



## SESSION 3: USING DATA EFFECTIVELY

**Moderator:** *Karen Baroody – Managing Director, Education Resource Strategies*

**Panelists:**

- *Karen Alexander – Principal, Denver Public Schools*
- *John Maycock – Chief Growth Officer, Achievement Network*
- *Liz Dozier – Principal, Fenger High School, Chicago Public Schools*
- *Gary Robichaux – Executive Director, ReNEW CMO*

“We drown our teachers in data, but we don’t teach them how to garner any information from those data sources. We just wind up really overwhelming them,” said Liz Dozier, principal of Fenger High School in Chicago. “How do we become not just *data* rich, but *information* rich?”

Dozier and the other panelists addressed the question: How do you use data effectively to inform instruction? How do you organize people and time? What assessment systems do you use to generate the data, and what kind of actions do you take with the data? What kind of systems, training and support for teachers and principals, and resources do you get from your central organization?

### How do you use data effectively to inform instruction in your school or organization?

**Achievement Network: John Maycock**

Achievement Network is a national nonprofit partner organization that operates networks in eight cities. Their approach is to get schools the right data and help them use it effectively. Data drives both whole-class instruction and intervention time. Data is used to funnel targeted

instruction into tutoring that might otherwise have been general homework help. ReNEW in New Orleans is one of their partners.

*Taking the hassle out of logistics for the school.* ReNEW provides schools with interim assessments that schools administer 4-5 times a year; ReNEW turns around the data in 48 hours on an online platform where schools can compare themselves with other schools and see what’s working.

*Networking.* They’re trying to create a network with both charter and district schools – everyone has the same questions. They convene teachers and leaders around best practices.

*Leadership levers and teacher action rubric.* “You’ve got to have four to five people at any school who really lead and drive this work. And if you can build their capacity to lead the work successfully, they can support their teachers in execution,” Maycock said. The rubric on best practices enables leaders to monitor and support their teachers. Coaches (former “rock star” teachers) work with the leadership team in each school and do training around best practices garnered from research and partners.

*Professional development supports* include common planning time; a structured protocol to help teachers understand the standards before they teach them; data days: 3-plus hours in every school to share data, create action plans, compare re-teaching strategies; reflection meeting: after teachers re-teach, they come back and discuss: Did it work? How do you know?

*To get schools to truly improve,* “not only do you need the right data to inform instruction; you also need to have a relentless focus on management and execution. We’ve seen that this is the difference between schools with pockets of excellence and

schools having all of their staff use data effectively to inform instruction and increase student achievement."

### **Finger High School, Chicago: Liz Dozier**

Finger HS is one of three turnaround schools in the district, supported by the Office of School Improvement, which serves as a research source for strategy and supports for the school. They just started their third year of turnaround. They attribute their good results to effective use of data on the ground with teachers, using four main strategies:

- *Structures, common language, alignment across the school.* FHS has 850 students, but these structures are happening across the turnaround schools, which serve thousands of students.
  - *Block scheduling.* 90 minutes of instruction per class period – that’s a big deal in Chicago, which has one of the shortest school days and, historically, seven 45-minute periods. Every Wednesday there are 100 minutes of professional development time.
  - *Horizontal and vertical planning time is built into the schedule.* Looking at data, like student work and assessment data – not just course teams at grade level, but also weekly department meetings in math, science, English, reading – allow teachers to dive deeply into what’s happening with individual students.
  - *Protocols.* Everyone in the building uses protocols to stay on the same rhythm, looking at data in 10-week cycles. They track what’s happening in academic department teams and course teams: how are people

planning intentionally around student deficits?

