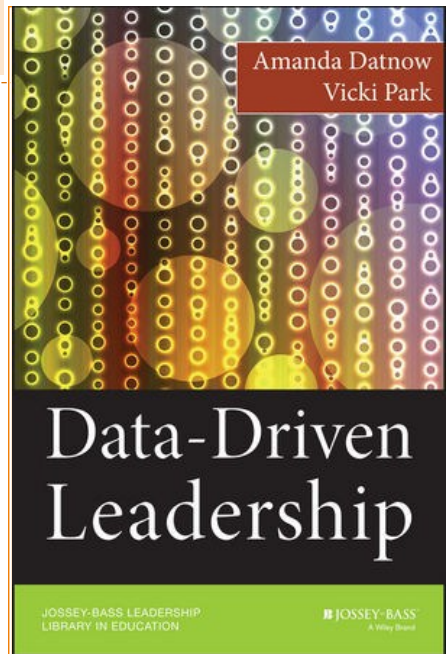# DATA-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

SUMMARY

In their book Data-Driven Leadership, Datnow and Park have delivered a valuable tool for educational leaders at the school or district level. The authors describe their purpose as supporting leaders to become knowledgeable about data and enable them to nurture a culture of data use. It is written from the perspective that staffs are working towards better use of data, as a place to begin to inform decisions and processes. The authors clearly describe the use of data as a continuum of skills and an evolving, dynamic process. With respect to data use, the authors organize ideas around four major activities, which are: knowing the context, reculturating, restructuring and instrumental change. The authors note that leaders should implement data use to actively plan for student and educator learning, *while* developing the conditions for this learning to occur. This implementation should encourage shared leadership, responsibility, and complimentary knowledge amongst staff. Finally, the authors address the following questions:

1. How do people, policies, practices, and patterns in a school shape data-informed decision making?

2. How can district and school leaders cultivate a culture of data-informed decision making?

3. How can goals, tools, and routines enable data-informed decision making?

4. How can leaders support teachers in engaging in data-informed decision making?

5. What is the impact of data use on instructional practice?

> "Data do not drive courses of action but rather provide the starting point for inquiry."

THE PROMISE AND PITFALLS OF DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Leaders have the opportunity to arm themselves with data to support decision making and drive improved teaching practices. The challenge for leaders is to effectively incorporate data use across staff groupings to engage colleagues in inquiry about improved student engagement and quality of instruction.

Various models of data use can be effective to support data process implementation. Leaders and all educators can use data to inform their actions towards reform goals. Educators can rely on data to inform decisions, if the data is central to school planning and improvement plans.

"It is useful to consider a range of data use models because it underscores the importance of examining how different contextual factors may influence how schools use data."

