

Interview Transcript: Take action in response to your evaluation results

- **Kim Morrison**, magnet school director, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County, NC
- **Kelly Bucherie**, academic manager for magnet programs, Clark County School District, NV
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Interview Highlights

- It is important to help stakeholders understand the value of an evaluation in supporting improvements in program practice.
- For example, program evaluation can be useful for: identifying and strengthening weak parts of the program, measuring student performance over time, and expanding or replicating a magnet program.
- Making decisions using disaggregated data, school-specific data, and data showing trends over time are particularly useful for magnet-related objectives.

Morrison: My name is Kim Morrison, and I am the magnet school director in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County, North Carolina. I think it's really important to understand what the purpose of evaluative data is: How is this evaluation going to help us implement magnet programs in our schools? And so we found out that it's basically a tool, one of many tools, and what it does is acts as a mirror. And so it says, this is what's happening; this is clear, valid, and reliable. So you can say, is this working in our district; is it not working in our district? It also isolates areas. The literacy seems to be working; the math integration does not, depending on what you are looking at. And then it helps say, okay, this area did not work. So in the next cycle, we were able to make adjustments based on the data we had gotten from the previous cycle.

So it's really important for directors to know right away that this is going to help them, because if they don't see relevance—just like children, if they don't see relevance for what they are doing—then they are basically just going to be giving you numbers, and checking off a box, and saying, I have to do this. So, I think, right away—and we did this right; I felt like we understood why we are having this evaluation—that, yes, the U.S. Department of Education needed the evaluation, but more importantly, I, as a director, needed this information, and it needed to be true; and if it was not good information in saying that our district was not going well, we needed to know that.

Bucherie: My name is Kelly Bucherie, and I am the academic manager for the Clark County School District magnet programs. The data we collect from our magnet program really drives all of our decisions, and the data is everything from student application to the areas of town the students live in.

We use the data on student performance over time; we also collect data from individual schools and individual programs that have been successful, or ones that we want to take a look at and review.

Our expectations in communicating all of our results to our stakeholders are that they should own the data. They are the data, their children are the data, their schools are the data, so we want to ensure that they understand it. So we collect it, and we deliver it, and we hopefully can explain it in a format that they can use in making informed decisions about their own students, about their own schools, and about future programs.

We use data to drive the majority of our efforts in recruiting and, absolutely, it is the number one key to a lot of our decision-making. That data is the important data, especially for a magnet—that we are trying to identify schools and programs to reduce racial isolation, and it's our goal as a district to recruit in efforts and get an application pool that mirrors the district demographics. The data that we collect during the recruiting season and after the recruiting season would be the number of students that fall into the ethnicity categories, the students that receive free and reduced lunch, and then, of course, the students that are from some of our special populations—special education and second-language students.

We certainly make it our effort to mirror and reflect the district demographic, so we use that data. We use that data with an arrow diagram: red means we are down in an area and we would like to improve; green means we've done a good job and have reached some goals in a certain area; and then yellow is status quo, we are maintaining. So that helps the school—assists a program—in goals, and reaching those goals, and identifying for future recruitment.

If we find that we have a program, that our applications far exceed our number of seats, we take a look over a period of time. We look at that data to see if that is just a fluke for the year. But if it's a three-year trend, it's an indication that there is a need. We then, in turn, turn around and have a group of folks that will go through a process in ensuring that the school itself is meeting its goals and increased student achievement. So it's not just because we have a number of applications, but we also see the bang for our buck on the other end, and that is certainly something viable and desirable out there.

We really feel like the data itself is the truth about what is happening, what is going on. Sometimes we don't like that data; sometimes it doesn't always paint a pretty picture. But it is telling, and it gives us opportunities, and it opens the door for change, and it also opens the door for recognition of best practices. And I think that what we have learned over time, and especially in our district, is that those schools that are using data to drive decision-making, and in most aspects of their school, have resulted in positive goals; goals that have been achieved, lessons learned.