- *Reorganization of the sequence.* The Office of School Improvement has some of the lowest-performing schools in the city – students were coming in four or five grade levels behind. They reorganized and redesigned the CPS course sequence. Freshman take 90 minutes each of math, reading – more concentrated blocks based on what they need, not on what the larger organization says they should take. Reading and writing, where students are really struggling, is a focus across the curriculum.
- *Teacher leaders are leading the work.* What is crucial is “building teacher leaders,” says Dozier. “Some people argue with me on this – they say the principal is the instructional leader. That’s true, the principal is the guide, but in terms of making this work at scale, it can’t just be a one-man band or a one-woman band. It has to be a collection of folks who are really highly trained and skilled.”
- *Tools for data analysis.* The district uses CIM – you can input not only your assessment data, but also teacher-created assessments and attach lessons to specific skill units. It’s online and real-time and makes things more doable.
- *Support of the work.* They have weekly coaching visits. They had a team of coaches in the first year but didn’t have a way to manage the work, so they created a log – similar to the Danielson model, but Chicago’s own homegrown version – that tracks what goes on in those coaching conversations so the leadership team can help teachers make better decisions – which trickles down to what students need. Because the work is often

difficult in this turnaround environment, you have turnover – but when a person leaves, the log helps to keep all the knowledge from going with them. There is also a suite of online videos of what great teaching looks like – all in-house, coming from teachers who are actually in the turnaround network.

### **ReNEW: Gary Robichaux**

ReNEW is a new charter organization in New Orleans that has been around for a year and is now running five schools under the Achievement Network. Robichaux was part of the New Orleans system before the major reform effort and thought it was a total mess – it’s been a major turnaround for the city. 80% of the schools are now charter; all schools are under the policies that govern charters – there are a lot of freedoms. ReNew was formed because there was no organization that was willing to entirely take over the lowest-performing schools.

*Focus on college readiness.* One unique thing is that ReNEW always looks at college readiness. There’s already a ton of data out there, and the state and NAEP have their own accountability system, so they keep it simple -- how many kids are college ready? In the two schools they took over last year, only 15-18% of the kids were college ready. After the first year they got about 42-45% college ready; the second-year goal was to get over 60% college ready. You can’t do that without looking at data.

*Structure.* Achievement Network gives them lots of structure. They create benchmarks, provide a scope and sequence of the state’s grade-level expectations (“GLEs”), or standards, and developed a third-party test. ReNEW gives the benchmarks every six weeks. They take a full 8-hour day – “data day” – to reflect on the data. How many kids are college ready, approaching college ready, not college ready? It all lines up with RTI tiers. Then they come up with a plan for how to re-teach the GLE the students didn’t master.

*A new approach to the school calendar.* The complicated part is to find the time to re-teach and how to get the kids in groups. A lot of teachers had many kids behind by 4–8 grade levels. This year they began the “45-15” calendar. The school year starts in July, goes 45 days, then they take 3 weeks “intersession” – mandatory for kids who are not college ready or approaching CR, to re-teach GLEs they didn’t master; optional for teachers. The CR kids can come to creative arts camp, band, sports. The teachers are given scripted lessons for the exact skills that the kids didn’t master.

### **Denver Public Schools: Karen Alexander**

Alexander’s school, Collegiate Prep Academy, is a new campus, part of the turnaround in Denver. The entering students didn’t have any data, the staff was all new, meeting new students. So they had to use last year’s data and set up a data system from scratch to ensure: Are the students learning?

*A culture of accountability and high expectations.* How do you address the standards kids don’t know, in addition to continuing instruction, and where do you start? They gathered data, starting with CSAT (Colorado’s assessment) – 70% of kids got the lowest rating. They decided to address culture first and made the rule that a student had to get 80% or else go to tutorials. Kids were not used to learning in a structured way – and if you didn’t make the grade, you had to come to tutorial. A lot of it started with work completion. It took the first six weeks for the kids to learn that you can’t just come to school, do a minimum of work, and leave.

*Focus on mastery.* Blueprint provided benchmarks in August. On assessment day they compared where students were with CSATs and with the benchmark. Reading scores were low – they knew they had to address reading, writing, and literacy. They went back to their scheduling – which was traditional, 7 periods, but they also included two

extra periods – literacy and math. The students are accountable for: What am I doing today? What do I need to know when I leave this class? Students are constantly asked to show their data books and if they are not where they should be, to discuss why. Teachers are required to have data sheets. They are accountable for knowing whether students mastered the material and if not, planning next steps. After school and Saturday school have been successful – if progress is not where it should be, kids are automatically enrolled in Saturday school – the school follows up with parents and makes sure the kids get there. Everything is linked to what students are expected to know. It gets reinforced every day that they are college bound.

