, leveling playing fields, mitigating systemic inequities historically rampant in Unites States' education, and to hold school systems accountable. While this is intended to allow teachers to close the academic achievement gaps of equity student groups; current practices today may be adversely perpetuating the inequities they mean to eradicate. Top-down

authoritarian mandates can actually work against the equity causes in which they are attempting to address, without intention, if there is not appropriate guidance and direction on how to engage in equity-based conversations when reviewing data (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020)

Setting and defining expectations on what it means to integrate data into instruction is different from the expectations put on states to monitor and report student group data for system accountability in a nation that has not always prioritized the education of all students. With an overrepresentation of Black/African American and Hispanics falling into economically disadvantaged status, and the pandemic overlayed by social justice issues causing disproportionate interruptions in learning and sustained trauma, careful attention should be paid to the compounding circumstances of these student groups (Bonilla et al., 2022; Keels, 2020). Additionally, SWDs and multilingual learners also experienced increased interruption in their learning during those times (Bonilla et al., 2022; Keels, 2020). The existing achievement gaps prior to the pandemic years, along with the primary and secondary traumas due to COVID-19 in the landscape of social unrest, begs for consideration of those factors when examining our current accountability practices. The findings of this study show a blurred line between data-driven instruction and school-system accountability, leaving teachers well-versed in data driven rhetoric, yet unsure of what to do to address the achievement gaps. This unclear distinction of accountability and instructionally actionable test data may contribute to the lack of teacher retention and societal perception of the public-school teaching field.

When we present teachers with data using the same structures and formats as the state summative testing, and teachers do not go deeper into the data and discuss causal factors, we are

merely telling teachers they are failing with each data set. For teachers to provide meaningful learning opportunities for all students in their classroom, that requires the teacher to become intimately familiar with each student, including their individual experiences in relation to the greater achievement barriers in a social context and their differences in performance within the class (Grossman & Hammerness, 2009).

When presenting teachers with summative data sets by equity student groups, and then following up with interim data sets presented the same way, we are not being solution-forward, we are not sharing these individualized differences and opportunities to frame the data within a larger context. According to Hattie (2009), there was more of an effect on teacher action and behavior when the discourse challenged prevailing notions and beliefs. Sharing anticipated gaps in performance needs to be met with accompanying discourse regarding the underlying assumptions, bias, and root causes to produce a rally call rather than a passive acceptance (Hattie, 2009). The shared experience is that when the teachers do meet collaboratively, it is already after they have moved on from the curriculum, and they look at data that is perceived as accountability rather than instructional data. The teachers are aware that their multilingual learners, SWD, and economically disadvantaged students are not performing as well as their peers, and showing teachers the same data repeatedly will not move the students forward. Having rich discussions about attributing factors, and how to integrate instructional strategies into their lessons, can help them be more effective teachers. This should be done without superficially attributing these gaps in performance to any specific underlying factor, however, going beyond the display of low performance and engagement in robust discussions of systemic structures and compounding factors affecting performance (Wang & Hall, 2018). Having these discussions at the aggregate level may work to

decrease teacher confidence, help perpetuate deficit mindsets, and decrease the rigor of instructional lessons (Lasater et al., 2021; Stosich, 2016). Instructional strategies that are effective involve collaboration between teachers including robust discussion before and after instruction (Hattie, 2009). It is important to be intentional about building self-efficacy and not inadvertently promote deficit-thinking by continuously sharing data in a way that leaves a teacher feeling inept.

Teachers are professionals; they require extensive education, continued professional development, and credentials who should not fear being on the wrong calendar day for the lesson they are scheduled to teach if they are attempting to address student needs. Professional judgement, discretion, and style is lost in prescribed lessons, rigid timelines, and data that tell teachers that even when they jump through all the hoops, they are still not doing good enough. With pressure on the standards-based outcomes alone, when students are already known to lack the prerequisites of those standards, not only can we be leaving teacher feeling unprepared, but we can be inadvertently disempowering the students (Narayanan et al., 2023; Stosich, 2016). With research to support that taking time to allow for multiple opportunities for students to learn specific skills over a variety of performance tasks, teachers need to be able to respond to the assessment data without the fear of being scrutinized for doing so (Hattie, 2009).