ROLE OF DATA-INFORMED LEADERSHIP

- Establish cultures and structures of data use across schools

- Build teacher capacity to use data and inform instruction

- Provides a starting point for inquiry and conversation

- Supports asking the right questions

- Provides catalyst for changing perceptions

THE (POTENTIAL) PITFALLS OF DATA

- Cheating on standardized tests

- Implementation of quick fixes

- Targeted supports only for students just below thresholds

- Narrowing curriculum outcomes

- Data overload

THE (POTENTIAL) PROMISES OF DATA

- Help to set and refine goals

- Identify next step instruction and student groupings

- Identify student strengths and needs

- Shed light on discrepancies

- Foster a culture of inquiry and reinforce school priorities

Source: USC CEG
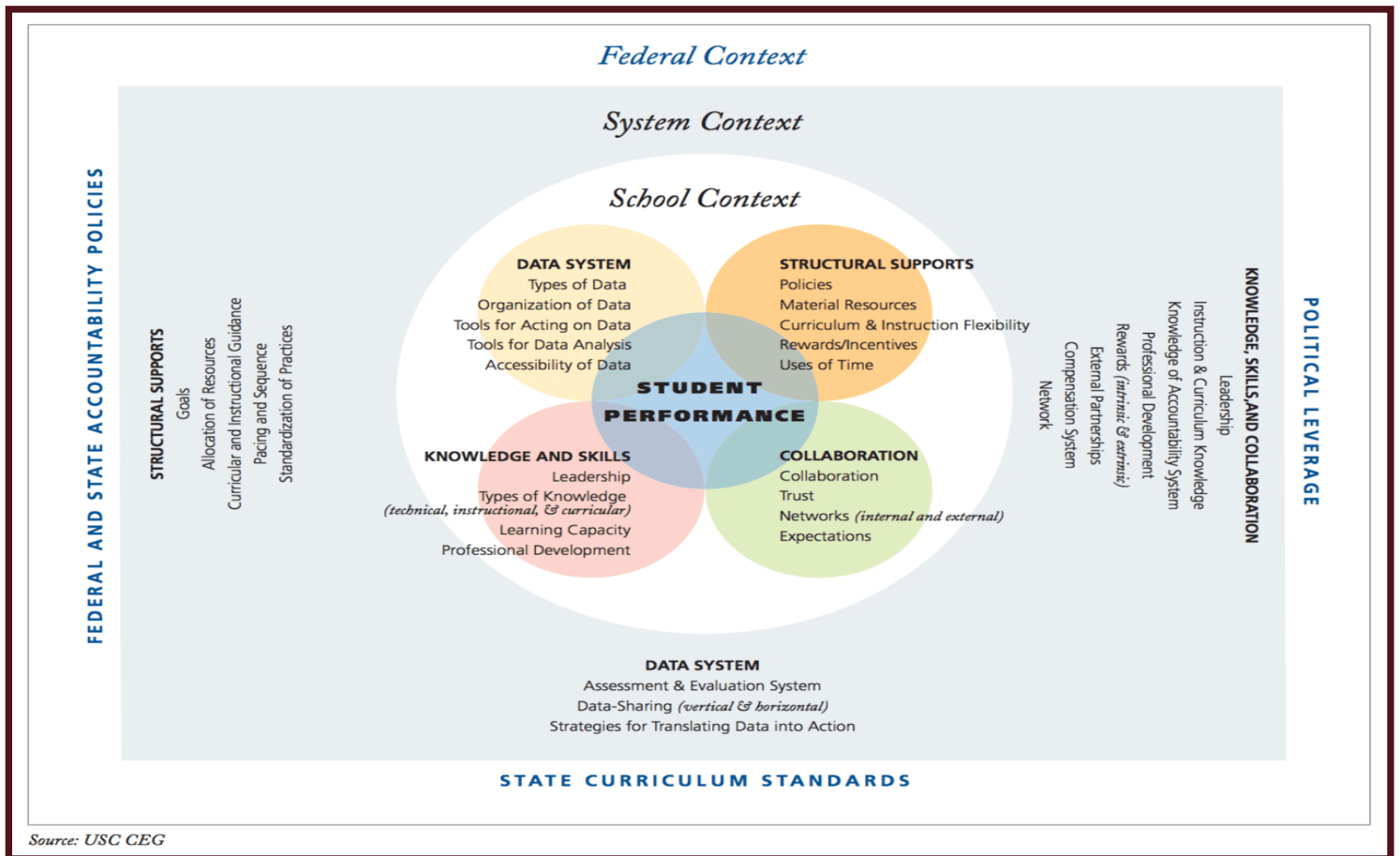
This figure reflects the interaction of elements fleshed out in this book, that arise in data use efforts.

The 4 P's (people, policy, practice, pattern) comprise the setting for educational change which shape actions and dynamically interact to produce reform. **Success factors** *from six case studies for each of the 4 P's are outlined below.*

People	Policy	Practice & Pattern
-stable and capable leaders	-strong accountability systems	-system wide assessment schedules aligned with standards
-empower people at all levels	-multiple accountability measures for deep change	-structures in place to support data use
-site autonomy for decision making	-public availability of data	-minimum of quarterly assessments
-slow and steady growth	-capacity to disaggregate data for reliability, validity, and sub-group information	-collaborative review of assessment results
-distributed ownership and leadership	-accountability systems provide political leverage for leaders	-teachers encouraged to use a range of assessment tools for formative use
-diversified experience of leader		-web-based data storage for teacher access
-leader respected by staff		
-formal and informal leadership teams		

TO SUM UP: THE PEOPLE, POLICIES, PRACTICES , AND PATTERNS THAT COMPRISE A SCHOOL OR DISTRICT ARE POWERFUL SHARING FORCES IN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE.

