Perspectives on Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The Data Sharing Project (DSP) is improving student services and outcomes by providing critical evaluation and continuous improvement support. The DSP identifies local best practices to support student success, and provides a streamlined, secure tool for community agencies and schools to work with student data.

The DSP's secure web platform provides a central repository to access and track student and program data. This platform is a valuable tool for partner agencies, through which staff can view and access live, student-level, school system data (such as academic performance, attendance, and discipline) about children enrolled in their programs. This approach provides insight into student experience and an opportunity to dive deeper and examine processes and social factors that contribute to student success. Staff assist partner agencies with understanding data and answering key questions with rigor, distilling insights into actionable continuous improvement plans with key performance indicators and attainable goals.

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Types of Service

The Data Sharing Project (DSP) provides many tools and services to support and promote continuous improvement. These types of services include research support, evaluation services, technical assistance, case management tools, data support and education, and COVID-19 response resources for our partners and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School (WS/FCS) district. The following sections provide examples of activities included in each area and a specific example of the work we have done in the past or have planned for the current year:

Research

General Activities

- develop, implement, and report on identified research proposals
- provide statistical supports around univariate, multivariate, non-parametric designed, and statistical modeling
- experimental and quasi-experimental design
- post hoc matched sampling (i.e. propensity score matching)
- reporting research results to key stakeholders to drive program improvements
- reporting research results to community members

Example: Crosby Scholars National Student Clearinghouse Research Report

National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) works within education systems to provide data on college enrollment and completion. The data and research led by NSC is meant to support educators and policymakers with educational insights about college enrollment, mobility, completion. While this is an important tool, the data it provides is not user friendly. The DSP team reverse-engineered these reports to determine the specific calculations for this report, and **shared disaggregated data to Crosby Scholars to examine trends in their student's college enrollment and completion from 2012 to 2019.** Examples of information shared include post-secondary enrollment in Fall following high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment within first year after high school graduation, enrollment within two years after high school graduation, as well as college/university graduation statistics by high school class and degree type for Crosby Scholars participants.

Evaluation

"Evaluation is a systematic approach of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy." (Weiss, 1998; ch.1, pg.5)

General Activities

- formative and summative evaluation
- developing, implementing, and reporting on evaluation plans
- creation and validation of assessments and data collection instruments (surveys, attendance tracking, focus groups, etc.)
- reporting evaluation results to key stakeholders to drive program improvements
- reporting evaluation results to community members

Example: WS/FCS Jump Start 2020 (previously RISE)

The Jump Start 2020 summer program is a WS/FCS project focusing on improving academic outcomes for students. This project is different from other DSP participants in that it is a district wide initiative. The DSP team has provided reporting to Jump Start for 2017, 2018, and 2019. This work enabled the WS/FCS district to understand that the summer school programming did have a statistically significant impact on students for 2018 and 2019. The DSP also explored the long-term program impact. To achieve that goal, a longitudinal study was carried out to follow students attending the 2017 summer program and how their EOG scores changed from one year to another. **We found that Jump Start saw significantly improved EOG reading scores from 2017 to 2019.**

Technical Assistance

General Activities

- provide training and workshop material for SAS, SAS eg, SPSS, R, Excel, logic models, Theory of Action, continuous improvement tools, etc.
- consultation for schools and community agencies around process improvement, research, evaluation, measurement, instrument design, and instrument validation

Example: Access Database training

For the 2020-21 school year, the DSP team will provide Access Database import training to integrate a batch import of mid- and end-of-year reporting into Crosby Scholar's Access database. **The introduction of this training for Crosby Scholars staff will save approximately 300 staff hours that were previously spent manually entering data points each semester.** This will improve the accuracy of data in their records and build capacity for a program that serves thousands of WS/FCS students.

Case Management

General Activities

- data system access provides real-time access to individual student data in one place.
- attendance tracking
- group roster management
- electronic document capture (ex. parent consent)
- secure file sharing

Example: Student Data Dashboards

In our pilot year, YWCA Best Choice Center inspired the creation of a student dashboard view within the data system as a helpful case management tool - this is now available to all of our sites through our DSP platform. **This student dashboard provides a live snapshot view of student marks, attendance, discipline, EOC/EOG testing, as well as basic demographic information.**

Data Support and Education

General Activities

- provide student-level data and reports on WS/FCS data as well as collected data
- provide aggregate-level data and reports on WS/FCS data as well as collected data
- Create processes for automated data cleaning and reporting
- Create and analyze longitudinal data sets
- clean, manage, and collect data for reporting and analysis

Example: Data Outputs

In the Spring of 2020, DSP delivered 270 data reports, across 7 partners, serving over 11,000 WS/FCS students. These reports are used by partners in many ways, the primary use being case management, funding or grant applications, and reporting. The DSP team also provides data education surrounding school system information that agencies use in their continuous improvement plans.