If we empower teachers to use data they believe is meaningful, to have robust collaboration between peers, and to individualize learning goals based on where the student is and where the gaps present themselves, we can hope to truly meet each student where they are and increase the teachers' self-efficacy in meeting those needs. Collaboration and discourse amongst teachers at the finite instructional level is a powerful force in improving student outcomes teachers discussing specific students who are at different performance levels can

influence performance (Mora-Ruano et al., 2019). Data science, even its most basic skills, is required if federal and state educational systems insist teachers use data-driven instructional practices. Data and assessment literacy skills are a key component of being able to look for patterns and trends and make sense of the data to then determine action steps. These lifelong skills need to be taught to educators and opportunities for learning skills in analyzing data should continue throughout the career of a teacher (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021). If we have not empowered teachers to have basic skills for completing these tasks, then the expectations will not be met.

The premise of the federal education acts is to hold the education systems accountable, to educate all students and acknowledge the disproportionality of some barriers to achievement. Reporting out the data disaggregated by student group, attaching rating systems, and tying funding to results may have data at the forefront of the discourse. However, as this concept trickles down to instructional practices, there needs to be strategic intentionality on behalf of educational administrators so, systemically, we do not continue to focus on the students who are right on the line of proficiency and consider those far behind as the lost-cause students. Research shows that when students do not possess the knowledge or lack the skills needed to achieve a goal, then giving them too challenging of a goal can contribute to more poor performance (Hattie, 2009).

Researchers studying deficit-thinking have found, when focusing on deficits in groups, we often seek fast solutions over a lasting one, which can inadvertently result in lowering expectations for those groups of students (Patton Davis & Museus, 2019). Looking at data without contributing factors does not benefit the teacher or the student, yet the practice of

looking at data to drive instructional decisions is not something to be discarded. Each data point represents a student with a name, a birthday, a family, a neighborhood, a story. It is time we move past the rhetoric and support teachers to effectively learn more about the needs of each student in the classroom, which requires authentic discourse considering systemic, societal, and individual barriers faced disproportionality by multilingual learners, SWD, economically disadvantaged, Black/African American, and Hispanic student groups. Policies and practices that allow for deficit-thinking will remain in place if we reduce the power of the federal education acts to rhetoric and jargon.

The current practices of meeting collaboratively to look at data at the summary level without consistency and structures may be doing little more than reinforcing deficit mindsets for equity student groups. Teachers need to look at data in a way that helps them discover how a student is thinking and what factors may contribute to understanding or misconceptions (Grossman & Hammerness, 2009). Looking at item level data combined with other evidence, the teacher can tell if a student got the answer correct, but for the wrong reason or if the student got the answer wrong for a specific reason (Hattie, 2009). Facilitation of data meetings should be supporting teachers in looking at data for this purpose and then determining how to respond to their understanding about individual student needs.

Lastly, having policies, equity teams, systemic or school-wide goals, and written plans may not bring about the desired, necessary institutional changes needed to attain equity goals. If those who are closest to the students in the schools, the teachers, are not aware of, empowered, and developed to be agents of change, then they will continue to see disappointing data sets. All students deserve more than rhetoric and loosely aligned initiatives, and students in the equity

student groups need urgently to have systems align efforts, dedicate resources, and engage in meaningful practices that will help teachers to understand the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

Sometimes, deficit-thinking can suggest that the solution to addressing inequities lies in the primary solution at the system level (Patton Davis & Museus, 2019). If there are systemically required equity teams with a focus on closing the achievement gaps of students with disabilities, they should be partners with the teachers. The larger systemic fix alone may reinforce the inequities that become barriers to achievement. If there are goals regarding improving the achievement gaps with the multilingual learner students, then instructional strategies must be integrated beyond one teacher, and monitored with meaningful data that goes beyond one number on one test. If we are to believe enough that change can happen that we embark on developing policies, procedures, goals, and plans, then we need to believe enough to make sure these plans and policies are implemented and intermeshed with what occurs in the classroom.

