No Teacher Left Behind: Achieving District, Student and Teacher Success

In education, districts are superior at putting together action plans around achievement. They even set targets and measure their progress towards these goals, but do they really have a blueprint for student success? Can everybody in the district, from the superintendent to the student say consistently and concretely what is essential for students to know, point to examples where students have demonstrated mastery, and identify which are the best strategies to help students get to mastery? Without understanding the impact that specific teaching strategies have on student performance, districts are left with many unanswered questions. If teachers are to make every child successful, then districts need to ensure that no teacher is left behind. According to research on increasing achievement, the key to student success is applying good teaching practices with the right students at the right time. It’s good instruction!

For example, having the right curriculum aligned to rigorous standards, integrated with solid academic practice, and daily, accurate assessment of student progress is good instruction. To increase the impact of teacher practice on student achievement consistently and predictably, districts need new data about instruction. Specifically, districts need data analytic systems that combine the analysis of instructional quality with student achievement data into a comprehensive picture of instruction. Districts lacking these systems resort to manual efforts to classroom observations that provide limited, anecdotal evidence about teacher practice but have no relationship to student results. Without a system that analyzes the connections between teaching strategies and learning data, districts are unable accurately assess the impact and effectiveness of specific teaching strategies on student performance.

District efforts to become more instructionally effective and increase predictability of student achievement must also integrate a solution that combines systems with professional development. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are the three primary functions that comprise a district’s competency. However, the management of these functions is often placed on the teacher to integrate into the classroom. By assimilating a Web-based analytic system, districts would be able to manage the primary functions more proficiently and establish a coherent strategy for leveraging their investments and efforts in one area to inform other parts of the organization.

In this age of information, data is king and in the scramble to understand student performance, benchmark testing has become the primary method of assessment. But what are we actually assessing through testing? Most assessments or external tests are designed to determine whether students have grasped the content at a given point in time, but it’s not a sufficient measure of whether students mastered the curriculum.

What if teachers had a comprehensive profile on student performance that combined their results on multiple assessments into a single picture? Capturing and analyzing multiple measures of student performance from traditional testing and grading to performance-based tasks that allow students to demonstrate what they know in different and appropriate ways would provide teachers and administrators with more data points to understand student mastery more comprehensively than a single test or grade can provide. Having the tools to analyze the actual instructional strategies that teachers use within the classroom will enable them to understand how their strategies measure up against research and to evaluate the impact they are having on different groups of students in the classroom. By implementing an analytic system combined with best practices, teachers can close the feedback loop by focusing their efforts on what is most appropriate for the different needs of their students, while also giving teachers the voice in the process peer review and collaboration.

This session lead by industry expert, Eric Doctor, Edgenuity’s president and CEO will explore the blend of technology and best practices that support teacher leadership efforts and the guidance districts need to pinpoint the instructional strategies that are having an impact on student outcomes.