The National Center Presents:

Data-Driven Recovery

Data-Driven Recovery: Lessons from Connecticut and Missouri
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Session Summary

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Session Highlights

» Connecticut: Using data to inform recovery initiatives
  o In 2021, Connecticut conducted annual assessments, but the state education agency (SEA) was very clear in communicating to the LEAs that the results would not be used for accountability purposes, and the data was not released in the data portal. Rather, the assessment data helped contextualize how students learned during the pandemic. Data showed those who attended school remotely lost the most ground versus students who attended in person. After the 2021 school year, the SEA already knew that math was the area of challenge, particularly in the middle grades. In addition, having collected three years of data allowed the SEA to see the pace of recovery. In the elementary grades, data showed that students were 2–3 months behind expected performance. In middle grades, the pace of learning was slower, and the learning loss was greater: 5–7 months in English language arts, and significantly more in math.
  o Through the data portal dashboard, the SEA was able to look at data and identify significant areas of delay, which led to investment in high-dosage tutoring. Using the ARP/ESSER funds, the state created a 6–9th grade mathematics tutoring program to address learning loss.
  o Another major initiative the SEA took on at the early onset of the pandemic was collecting attendance data. Since September 2020, the SEA has made a concerted effort to collect attendance data to understand attendance options (hybrid, remote, in person). The SEA implemented a monthly attendance collection to populate its monthly report. This has been very helpful in supporting initiatives and providing technical assistance to the districts. This year is the first time the SEA has observed a decline in chronic absences.
  o LEAP Home Visitation Initiative – an external evaluation of the home visiting initiative shows that six months after the initial home visitation, attendance increased by 10 percentage points on pre-k through 5th grade. In middle and high school, the increase was 20 percentage points.
» Missouri: Data and Pandemic Response
  o Missouri is a remarkably diverse state with 554 local education agencies. The largest LEA serves about 26,000 students and the smallest serves 23 students. There are areas of great density and areas of great sparsity. In Missouri, state funding is based on attendance. As schools began to close during the pandemic, the Commissioner of Education made the decision to cancel state assessments. The three major priorities were to keep staff and students safe and healthy, to deliver the best education possible under the circumstances,

and to make sure schools get paid. The SEA developed emergency state regulations that allowed payment of school under strange attendance patterns and developed a lot of new routines to keep teachers paid and healthy.

- o The 2021 state assessment results showed that for all students, all content areas, and all grade levels, Missouri suffered a learning loss of negative 0.13 effect size, which is in the moderate range. The vast majority of LEAs stayed open the majority of the time. Similar to Connecticut, onsite in-person learning was the most effective way for schools and teachers to function as it experiences the smallest percentage of learning loss. The hybrid setting saw an effect size twice as large as in-person. Both distance and virtual learning suffered more than twice as much learning loss.
- o Based on the data, the SEA selected Science of Reading as the major area of effort and provided LETRS training to as many teachers as possible. The SEA provided instructional materials grant for the lowest performing LEAs, and mental health grants.
- o Missouri has been on a 10-year decline on teacher supply. In response, the SEA has invested $50m in recruitment and retention grants and developed Missouri Teacher and Leader Development systems and regional professional development centers. In addition, the SEA developed a six-part study on retention strategies.
- o Next Steps: continue monitoring academic recovery, evaluate teacher recruitment and retention, evaluate the option for a four-day school week, and pursue state support for sustaining initiatives.

≫ For your SEA, how did you decide on where to start? At what point during the pandemic, did the SEA decide it was time to lean into the data?

- o Connecticut began very early because we started collecting attendance data in September of 2020. We stumbled through developing guidance to what it means to be present. The LEAP Program started in April 2021, before the pandemic ended the school year. The LEAP home visitation model was designed to tackle attendance as a supportive rather than punitive model. It allowed the SEA to work with families to identify and address barriers such as access to technology. The SEA also made a commitment to maintaining the state assessments, but clearly articulated why the data was collected and for what purposes. The 2021 assessment data was key to restarting the growth.
- o In Missouri, the SEA is figuring things out every day. Similar to Connecticut, the SEA had to clearly communicate to the districts that the assessment data was a flashlight and not a hammer. To that end, the data was not released to the districts. Regionally, the data has been disaggregated and analyzed in many ways, but the results have not been released to the LEAs and that was a critical piece. The state's data systems are good, but not perfect, so the SEA is continuously looking for ways to improve.

≫ Did you have to build data literacy among stakeholders?

- o Sometimes we are data rich, but information poor. It is important to define what data elements mean, like defining chronic absence. Data literacy is an ongoing battle, but the more graphics and visuals we create, the better.
- o In Missouri, the SEA has created more dashboards than ever before. A combination of more visuals and communicating the data using common language has been the biggest two takeaways.

≫   How are you thinking about sustainability for these interventions and what does that look like?
  - o   The key, regardless of the intervention selected, is to pick something that fits within the LEA's existing structure or something that can become part of the LEA's standard of operation. It can't be something that will be added on because that won't be sustainable after funding ends. For high-dosage tutoring, we are currently using external resources, but some LEAs may continue using their own local resources or Title I funding. The SEA is also building capacity of its paraprofessionals and paraeducators to make sure they have the skills and training to supplement capacity. In terms of research, the SEA is using ARP/ESSER funds to build a system or conducting research.
  - o   In Missouri, the SEA is increasing capacity of people, training as many teachers as possible and putting experts in the regional professional development centers. The SEA is also pushing for the legislature to keep funding to prevent teacher shortage that would cripple the public education system.

≫   Has the relationship between SEA and LEAs become stronger?
  - o   It has. The conversations are focusing more and more on what is effective and how to sustain the initiatives. In Missouri, the relationship with the LEAs are ones of strong partnerships.
  - o   In Connecticut, the nature of the relationship between SEA and LEAs has ups and downs. Sometimes we may not see eye to eye on particular issues, but the pandemic has opened the communication channel and made sure the communication is frequent and ongoing. Previously, it was ok to not be in touch as much, now it's clear we don't act without consultation and partnership with the LEAs.