Administrative Recommendations

One recommendation is to consider an Equity Data Science/Literacy professional micro-credential for teachers, designed to help teachers navigate data to become actionable in supporting their equity student groups. To build self-efficacy, teachers need to experience choice, adapt their personal styles, and share ideas with each other to improve their practice over time (William, 2007). Teachers are aware they are supposed to look at data and believe, when done effectively, data can help them better serve their students. To improve teacher self-efficacy, teachers need on-going training covering how to access meaningful data, how to align instructional strategies with the data, how to differentiate instruction based on the data, and how to reinforce the learning beyond that one

lesson through ongoing measurement of learning. Additionally, learning to have critical discourse regarding inequities, historic disproportionality, and barriers to success while looking at patterns in multiple sets of data may help empower teachers and build their efficacy in improving outcomes for their underperforming student groups.

Another recommendation is to standardize the Collaborative Data Meeting Agenda Structure and Data Analysis Protocol to help build the efficacy of the facilitators of the meetings, so the collaborative data meetings have a clear purpose and outcomes. Skillful facilitation and intentionality are critical to move these meetings from compliance to instructionally useful. This also may mean systemically restructuring the learning week to build in a consistent time to meet with fidelity and to allow for prompt follow-up of instructional strategies, which would require changes to teacher schedules and dedicated time for data meetings. The structure would include facilitation from the ELD Chair, Equity Lead, and Special Education Chair on an ongoing basis. The agenda should provide interdisciplinary time to collaborate around data for the equity student groups to allow for optimal support through the students' school day, and not be reduced to isolated skills that do not appear to be transferrable.

The third recommendation is to create Curriculum and Assessment Audits specifically looking at math curricula to determine how to increase the amount of flexibility a teacher can have to truly address the learning needs of all students. This approach may need to be at a state level, as the state grade-level learning outcomes are assessed at the end of each year or course, leaving school districts to attempt to include all of these outcomes, regardless of where the students are ready to learn. Knowing that most students are falling well-below grade-level expectations, continuing to work through a fast-paced grade-level curriculum is irresponsible. For the other

contents, including math, auditing the required assessments to ensure teachers have enough timely and meaningful data is suggested.

Teachers need data to measure growth and not to reaffirm their students are below proficiency. This may be best developed as pre- and post-test models and should include teachers in the development. To begin, however, content teams should determine what existing data points are already meaningful and focus on growth rather than proficiency. In English language arts specifically, if the required quarterly assessments are not producing data that lead to meaningful discourse, perhaps allow teachers to bring their own assessment data for discussion. A recommendation of having a panel review all the required assessments, including those required as a part of the mandated curriculum, to determine which assessments produce actionable data, would allow teachers to modify instruction for their equity student groups, and determine what supplemental data should be looked at alongside the test data to provide a comprehensive look at student performance.

The final recommendation is to conduct an Audit for Equity Initiatives and Policies for the system. Fragmented efforts may not change the classroom and, in this study, nearly all teachers remained unaware of systemic efforts taken to improve achievement outcomes and equity goals. Looking deeply at potential implicit and pervasive deficit-minded practices that may exist in the current structures, specifically regarding the disaggregated analysis of test data, can help better increase the anti-deficit discourse (Patton Davis & Museus, 2019). Having a crosswalk of efforts to determine where the resources, goals, and plans intersect can more cohesively support all those responsible for improving outcomes for the equity student groups. Careful attention should be paid to determine the purpose of a set of data and whether it is intended to be an accountability