RECULTURATIING CONSIDERATIONS

-administrative support to teachers

-open 2-way communication

-leadership understanding of how change occurs

-build trust culture

-understanding of barrier to change

-data literate leaders

-high expectations

-shared responsibility for improvement

-use data thoughtfully

-establish norm of basing decisions on evidence, supported by data

-create inquiry minded culture

-mutual accountability

-value collaboration/healthy debate

-value teacher expertise

-assessments relevant to daily teacher practice

-collaboration within school and across district

-establish routines of data use

-see data as a diagnostic tool vs evaluation

-teacher input into assessments

-focus on expanding student strengths

-disaggregate data to confront issues and reshape expectations

-adopt a division wide 'Do whatever it takes' attitude

RECULTURATING FOR DATA USE

CHALLENGES TO BUILDING A CULTURE OF PRODUCTIVE DATA USE

- Beliefs that current models of improvement are working

- Pressure to maintain high standards so not will to risk change

- Teachers question purpose of data collection

- Belief that data collection will require too much time to grade and input

- Change of mindset toward collaboration of rigorous inquiry around student work

"LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT INFLUENCING NOT JUST PRACTICE, BUT ALSO BELIEFS AND NORMS"

GOALS, ROUTINES AND TOOLS

3 KEYS TO SUCCESS

Importance of **GOAL SETTING** to Measure Success

⇒ Critical for continued improvement

⇒ Actions plans connected to goals

⇒ Avoid generalized objectives (i.e., All students will become lifelong learners).

⇒ Utilization to monitor progress and refine actions plans

⇒ Consider: Who is at the table when creating goals? How are they developed? Are the goals measurable?

"Goal setting is critical not just for data-informed decision making; it is also essential to a cycle of continuous improvement."
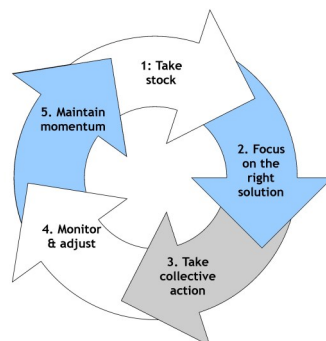
TOOLS

⇒ Curriculum pacing flexibility

⇒ Common curriculum across all schools in division

⇒ Align instruction with assessment

⇒ Web-based data-management tool to ease of use and distribution

⇒ Protocols to guide informed decision making to ensure action from conversation

⇒ External consultant support to provide

ROUTINES

⇒ Connect curriculum to benchmark assessments

⇒ Teacher participation in assessment creation (rich discussion)

⇒ Results available for teacher use

⇒ 4 assessments per year max

⇒ Electronic access to data

⇒ Alignment of school reporting results to benchmark results

⇒ Consult multiple data resources

⇒ Build structured time for data collaboration

Cycle of Instructional Improvement

1: Take stock
2. Focus on the right solution
3. Take collective action
4. Monitor & adjust
5. Maintain momentum

USING DATA FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT INVOLVES THE INTEGRATION OF:

- DEEP THOUGHTFULL INQUIRY
- USE OF MULTIPLE DATA SOURCES
- LOOKING BEYOND ASSUMPTIONS
- INCLUSION OF LEARNING GOALS
- MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT TOOLS
- CAPACITY FOR DATA USE
- DATA USED WITHIN A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

HOW DATA USE CHANGES CLASSROOM PRACTICE

1. *Pause*

2. *Reflect*

- on multiple sources of data

- connect context such as behavior observations

- on instructional practices

3. *Reteach*

 - employ a variety of instructional strategies to reach multiple learning styles

"The thoughtful use of data cannot be divorced from reflection about one's beliefs, assumptions, and practices around how students learn."

"The inquiry process is at the core of using data thoughtfully, and assessing student engagement is at the heart of what counts as critical data for instructional improvement."

"Individual students should not get lost in the numbers and teaching is about building relationships, not just correctly implementing techniques or transmitting content."

Improving Student Engagement is at the Heart of Instructional Improvement

Key Considerations:

- Collect engagement data
- Share data with students
- Student involvement with data analysis and decision-making
- Student involvement to increase ownership
- Use of student self-assessment tools

FACING THE FUTURE WITH DATA-INFORMED LEADERSHIP

In our era of accountability, data-driven decisions can be an engine for change. Data leaders need to fuse the following calls to actions to manage a collaborative process of data use.

