

# USING DATA FOR EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM



## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DATA USE

It is important to dispel some common myths that are alive and well in many schools because these misconceptions often discourage teachers from using data.



### **Data can drive.**

Data can provide very useful information that can inform instructional improvement, but data don't drive. Data do not tell teachers what to do differently in the classroom, and looking at data alone will not improve teaching and learning. Rather, data use needs to be part of a broader process of inquiry that supports teachers to engage in professional learning.



### **Data supersede teacher judgment.**

Data are meant to support teachers' judgment, not be a substitute for it. Teachers' deep knowledge and professional wisdom are integral to making sense of data and using it in thoughtful ways.



### **Data use is limited to externally validated assessments, typically in the form of quantitative results.**

These data are often seen as less meaningful for teachers, and for good reason, as they feel disconnected from daily practice. We believe that all information that pertains to student learning counts as "data" and is critical in informing instruction.



### **Data use and accountability must be linked.**

Although accountability is an inevitable part of life in schools, it should not be the driver of data use. In fact, a focus on accountability leads to mistrust and an orientation toward compliance rather than a focus on learning.



### **The goal of data use is to identify struggling students.**

Although using data can reveal information about students who need additional support, this is not the sole purpose of data use. Data use should support the learning of all students, not just a select few.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DATA USE?

In many schools, it is defined as using data from standardized assessments, including benchmark assessments, to target students for instructional remediation, make quick decisions about which topics need more coverage, or place students into classes or groups. These limited definitions, focused on meeting accountability mandates, often don't produce the intended improvements in student learning. They also work against equity goals.

**Our definition of data use is wider and involves a process of deep inquiry in which information on student learning, broadly speaking, is part of a conversation about instructional improvement and driven by the goals of equity and excellence.**



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Datnow and Park are coauthors of *Data Driven Leadership* (2014) and *Professional Collaboration with Purpose: Teacher Learning for Equitable and Excellent Schools* (2019) as well as research articles and policy briefs on data use.

This has been a sampling of the content from the full Quick Reference Guide (QRG), *Using Data for Equity in the Classroom* by Amanda Datnow & Vicki Park.

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