monitoring tool, or if it is meant to be an agile instructional data tool. Mixing the purpose of the data can contribute to its ineffective use. By allowing for more cohesion, the efforts can be more intentional and more effective at reducing the barriers to achievement long faced by the student groups.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research to further this study could include additional facilitation strategies for data discussions that allow for meaningful discourse, specific steps for implementing data and instructional strategies, and cycles that allow for reviewing evidence of effectiveness, including which data sets would best support the equity student groups. Discovering which instructional strategies and equity discourse practices could be used across contents to support students should also take priority.

Researching the impact of school districts' equity policies, district plans, and expectations, and how they translate into meaningful instructional practices they are intended to support is imperative. Along with this, future research should be conducted to study school and district leadership behaviors and practices used to support teachers using assessment data to address the gaps for their equity student groups in practice. With this research, we can help develop current and future educational administrators' implementation of these policies within their schools or districts.

Future research regarding the fixed grade-level learning outcomes and standards, specifically in mathematics, to determine if grade-level expectations are realistic should be done at the state, local, and national level to address current gaps in performance before and since COVID-19. The study could include determining the impact of standardized curriculum pacing and how the model of mandated curriculum and pacing impacts effective instruction. Future studies

investigating how teachers are gaining the skills necessary to implement any changes or modifications to instruction or curriculum, specific technical training needs on data analysis strategies, and access to data for teachers to support their equity student groups, are all relevant and timely to this topic of concern.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
www.marshall.edu

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

September 14, 2023

Chris Sochor, EdD, MA, BA
Leadership Studies - COEPD

RE: IRBNet ID# 2101947-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Sochor:

Protocol Title:	[2101947-1] AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHER USE OF ASSESSMENT DATA TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF EQUITY STUDENT GROUPS
Site Location:	MU
Submission Type:	New Project APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.104(d)(2), the above study was granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. No further submission (or closure) is required for an Exempt study **unless** there is an amendment to the study. All amendments must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

This study is for student Laurie Mazelin.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Lindsey Taylor at (304) 696-6322 or l.taylor@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director, Office of Research Integrity

Appendix B: District Approval Letter

[redacted]

Oxtober 3, 2023

Laurie Mazelin
[redacted]
Alexandria VA 22301

Dear Ms. Mazelin:

The review of your request to conduct the research entitled, "AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHER USE OF ASSESSMENT DATA TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF EQUITY STUDENT GROUPS" has been completed. Based on the examination, I am pleased to inform you that the [redacted] has granted authorization for you to proceed with your study.

This approval applies to the 2023-2024 school year. We reserve the right to withdraw approval at any time or decline to extend the approval if the implementation of your study adversely impacts any of the school district's activities. If you are not able to complete your data collection during this period, you must submit a request for an extension through the online tool located on our website. You will be required to submit a status report of your study, any changes to your procedures and methods, and all appropriate consent forms and instruments.

Prior to your data collection activities, you are required to secure written approval of the principals where you plan to recruit your research subjects. The Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study forms must be signed and forwarded to the Office of Research & Evaluation and a copy given to the respective principal. Regarding the recruitment materials please be aware that only approved copies (stamped 'APPROVED') can be distributed to your target subjects or distributed in schools from which you plan to recruit research subjects. The wording of the consent forms must be exactly as the version submitted to our office. Should you change the procedure or materials, any revisions must be approved by this office before being used in this study. Please be aware that participation in your project is on a strictly voluntary basis.

An abstract and one copy of your study's final report should be forwarded to the Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation within one month of successful completion of your study. Do not hesitate to contact the Research and Evaluation office if you have any questions. I wish you success with your study.

