Using Value-Added Data To Improve The Human Capital Management System In LAUSD

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Background and Context

Since the beginning of my fellowship at the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), my role has centered on the advancement of the district's human capital management system through better use of data. These efforts initially focused on the development and publication of value-added measures for schools and educators, locally known as Academic Growth over Time (AGT). AGT is a key metric that provides us information on how schools and educators are performing. This advanced use of data moves the district away from its reliance on a one-dimensional view of student achievement based on static test scores to a more complete view of performance. But despite the progress we made by producing AGT, we realized early in the process that AGT in isolation falls well short of its promise and is most useful when it is combined with other information about educators and schools. As an initial step in this direction, I worked on behalf of LAUSD to integrate this robust and sophisticated measure into existing district accountability systems. While this represents great progress over the course of two years, my work drove the district one step further by laying the groundwork to advance the broader goal of using AGT to inform decision-making and affect policy and practice throughout the human capital system. The SDP Human Capital Diagnostic catalyzed these efforts in many ways, specifically driving LAUSD to address the larger challenges of better utilizing employee data and collaborating more extensively with the major teacher preparation programs in the Los Angeles area.

The Production of AGT

AGT controls for factors outside the influence of schools and educators and accounts for the measurement error inherent in all tests. To produce AGT data and resources for schools, grade-level teams, and teachers, the district partnered with the University of Wisconsin's

Value-Added Research Center (VARC). A large part of my work was the active management of the model development process, which required collaboration with VARC and a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of national experts who provided input on both the methodological and practical implications of different modeling choices. One of the keys to building the AGT model was distilling highly technical information gathered through the TAG and turning it into a concise set of options for district leaders to guide their decision-making.

Incorporation of AGT into District Support Systems

Our initial focus centered around providing AGT results directly to educators and building it into a broader effort to create a multiple-measure performance appraisal system based on the recommendations of our Teacher Effectiveness Task Force. This was no small task in a district of nearly 30,000 teachers and school leaders, with active labor partners who are extremely cautious about reforms that include student growth measures. After successfully introducing AGT for the first time in the spring of 2011, the district went on to release new results in the fall of 2011 and 2012. In order to demystify the measure itself, we provided training and resources to key stakeholders to accompany each distribution. Additionally, this new way of looking at data was introduced in a no-stakes environment that emphasized the value of this information for learning, reflection, growth, and development.

In summer 2011, we also began to incorporate AGT into our school accountability system known as the School Performance Framework (SPF). The SPF categorizes schools based on their level of need in a way that provides guidance to target resources and interventions. I played an active role in compiling school performance data and designing the SPF. Though this work did not always rely on complex methods, it required shepherding the process and providing analytic support during extensive conversations on the impact of each design option. One of the biggest

challenges of this work was to limit the number of metrics included in the framework while attempting to align with other school planning efforts as well as state and federal accountability systems. Ultimately, the SPF attempted to narrow the focus to key indicators without oversimplifying the complexity of school performance.

Human Capital Data Warehouse and IHE Collaboration

During the fellowship, I worked closely with SDP on the Human Capital Diagnostic, which we used as an opportunity to answer some of our most pressing questions about the district's management of human capital. One of the early revelations from conducting the Human Capital Diagnostic was the difficulty of obtaining and utilizing Human Resource (HR) data to link with AGT and other performance and outcome measures. Like most other school districts, our HR department uses employee data primarily for operational rather than strategic purposes. For LAUSD, this meant that data systems were fragmented and the data were not easily accessible. The work done by the district to provide information for the diagnostic demonstrated that the data were available, but required considerable department resources to conduct basic extraction, compilation, and analysis. While the district was eager to work with SDP in order to add capacity in this area, it also became clear that we would need to create sustainable data systems to mirror the robust longitudinal system that exists for student information. I worked with district leadership to develop a vision for a Human Capital Data Warehouse (HCDW) that would address the need for a unified system to capture and store HR data to support the analysis and reporting of human capital information. I began collaborating with our HR, Data, and Accountability, and Information and Technology departments to gain a better understanding of how the current storage systems are utilized. I used the data specifications for the diagnostic as a base to work with these departments to build out the list of desired data elements and in most cases identified the best sources for each data element. I also developed the definition of business rules for the capture and transformation of

the elements for storage and planned for the creation of analysis and reporting structures.

One area of high interest and particular need with regard to HR data is teacher and school leader educational background and preparation information. Our objective is to strengthen alignment with teacher preparation programs and strategic 'sourcing' of our future educators, but current gaps in data strain these efforts. To address this, I worked to advance a collaboration of roughly 10 Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs), which have been the source of nearly 50% of the district's new hires from SY 2004-05 to SY 2010-11. We have been meeting with these IHEs since December of 2011 to deepen our partnership through data sharing and research to address our collective goal of driving student learning through effective teaching. My initial efforts focused on sharing the information from the diagnostic with the deans of the schools of education at these IHEs. This was met with great enthusiasm and a desire to learn more. In response, I created individualized resources for each IHE with basic summary data about their graduates employed by the district, which included student preparation, school and student performance, and retention. After sharing this resource, we met individually with each IHE to explain the information and learn more about their related research interests. This was a crucial step in making them feel comfortable with the information and intentions for the partnership to delve deeper into program performance. Once these individual meetings were completed, we met as a collective working group to develop data sharing agreements and research questions. A key to moving this work forward has been our attempts to work collaboratively, provide a venue for all of the IHEs to voice concerns, and identify solutions together. Through these efforts, we anticipated that we would have agreements in place by fall 2012.

Final Reflections

In the fellowship, I set out to impact a complex, interconnected system of human capital management in the second largest school district in the country. However daunting this task may have seemed, my team was driven by the idea that even small successes would represent greater opportunity for thousands of underserved youth. In reflecting on my time as a fellow, these experiences have taught me about the necessity of collaborating with internal and external stakeholders in a large system. While it was possible to produce AGT in near isolation, the integration and institutionalization of the measure could not have been achieved without concerted efforts to engage other departments and partners. Often, the largest barrier to collaboration was the sheer pace of the work. At times because of the urgency of we felt to drive these projects forward, it was difficult to compromise on speed to be more inclusive. We realized a balance between pushing for system-wide improvements and providing the opportunity for others to engage with the work was necessary to make the efforts sustainable.

Overall, I believe my work was successful in moving the district forward on the spectrum of human capital management. In addition to the creation and incorporation of AGT into the district accountability and support systems, we also came to recognize it as a powerful tool to reflect on how we can best use employee performance data to inform our policies and practices. This work must continue in collaboration across departments to truly harness all of the available information to advance the broader system.