

Why Use Data? Activity

Time Needed

20 minutes

Purpose

This activity can be used as an opening exercise that helps staff create a personal context for why achievement and other data is useful.

Directions

Print the following statements in large bold letters on strips of chart paper: Also print the words “Extrinsic and Intrinsic”*.

- To reward and strengthen teachers’ own feelings of success/efficacy
- To satisfy our own drive for excellence
- To demonstrate our belief that we can do a better job helping kids succeed
- To test the assumptions we make about students and their performance
- To be more focused and less fragmented
- To be more objective in decision-making
- To be able to incorporate authentic/performance assessments, not just standardized tests
- To keep us from wasting time and money on things that don’t work or don’t matter
- To present a more complete picture of the school to our community
- To help us get the “big picture” of our school
- To be proactive in reporting to stakeholders
- To prove we’re not afraid of feedback
- To counter negative/inaccurate media coverage
- To answer community questions related to comparison with other schools
- To give the community a “big picture” view of our school

Tell staff their job in this activity is to tell others “where to go”. Here’s how it works:

1. Ask for two staff members who are willing to accept completely menial tasks and leave more tasks for others - give these two people the “extrinsic” or “intrinsic” signs and have them stand across the room from each other.
2. Copy the above statements on large strips of paper and pass them out randomly to staff members. Be sure to tell them that these statements come from other teachers.
3. Ask each statement holder to stand up and read the statement.
4. Ask the full staff to decide if this reason for using data is an intrinsic or extrinsic motivation for using data.
5. Tell staff to yell out where the statement holder should go and have them stand by the people holding “intrinsic” and” “extrinsic” signs. Encourage rowdiness!
6. After all statements are placed along the continuum, have the remaining staff use applause to tell how much personal motivation each of the items provides. In other words, if “To prove we’re not

afraid of feedback”, provides no personal motivation for most people there would be very little clapping (booing and hissing is okay though).

7. Conclude by briefly commenting on the importance of the statements that were validated by applause. Ask the group members to get a mental picture of their colleagues holding these words and remember that these are the real reasons they will be working with data.

* Extrinsic = externally motivated. Intrinsic = internally motivated.

Adapted from “The “Live” Motivation Continuum.” Holcomb, E.L. (2004) Getting Excited About Data (2nd Ed.): Combining People, Passion and Proof to Maximize Student Achievement. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.