Research Update: Developing Data-Use Surveys

REL Appalachia (AP) is collaborating with the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) Data Use Research Alliance to develop survey instruments measuring various dimensions of data use.

We interviewed principal investigators (PIs) Dr. Jeffrey C. Wayman and Dr. Stephanie B. Wilkerson about the project, its progress, and its implications.

**REL AP: What prompted the alliance and REL AP to initiate this work?**

**PIs:** MNPS leaders are focusing on improving student literacy, particularly in the middle grades. As part of this effort, district leaders expressed a need for surveys to measure attitudes, perceptions, and practices regarding the use of data.

REL AP staff first attempted to locate existing surveys that could meet the alliance’s needs. Our search prompted us to talk to the alliance about expanding and evaluating an existing data-use survey.

**REL AP: Do you anticipate nationwide applications and/or implications for this project?**

**PIs:** Absolutely! As part of the project, REL AP will develop three separate instruments: one for teachers, one for instructional support staff, and one for school administrators. Because the survey items are mapped to the research literature on data use, districts nationwide can use the instruments to understand teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, and practices regarding data use. The surveys could be used across school levels and content areas, not just by districts interested in middle grades literacy. These surveys are in a position to be broadly used.

**REL AP: What steps did you take to develop these survey instruments? What’s next?**

**PIs:** We started with a survey that Dr. Wayman developed with Vincent Cho and Shana Shaw, the *Survey of Educator Data Use* (Wayman, Cho, & Shaw, 2009). We added a bank of items related to collaborative inquiry, which is a focus of the alliance. Districts can customize the surveys to reference data types used in their schools (i.e., specific state and local assessments). One of the challenges was balancing the length of the surveys with the breadth of content, because there are so many things that are important to good data use.

We recently conducted cognitive interviews with 19 MNPS educators and piloted the survey with each of the three groups (teachers, instructional support staff, and administrators). We’re evaluating the results of the pilot test and preparing to submit the surveys to the IES peer review process. We hope to make the survey public around this time next year.

**REL AP: Is there anything else you would like to mention about this project?**

**PIs:** Alliance members, particularly Margie Johnson, Business Intelligence Coordinator in MNPS’s Information Management and Decision Support Department, have been crucial throughout the process. Margie’s advocacy for the project is invaluable.

[Learn more about the project.](www.relappalachia.org)