*Teacher collaboration.* Common planning periods are set up by content areas and by team, with discussions about student data. Professional development every Wednesday aims to identify and help any teachers that are struggling. Materials are based on non-mastery. Once students know they were coming to tutorial, data analysis teams – teachers and teacher leaders – discuss how to group them, and how to look at data as a school and make sure everyone is moving together toward the same goal: student academic achievement. Team structure is important. Teacher leaders are prepared – they do extra planning, talk about the data team, plan and facilitate lessons each week.

### **How much support does the school get from the central office or organization, vs. what is developed at the school level?**

Alexander: Blueprint provides us with a lot of support – assessments are set up, we get them back, then we analyze them on data days and plan next steps. Robichaux: Achievement Network gives us the scope, sequence and tests. They give us lots of training and support about how to re-teach, how to support students.

### **What is the biggest barrier to effective use of data?**

*Time.* Robichaux and Alexander: Time – for reflection, for teachers to re-teach.

*A lack of understanding of rigor.* Dozier: We have built time into structures, so it's not as much of a problem. Now it's the rigor level. A bump in test scores made us think we were victorious, but then we flat-lined last year. "For us, now, it's really getting folks to understand what rigor is. Rigor is not just giving the kids more work or more worksheets. It's at that fundamental level of critical thinking." It's a challenge, if not a barrier.

*Management and training.* Maycock: Once you figure out the time piece, the biggest barrier is management and training. Every school has pockets of excellence where a few teachers can do this work really well, but the challenge is getting every teacher in the school to do this well. "It takes a tremendous amount of training. You have to get teacher leaders involved. You have to have a bottoms-up approach as well as top-down." But then it's management – fitting into the larger school improvement strategy and not having it be something extra. A lot of times you have a quick fix and some people will do it well but you have to have that structure in place for the entire school to do it well.

*Scale.* Karen Hawley Miles: Scale is a challenge: you've got some teachers that know the protocol, know how to do it, then a few schools keep doing it for a few years, but then a new protocol comes along – most people figure out it's the same thing but not always – how do you make sure it's not just pockets of folks in the initial training and make it a part of the ongoing thing you're doing?

*"Part of what we do" vs. "something extra."* Zone Superintendent: We dipped every school in data-wise – some of it stuck, some not. If we didn't connect it to a belief, a strong understanding of why they're doing it – you're just doing "data

logs,” you’re not getting it. Do I know what I’m assessing, why, what data I need to pull out, and how that drives intervention tiers and instruction? We need ongoing professional development to help folks gain an understanding of “data literacy.” Maycock: We get in trouble when we think of our work as a separate program – you only get systemic change when it becomes “what we do – what great organizations do.” Dozier: Assessment days are about students, not just something extra. Was my instruction on target? If not, what do I do differently?

### **How does all this fit into the evaluation of teacher performance?**

*Multiple factors used.* Robichaux: Data includes a lot of observations to make decisions like firing a teacher -- we do have a value-added component to evaluation. State data does have money that’s attached to it. We use that data to make decisions about teachers. We use a TIF grant – that has a value-added incentive bonus. Dozier: Informally, we use coaching logs to look at what’s happening, especially in turnaround schools. Alexander: evaluation includes observations on student engagement and how that impacts learning.

*Don’t mix formative and evaluative assessments.*

Maycock: In professional development leaders can review data on struggling teachers – those outcomes can inform classroom observations. Different assessments have different purposes. We’re in the business of assessments to drive instruction and teacher improvement. You have to be careful about the messaging. State data is for teacher evaluation. It’s a major culture shift to open an honest lens into the classroom – you can’t have one assessment do everything.