Best regards,

[redacted]
Supervisor, Office of Research & Evaluation

[redacted]

Appendix C: Teacher Data Utilization Interview Protocol

Perceptions of Classroom Teachers on Using Assessment Data Meetings to Address Equity Gaps

General Demographics

a. Grade-level(s) teaching:

b. Content teaching:

c. Years of experience teaching in K-12 public education setting:

RQ1: How do teachers define their role in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?

1. What is your role as a teacher in using test data to address the needs of all students?
2. What is your previous experience in using assessment data to inform instruction?
3. What are the expectations placed on you to use assessment data to address the needs of your equity student groups?

RQ2: What data-use strategies do teachers find most effective when using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?

1. When looking at assessment data, are there specific strategies you use to help you incorporate the data into your instructional practices?
2. How do you look at test data to help your equity student groups?
3. Do instructional strategies differ based on looking at assessment data for your EL, SWD, or other student groups? If so, how?

RQ3: What role do equity leads/data coaches play in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?

1. Do you work with an equity lead or data coach at your school? How and when does this support occur?
2. To what extent do equity lead or data coaches facilitate your use of assessment data to improve the academic performance of equity subgroups?
3. Are there other staff who support your efforts to use assessment data to improve instruction for your equity student groups?

RQ4: What are teachers' perceptions regarding the roles of collaborative data team meetings in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?

1. Describe your data collaboration meetings? Do you find the data team meetings helpful? If so why and if not, why not?
2. How do you use collaborative data team meetings to modify instruction?
3. Do these meetings help you address improving the performance of all students and specifically equity student groups? If so, how?

RQ5: To what extent do collaborative data team meetings affect teacher efficacy needed to raise the performance level of students in equity subgroups?

1. Does meeting collaboratively to discuss data help you feel more confident in addressing the needs of all your students?
2. Thinking of your last meeting discussing assessment data, can you recall how you felt about your ability to address gaps in performance as a result of the meeting?

RQ6: What challenges do teachers face in incorporating assessment data into their instructional practices?

3. What difficulties do you have as a teacher in using the test data discussed at collaborative data meetings?
4. What are some barriers you have in using data to inform instructional practices?
5. Has this changed since COVID-19? If so, how?
6. What has been the impact, if any, of COVID in using assessment data to inform instructional decisions?

Is there anything else that you would like to share on this topic?

Thank you so much for your time and willingness to be a part of this study.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Teacher Interview Protocol

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "*An Exploration of Teacher Use of Assessment Data to Improve Academic Achievement of Equity Student Groups*" designed to investigate teachers' navigation of the inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve the academic achievement of equity subgroups. Secondarily, the study will investigate the impact of data collaboration meetings in integrating the assessment data into classroom lessons. The study is being conducted by Laurie Mazelin from Marshall University and has been approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirements for Laurie Mazelin.

As a participant in this study, I ask that you agree to participate in a virtual semi-structured interview that should last approximately 60 minutes. During the interview, speech-to-text technology will be utilized to generate an accurate transcript for data analysis purposes for this doctoral study. The information gathered during this interview will be kept strictly confidential, and pseudonyms will be used for all participants.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time without penalty or prejudice. By participating in this interview, you affirm that you are over 18 years of age, and you consent to your responses being used in the doctoral study and resulting research paper. Please keep this page for your records and another copy will be kept by the researcher. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Chris Sochor at 304-696-3192, or Laurie Mazelin at 443-254-6068 or mazelin@marshall.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303.

_____

Participant Name (Printed)

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

_____

Person Obtaining Consent (Printed)

_____ _____

Person Obtaining Consent Signature Date

Appendix E: Recruiting Letter

My name is Laurie Mazelin, and I am both an employee of _____ and a current doctoral candidate student at Marshall University, College of Education and Professional Development. I am conducting a research study, *An Exploration of Teacher Use of Assessment Data to Improve Academic Achievement of Equity Student Groups*, under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Chris Sochor, and will explore the use of assessment data to improve teacher efficacy in improving the academic outcomes of equity student groups.

