

An Equity-Focused Approach to TSI/ATSI School Improvement

Lunch and Learn Highlights – February 17, 2021

Each month, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and the Region 11 Comprehensive Center (R11CC) are hosting interactive, content-focused sessions as a part of the year-long “An Equity-Focused Approach to TSI/ATSI School Improvement” Virtual Learning Communities (LC). Following each session, a Lunch and Learn is hosted where colleagues participating in the LC network continue the conversations from the previous content session.

In the January LC session, we continued learning from Heather Krause, Dataassist founder and head of the We All Count project, as she shared more about her Data Equity Framework. During the Lunch and Learn held on February 17, we reviewed the [Foundations of Data Equity resources](#) available to us through We All Count’s online learning platform. LC participants have been granted unlimited access to the resources for 2021, although R11CC asks that you reach out to us before disseminating the materials.

We also explored how our motivations can influence how we collect, analyze, and report data with equity and examined what it means to have equity when looking at findings from an impact evaluation.

Topic 1. Motivation

We began by talking about the importance of clearly specifying the motivation for a project. A common problem with many projects is a vague core motivation and unstated goals (e.g., visualize an unbalanced seesaw). The desire is to have a specific core motivation and transparent secondary goals (e.g., balanced seesaw). Together, those two components provide a motivation touchstone.

We next practiced changing a vague motivation statement, “improve achievement for subgroups at low-performing schools,” to a specific and measurable motivation touchstone: Increasing the 11th grade cohort’s ACT composite score by 10% for each demographic group.

When debriefing this exercise, one participant shared that the [NWEA’s ASG Quadrant Tool](#) is useful when looking at student data and different reference points. For example, just because a student has high achievement doesn’t mean they have experienced substantial growth and vice versa.

We created a “just for fun” motivation touchstone using the Motivation Mad-Libs tool included in the [Foundations of Data Equity resources](#). A motivation touchstone is a valuable communication tool that can be used to succinctly explain the context of a project and as a test to see if anything is missing that may affect equity.

Topic 2. Impact and Equity

We examined sample data from an impact study that showed average grades before and after an intervention. Although at the aggregate level it appeared the project was a success, the story changed when we disaggregated the data. Disaggregating the data revealed that average grades for each of the three subgroups increased at different rates. Further, when we looked at grade gaps rather than simple grade increases, it appeared the project widened existing gaps. This example highlighted why considering equity in impact evaluations is so important. Often when people hear the word impact, they think the result is positive, which might not be the case. For more on paying attention to the words we use and what they may unintentionally convey, check out the [Data Speak Decoder](#).