COVID-19 Response: Adaptable Program Focus

Canvas Engagement Reports

The WS/FCS district has chosen to use the 'Canvas' Learning Management System for the 2020-2021 school year. Teachers from K-12th grade have set up individual virtual classrooms and all instruction is required to go through Canvas. With this centralized learning system, we can track student activity and inactivity and can identify levels of activity of every student. **The DSP evaluation team has worked in partnership with WS/FCS to create Canvas reports to assist schools with tracking e-learning engagement at the district, school, and student level**.

From September 2020 through January 2021, principals were provided with weekly 'Student Engagement Reports,' which include:

- 'Student Activity by Student' denotes which students are inactive in ALL their courses
- 'Student Activity by Course' lists all of the courses for a given student and indicates participation in each course
- 'Percent Activity by Student' indicates the overall percent of courses in which a student is participating (for 6th-12th grade) and summarizes the count and percent of students Inactive in all Courses, disaggregated by race, gender, grade level, and school.

Using these reports, school administrators can determine who needs support from the CARES team at their school. These reports are also being shared with DSP community partners to engage students who may not be logging into e-learning or may have low levels of activity.

Project Example: YWCA Best Choice Center Afterschool Program

Overview

YWCA Best Choice Center (BCC) is in their 4th year of partnership with the Data Sharing Project (DSP). They use the DSP software for attendance tracking, case management, and report delivery. They have completed cycles of continuous improvement using data for program improvement. The DSP team is following students to identify the long-term impact of their services. **Results of the annual evaluation plans suggest that students who attend the BCC Afterschool program have better academic outcomes and school attendance than their peers** and provide a supportive culture for the student's families.

Our work together has resulted in the intentional shift in BCC hiring certified teachers for their programing, identifying case management approaches to best support their students (managing tardies and absences in school), and the development of a parent engagement framework that the DSP team plans to build upon with other DSP partners.

Timeline

2017-18 School Year

BCC focused on outcomes data in the first year to look at the impact of the program on academics. The DSP team planned a three-year impact evaluation, examining students who return year-over-year. The DSP team examined the after-school tutoring impact on marks, discipline, attendance, and DIBELS, by race and grade from the first quarter to the last quarter compared to their peers as well as accounting for program attendance. The findings from this first year are highlighted below:

- School attendance is important (tardies specifically) and something to watch closely with case management.
- BCC did not see the impact they were hoping for with grades so they made the decision to hire certified teachers and worked to align services with the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools pacing guides for tutoring with students.
- The first year of evaluation found that students who went to BCC had better attendance than a comparison group of their peers.

2018-19 School Year

In year two, the same evaluation questions were addressed, as well as the addition of a parent engagement component. The findings from year two are highlighted below:

- There is some evidence that the decision to hire certified teachers for the 18-19 program year resulted in better academic outcomes.
- Parent Focus Groups were hosted to get feedback on programming at BCC. Through analysis of these conversations it was discovered that both students and their families received benefits from participation in the program. This model will be used by DSP to assist other agencies with goals of increasing parent engagement.

2019-20 School Year

In year three, the longitudinal view of returning students was scheduled to be complete. Due to COVID-19, this has been shifted to the 2020-21 school year (*availability of data permitting*). However, the parent engagement work continued:

- Parent voice "culture of support" framework was created for agency use in reporting
- Caregivers/parents felt supported by staff members and felt that their children are treated like family. This finding from this survey are in line with the 2018-2019 parent focus groups as well as staff focus groups carried out Spring of 2020

2020-21 School Year

In the wake of COVID-19, DSP provided weekly Student engagement reports for BCC to provide live case management support for students who are not actively engaged with remote learning. Plans are evolving to continue Parent Voice work with the hope of convening a parent focus group in late Spring or early summer of 2021.

COVID-19 Post Note

Due to COVID-19 and EOG Assessment changes, this iteration of our longitudinal project was not able to be completed in 19-20. As of February 2021, the designed study will not be carried forward to 20-21. Although we were unable to complete this phase of the project for BCC, results from year 1 and year 2 are still being utilized to guide process and program improvements moving forward, and a new evaluation plan is in development. This learning and knowledge will be carried forward for this and other DSP projects.

Note on Data Availability for longitudinal view on EOG assessments - The curriculum for EOG Math changed in 2018-2019 and EOG Reading changed in 2019-2020. Once the curriculum changes, EOG scores are NOT comparable to previous years. These changes impacted evaluation results. A longitudinal study using years before the changes took place will not be possible. Plans to shift and continue this work are being discussed with all DSP agencies.