I am contacting you to request your participation in my dissertation research study which aims to investigate teachers' perspective on the inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve the academic achievement of equity sub-groups. Secondarily, the study will investigate the impact of data collaboration meetings on teacher confidence related to their perceived self-efficacy in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals.

Specifically, I am requesting your participation as an esteemed colleague, in a one-time semi-structured interview. This interview will focus on the topic of your experience in using assessment data. The interview will be conducted via videoconferencing (Zoom or Teams) and should require approximately 60 minutes of your time. Interviews will be recorded, and the recording will be destroyed after the interview transcription. Transcripts will be assigned a number, and the coded list of names will be retained on a password-protected digital file by the co-investigator. The study's success depends on the willingness of educators like you to share their perspectives and experiences.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to consider participating in this study. My expectation is that this study will help inform expectations and improve support on how to effectively integrate assessment data to address equity student group gaps in performance. A summary of the study's findings will be shared with all participants.

Please reply to this email and let me know if you are willing and available to participate. If so, I will respond with suggested time parameters for scheduling the interview.

Sincerely,

Laurie Mazelin, Co-Investigator

mazelin@marshall.edu {443 254-6068}

Appendix F: Letter of Support

[redacted]

September 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: Research Office External Evaluator
Department of Testing, Research, and Evaluation

FROM: [redacted]
Director of Equity, Diversity, and Belonging

RE: *"An Exploration of Teacher Use of Assessment Data To Improve Academic Achievement of Equity Student Groups"*

The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Belonging is pleased to support the implementation of the research study conducted by Primary Investigator Laurie Mazelin on the *"An Exploration of Teacher Use of Assessment Data To Improve Academic Achievement of Equity Student Groups"* research project through Marshall University, College of Education and Professional Development. We are providing this letter of support to confirm our approval of this effort.

This study aims to investigate teachers' inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve the academic achievement of equity sub-groups. Secondarily, the study will investigate the impact of data collaboration meetings on teacher confidence related to their perceived self-efficacy in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals. Given the current reported academic performance of equity student groups on state and district assessments and the challenges faced by public school educators in addressing the needs of all students in their classrooms, the researcher seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers define their role in using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?
2. What data use strategies do teachers find most effective when using assessment data to improve academic achievement and achieve equity goals?
3. What role do equity leads/data coaches play in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?
4. What are teachers' perceptions regarding the roles of collaborative data team meetings in facilitating the integration of assessment data into instruction?
5. To what extent do collaborative data team meetings affect teacher perceived efficacy in increasing the performance level of students in equity student groups?
6. What challenges do teachers face when incorporating assessment data into their instructional practices?
7. What are the differences, if any, based on selected attribute factors, in teachers' inclusion of assessment data into ongoing instructional decision-making to improve academic achievement of equity student groups?

Should the proposal be approved, we would support the recruitment of participants with the implementation of the research study in Fall 2023. We understand that [redacted] will incur zero costs associated with this research project and there will be no request or exchange of personally identifiable student or staff data as part of this project. Our district will allow Co-Investigator Laurie Mazelin to recruit 15-20 classroom teachers from schools to participate in this study.

We are excited at the prospect of this research study and increasing our district's knowledge of how to improve collaborative data discourse to advance the achievement of students in equity student groups.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Curriculum Vitae

Laurie Mazelin *Alexandria, VA*

Expertise

Literacy, grant management, equitable approaches, and adult practices, training and staff leadership development, cognitive coaching, adolescent & adult education, professional development, Title I & II, EL strategies, diversity training, program design, and systemic effectiveness.

