

10 Steps to effective evidence-based practices in your school: part 2

Michael Tunks discusses how make best use of collected data to effect change



Fig 1. Concentrating your efforts

In the Term 1 2011 issue of *Education Today* we discussed the first five steps required to make full use of the data that you might have gathered in your school:

- 1 Agreed criteria for naming and categorising problem behaviours
- 2 Data collection processes
- 3 Data collation
- 4 Using data to identify problems
- 5 Precision statements about identified problems.

In this second part, we suggest how to make the best use of the data you have collected.

6 Using data for decision-making

Beyond identifying problem areas (Step 4) data can be used to aid the decision making process. In the US, PBL exponents talk about the Big 5 in Behaviour Data:

Referrals by – problem behavior, location, time, student and perceived motivation.

A typical scenario: Your data has shown a problem with Year 5 girls in the lunch seat area. Drilling down you should be able to identify specific classes and individual students so the problem can be pinpointed to specific students involved. You can then decide what to do about it. Whether it is a few students or a large number, your solution strategies will be informed by the data.

Longitudinal data (over a period of time) will also show the effectiveness of implemented strategies. By comparing data across a period of time (month, term, semester etc.) you will see if improvements are occurring.

One problem solving strategy I still see in use in schools is at a school assembly where the entire student body is harangued over a particular behaviour problem. This is analogous to having a fire in a storeroom and the firefighters spraying water over the entire building instead of concentrating their efforts on the source of the blaze.

Did you know that when you catch a plane from point A to point B much of the time the plane is actually off course? The navigation systems are constantly taking in new data and correcting the plane's trajectory to ensure its arrival at the correct destination. Similarly, schools will use data to continually refine and refocus strategies to move towards desired outcomes.

7 Effective meeting procedures and follow-up practices

TIPS stands for Team Initiated Problem Solving and provides a set of standard meeting practices to increase effectiveness of meetings and reduce time and workload pressures on staff. You can find out more about TIPS at www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources.

The summary points are:

- Have a regular and set meeting time and location
- Identify and allocate roles for participants – facilitator, data analyst, recorder
- Record decisions
- Follow-up processes in place to implement decisions
- Precision statements about behavior (see Step 5)
- Evidence-based discussions – avoid generalisations and assumptions
- Evaluate the meeting and continually improve processes

8 Reporting data to parents

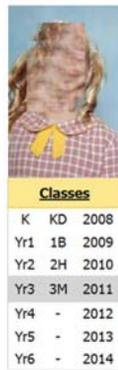
Discussing behaviour issues with parents can be difficult so you'll want to have evidence-based discussions. Ideally, you'll be able to use your data collection system in the discussion to show parents the various issues of concern and details such as dates, what happened and what action was taken.

This discussion time is also a perfect time to collect more information about the student. This information may increase your understanding of the student's behavior and help to develop more appropriate strategies. This information should be entered into your data system.

9 Training staff in data collection practices

Implementing a data collection process and developing shared understandings amongst staff will take time. We have found the following strategies to be effective:

- Have a third party introduce the new processes to staff and be ready for the common questions and comments such as "This looks like a lot of extra work." "How secure is the data?" and "How accurate will our data be?" This third



Classes		
K	KD	2008
Yr1	1B	2009
Yr2	2H	2010
Yr3	3M	2011
Yr4	-	2012
Yr5	-	2013
Yr6	-	2014

Class: 3M Grade: 3 Female Refresh

Student Details Class... Academic Behaviour Awards Support Notes Documents Medi... Characterist... Galle...

View Referrals Enter Referral Previous Referrals

Behaviour Results - Prior to 2011

Referrals in previous years: 33

Date	Teacher	Reasons	Action	Letter	
06/12/2010		Swearing Unsafe playing	Red Card	Yes	Details
24/11/2010		Damage school property Harassment Insolence	Detention	Yes	Details
04/11/2010		Aggressive play Breaking 3 playground rules Damage school property	Time out (with executive)	Yes	Details
24/09/2010		Insolence Teasing	Detention	Yes	Details
22/09/2010			No action recorded	Yes	Details
20/09/2010		Victim of bullying Smoking Unsafe playing	Detention	Yes	Details
20/09/2010		Insolence Smoking	Expulsion	Yes	Details

Fig 2. Data for evidence-based discussions

party could be a PBL consultant/advisor or a representative from your data system company.

- Use mini-inservices in a staff meeting to focus on one aspect of the system
- Stress the importance of entering complete and accurate data. This has a significant effect on the decision making processes based on your data.
- Make time available for staff to enter data – RFF times, part of a staff meeting, other special times.

10 Maintaining the momentum – using the data

If data isn't perceived as being used – staff won't commit to collecting it.

As soon as possible start showing collated data results to staff. Get discussions started around the data and let staff know what

decisions are being made using the data.

Implement the mini-inservice idea (Step 9) to keep a focus on data collection.

Let your P&C know about your data systems and how the data is used. Using the data will help keep the momentum going.

If you have any questions about this article or other PBL issues, send me an email to mtunks@impromation.com.au **ET**



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