

Data: Putting the Pieces Together

Today, many principals are feeling the pressure of introducing multiple, new assessment and evaluation processes in their schools. The data—resulting from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative and teacher and principal evaluations, to start—can seem like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that must be ordered in a way that feels cohesive, and then ultimately benefits children. New York principal Lucille McAssey likens the atmosphere to “a perfect storm”—a trifecta of new systems. Finding the silver lining, however, involves getting past what she calls “the negative perceptions of the standards and assessments reform agenda” in order to “focus on the positive aspects” of change. This issue of *Principal* explores how school leaders can bring data pieces together for positive outcomes.

Linda Darling-Hammond opens the conversation with a discussion of the significance of Common Core Standards, arguing that they represent a “critical juncture” in achieving 21st century standards for learning. The CCSS and assessments, she writes, will also support better teaching.

But CCSS represents only one piece of the data jigsaw puzzle. Author Lucille McAssey notes in her article, “Common Core Assessments: A Principal’s View,” that schools aren’t introducing the new standards—and their accompanying assessments—in a vacuum. Many schools are also experimenting with new teacher and principal evaluations systems at the same time. McAssey recommends that principals manage the pieces by leading with a growth mindset, encouraging students and staff alike to be open to change.

Authors Joseph Murphy, Ellen Goldring, and Andrew Porter address another large piece of the data puzzle: principal evaluation. In “Principal Evaluation Takes Center Stage,” the authors argue that achievement data is largely misused, and that “more common sense and less bombast needs to be brought to the issue.” Murphy and his co-authors conclude that principals should make use of their voices in evaluation systems. Pennsylvania principal Jacie Maslyk does just that in her article, “Take Charge of Principal Evaluations,” offering principals sage advice on maximizing their own evaluation experiences.

Rounding out this section on data and evaluations, NAESP’s 2013 National Distinguished Principals provide insight on teacher evaluations, offering time-management tips on everything from using tools to scheduling to delegating. This article is meant to be especially useful for early career principals.

This issue also includes the third installment of the yearlong Building Bridges series, which focuses on supports for English-language learners (ELLs). In it, Ivannia Soto explains ELL shadowing, which allows teachers to observe the classroom experiences of ELLs to gain a true snapshot of their learning day.

As is our custom, we have also included articles that are of perennial interest to principals: bullying prevention, novel approaches to instructional leadership, nurturing parent relationships, and understanding education law. As you reflect on your practice this New Year, feel free to let us know what you think about the topics addressed in this issue.

—Kaylen Tucker

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