Supervisor of Data Management and Reporting, Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation Public Schools, 2018-Present

- Coordinate the reporting of academic data to the state board of education, district executive leadership, district staff, and school-based leadership teams.
- Steward of state and local assessment data as used for strategic plan measures, school performance planning, resource allocation, curriculum planning, and professional development.
- Design training and professional development for various levels of stakeholders on using instructional data and improvement measures to improve student outcomes.
- Provide data reporting and guidance to Curriculum and Instruction, Employee Performance, School Staff, and other divisions such as HR, Title I, and Area Offices on the use of data to inform instructional and resource decisions.
- Oversee the building of data dashboards for school progress monitoring.
- Facilitate training and professional development on assessment literacy, data protocols, and assessment design grounded in equity.

Coordinator/Manager of Federal Grant Programs, Monroe County Board of Education - Key West, FL, 2016 to 2018

- Direct the department of federal programs, which include Title I, Title II, Title III, 21st Century Learning Centers, Title V, and Title IX-Part A.
- Manage program staff and provide technical training and support to schools.
- Manage federal and local budgets.
- Design equity-based training and professional development.
- Advise district policy and practices to align with ESEA requirements.

Federal Grant Reviewer, VARIOUS CONTRACTS**,** July 2008 to Present, 15 hours per week.

- Review Federal Grant applications based on given rigorous criteria using expertise on literacy, EL students, equity, and education.
- Projects include the Office of Head Start, Office of English Language Acquisition, Office of Secondary School Counseling, and Department of Justice.
- Verbally justify scores and collaborate with other panel members and chairpersons to compile scores for federal grant applications.

Supervisor of Assessment and Systemic Equity Leader, Baltimore County Schools Department of Research, Accountability & Assessment, 2010 to 2016

- Manage the implementation of predictive and summative assessments.
- Facilitate training and delivery of pertinent information to school-based administrators.

- Collaborate with various internal and external stakeholders, including the school board. Served as Alternate Local Accountability Coordinator.

Assessment Specialist-

- Provide any necessary support to schools in implementing state and federal mandates regarding testing and reporting.
- Present mandatory information to principals and school testing coordinators.
- Coordinate the online testing team, disseminate timely and accurate information to all necessary parties, and collaborate with other units to meet system goals.
- Attending conferences, workshops, and professional development.
- Keep timely deadlines, paperwork, and confidentiality. Served as Acting Director, LAC.

Adult Learning Facilitator

Loyola University, Adjunct Professor, August 2010 to March 2012, 10 hours per week

- Facilitate graduate courses in Innovations in Urban Education Reform.

The New Teacher Project (TNTP), Adolescent Literacy & Reading Language Arts Pedagogy Course Instructor/Instructor Mentor, 2008 to 2011, 10 hours per week

- Supervise a team of 5 instructors of Adolescent Literacy graduate level coursework.
- Provide coaching, mentoring, feedback, evaluations, support, and modeling of adult facilitation.
- Instruct adults for teaching certification through state licensure program.
- Mentor and train on the effective use of data to inform instruction.
- Explore topics such as instruction in vocabulary, motivation, assessment, data-driven instruction, etc.

Contract Curriculum Audits and Assessment Standard Alignments Connections Academy 2010 to 2018, 18-20 hours per week.

- Design course curriculum for online course based on research-based pedagogy, evidence-based strategies, and alignment to standards.
- Audit curriculum documents and resources to align assessments and lessons to state-specific standards.
- Find evidence of the effectiveness of lessons and texts in meeting the learning outcomes.

Urban Title I Middle School Teacher Baltimore City Schools 2006 to 2010, Los Angeles Unified School District 2002 to 2006

Education

- Ed.D. In Leadership Studies, School of Professional Development and Education, Marshall University. Anticipated program completion 2024. Dissertation: *An Exploration of Teacher Perception and Practices of Using Assessment Data to Improve Achievement of Equity Student Groups*
- Administrator Certification Program for Educational Leadership in Rapidly Changing Populations, Goucher College, 2016
- M.A. in Literacy Education/ Reading Specialist, Loyola University, 2009
- B.A. in Social Science/Secondary Education, Long Island University, 1998
- A.A.S in Liberal Arts Suffolk Community College, 1995