"Let's use data to ensure that all children truly have the learning opportunities to achieve their dreams."

Use Data to Support a Culture of Inquiry and Continuous Improvement	• Encourage rigorous ongoing reflections of data • Move towards a more complex definition of student learning • Embrace differentiated teaching strategies • Support beliefs and norms to enable data use
Use Knowledge of 4P's *(people, policy, practice, pattern)* **in Planning Reform Efforts**	• Use knowledge of these P's to plan for educational change • Ensure a deep understanding of context data • Look for opportunities to understand context from different points of view
Build Trust in the Process of Data Use	• Increase transparency by building trust at and between all levels of educators • Create a non-threatening atmosphere • Frame data use as a collective responsibility with mutual accountability
Build Skills and Knowledge for Data Use	• Develop and invest in capacity building of data use and instructional strategies to support differentiation
Establish Goals, Routines, and Tools to Support Data Use	• Embed structural supports for successful data use • Establish goals linked to data • Continually revise and refine actions plans connected to goals • Use of multiple forms of data • Provide structured collaborative time for staff
Keep Equity Concerns at the Forefront	• Develop teachers sense of ownership for student achievement • Data used to address low expectations
Center Data Use around Improving Instructional Practice	• Use data to plan for instructional interventions • The power behind data driven decisions is the opportunity to change instructional practices to meet student needs • Thoughtful and systematic inquiry around data use • Use data on a deeper level to determine root causes of data patterns

FOR DATA LEADERS:

* Be bold and future orientated. Resist the temptation to adopt quick fixes.

* Use data to work toward long-term continuous improvement

* Engagement in reflective practice is imperative.

* Act when the evidence is clear and compelling.

* When action is warranted, do not simply adopt what has worked well in another school. Each school has a unique context for consideration.

* Replicate successful principles

* Consider in advance how people will respond to new ways of working to avoid potential problems.

* Continually gather data to examine for improvements or areas of concern.

"Are we in danger of chasing numbers and forgetting the central purpose of data use, which is to improve teaching and learning?"

Reflective Questions for Data-Informed Leaders

1. Who are the key people among the teaching staff who will help or hinder data use efforts? How will you engage these people?

2. What is the existing professional capacity of teachers and leaders to undertake data use? What opportunities are in place to build capacity?

3. What current routines and practices support data use?

4. What is the existing culture with respect to education change? Would it be embraced? Would there be resistance?

5. What data systems and tools are already in place that could help or hinder reform?

6. How can structured teacher collaboration time be provided within the work day?

7. How can students become involved with data collection, analysis and goal setting?

8. What processes could be put in place to ensure that data are used thoughtfully?

8

<u>Critical Evaluation</u>: Authors Datnow and Park have done a good job effectively sharing case studies of six different schools, across three school districts with their data journey. These case studies helped to illustrate the implementation of each call to action at the school level and the impact of each on the effectiveness of data-driven decisions. Each call to action outlined, gives leaders background reasoning and possible pitfalls connected to implementation. The detail given with each call to action supports leaders to thoughtfully implement a data-driven approach, with greater likelihood for success. Learning to implement data-driven decisions is applicable to our current context where school leaders are required to use data, drive student achievement, and build teacher professional capacity. While the calls to action are very clear and provide helpful details, some strategies were not applicable as it is United States based. As outlined, one of the key components to implementing data-driven decisions is to implement thoughtful data analysis processes, but it would have been helpful for the author to give more information about how to analyze data and teach others to analyze data, to determine deep root cause patterns, build goals, and create actions plans. Overall, this book is a valuable read for leaders, to learn how integrated calls to action will lead to data-driven decision-based leadership, increased student achievement, and improved professional capacity.

"If you are looking for practical insights into how data can make a difference in your organization, this book is an essential resource." Jonathan Supovitz, co-director, Consortium for Policy Research in Education, and associate professor , Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Author Highlights	
Amanda Datnow	**Vicki Park**
• Currently a professor at University of California, in the Department Education • Research focus includes K-12 educational reform and policy, best practices in data use and building educator capacity to use data effectively • Has authors 7 books, and 60+ articles and book chapters	• Currently a professor at San Jose State University, in the Department of Edcuation • Research focus includes urban school reform, equity and K-12 leadership • Park has a background teaching in elementary and middle schools