



Aporia Consulting Ltd.

Steven Katz, Lorna Earl, & Lisa Dack
GTA PNC: Networking to Build Local Capacity

3219 Yonge St. Suite # 240 Toronto ON M4N 3S1 aporia@attglobal.net www.aporia.ca
tel 416.686.2279 fax 416.686.4162



Intent of the project

- To learn more about the role of supporting schools in data use
- School improvement teams from the participating boards were involved in a year-long initiative designed to build capacity in evidence informed decision-making for school improvement
- The teams' work was supported by a facilitator
- The intent was to use this job-embedded experience to understand and learn more about the role of facilitators in building school capacity for data use



Overview of the data-use series

- A year-long initiative designed to build capacity in evidence-informed decision-making for school improvement
- Process anchored by 3 sessions:
 - Focus is foremost
 - Interpretation is meaning-making
 - Accountability as conversation
- Between-session task completion



Facilitator learning

- The goal was to learn about the issues that the facilitators were facing and the strategies they were using to address the issues
- Facilitators kept a record of what they were learning by completing a template each time they interacted with their teams
- Facilitators attended between-session meetings in which they networked to share successes and challenges, and discussed strategies for moving their teams forward
- The templates served as a basis for these discussions

Facilitator issue identification

What's at the heart of the issue?



Facilitating getting to FOCUS

- There is an erroneous assumption that choosing a focus means that other things don't matter and that a focus is "for life". Because of this, the focus is often too broad.
- Once a student learning focus has been selected, schools have difficulty understanding that this student learning need is representative of an adult learning need.



Facilitating alignment across initiatives

- Schools don't understand how all the different initiatives they're involved in are aligned, and see them as disconnected and competing.



Facilitating hypothesis generation

- Some educators see the data as the “objective truth”, while others feel they don’t need the data because they “just know” – Hypothesis testing is the mechanism that recognizes the value of each of these in relation to one other.



Facilitating whole-school involvement in data use

- Schools are using a “divide and conquer” strategy where different people are involved in different initiatives.
- There’s often a “my kids” orientation, rather than an “our school” orientation.



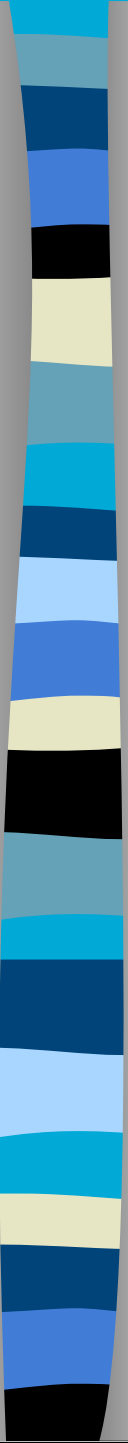
Facilitating relationship-building

- It's hard for school teams to move forward if there isn't a group of people working well together. School culture is both an antecedent and a consequence of effective data use. What's the minimum threshold of positive relationships that needs to be in place to get started?



Who facilitates?

- Who is the right person for the job of facilitation? Is it a person or a team? It depends on the structural organization of the board. It requires bringing together improvement planning, information management, and curriculum (including assessment). Facilitation requires an ongoing and consistent relationship with the schools.



Facilitating the balance between accounting and accountability

- Schools need to understand the co-dependent relationship between accounting (gathering, organizing, and displaying information) and accountability (the conversation about what the information means and how to use it for improvement).



Facilitating purposeful data selection

- Data literacy is about more than what you do with the data when you get it – it's about knowing what data you need to consider. Schools often want “everything” that is available, because they don't know how to purposefully select data.



Facilitating formal leadership capacity

- Some formal leaders in schools assume sole responsibility for engaging with the using data agenda, as a strategy for buffering their staff from additional demands. This has the effect of making data use an activity (an initiative) rather than a continuous habit of practice in the school.



Facilitating sustainability

- Moving beyond “this too shall pass”.

Strategies





Facilitating getting to FOCUS

- The forensic metaphor
- Language clarification
- Example from Upper Grand- the 6-week cycle



Facilitating alignment across initiatives

- Key people common across initiatives
- Have the alignment conversation explicitly
- Actually map this out



Facilitating hypothesis generation

- Scaffold hypothesis generation with thinking stems
- Be clear that hypothesis generation takes time



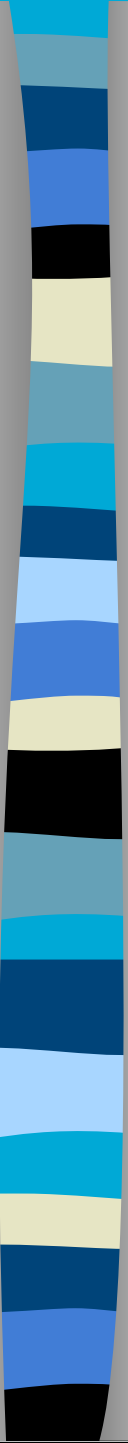
Facilitating whole-school involvement in data use

- Derive the focus from something common and urgent to school staff so people to take ownership
- Facilitators spend time understanding the various initiatives the school is involved in
- Every teacher needs to see their own students in the data



Who facilitates?

- May sometimes be better as a team, because an individual may not have all the requisite knowledge
- Need to build in face time



Facilitating the balance between accounting and accountability

- Need structures in place to make the accounting easy so the schools have time for the accountability
- Data needs to be displayed in ways that are easy for the schools to work with
- Someone needs to help get the accountability conversation started
- Make sure teachers understand that the accountability conversation is to support student learning, not to evaluate



Facilitating purposeful data selection

- Help schools learn to ask the right questions so they understand what data they need
- Build people's confidence around data literacy and seeking out data
- Show people models and walk them through the process



Facilitating sustainability

■ Generally:

- Build time to look at data into existing school structures, so it becomes part of what they always do in the school
- Find creative ways to release teachers to have these sorts of conversations

■ In relation to this project:

- Set up the expectation that people will share their learning by sharing their posters
- Take the last homework slide from session 3 (about next steps) and ask the teams what this looks like for them, what supports they need, etc.
- Facilitators take these conversations back and continue them in meaningful ways in their own boards