Data Wise: A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning

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In Data Wise: A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning, editors Boudett, City, and Murnane introduce a process for assessment data use. The process is organized around eight distinct activities that fall into three general categories:

- **Prepare**: Organize for collaborative work and build assessment literacy;
- **Inquire**: Create a data overview, dig into student data, and examine instruction; and
- **Act**: Develop an action plan, plan to assess progress, and act and assess.

While the chapters are written by several authors, they all use the framework of the model to link concepts together. For example, authors of the “Examining Instruction” chapter build on the previous discussion about the “learning problem” a school might have identified, writing: “The learning problem you have articulated by this step of the improvement cycle is a complicated problem—if it were an easy one, you would have solved it by now.” They then go on to suggest that the learning problem should be reframed as a “problem of practice.” In other words, how can teaching help address this problem? Four guiding questions are provided to help with this:

- With this particular learning problem, how does instruction impact what students learn?
- How do we look at instructional data?
- What does effective instruction for our learning problem look like and what makes it effective?
- What is actually happening in the classroom in terms of the learning problem, and how does it relate to our understanding of effective practice?

The editors stress that the process is intended to be cyclical. Once schools learn from and act on assessment results, they should cycle back to ask additional questions. However, the book is intentionally designed so individual chapters, each of which focuses on one of the eight activities, can stand alone. It could also be used to support a yearlong focus for a school staff wanting to hone their data-use skills.

A strength of this book is its use of real-life examples to demonstrate the elements of the process. A companion volume—Data Wise in Action: Stories of Schools Using Data to Improve Teaching and Learning—expands on the discussion of Data Wise in practice. It uses case studies from eight schools to demonstrate the use of the Data Wise process of using assessment results to improve teaching and learning.