

Case Studies

Rowland Unified School District (RUSD)

Rowland, CA
TERC Using Data Partner: 2010-12

A Leadership Model For Data Use That Embraces Three Key Components: Expectation, Support, Involvement

Success at-a-Glance:

Rowland Unified School District (RUSD) started with a vision and some core beliefs. These important rudiments led them toward building a culture of using data to inform and improve—from central office to classroom. They came to recognize data not as a compliance issue, but a means to inform solutions and monitor ongoing progress. Their story of using data for meaningful change can serve as a touchstone to inspire others.



School-based teams meet regularly and analyze data to inform practice.



A collaborative inquiry process based on evidence is used to identify student learning problems.

In 2009, the district, situated in Los Angeles County California, was designated in “needs improvement” status and given a state mandate to develop an improvement plan to make Academic Performance Index (API) gains. Determined to turn things around, district leaders sought to establish a uniform set of proven structures and data analysis processes that would support a rich district-wide data-literate culture. They strongly believed that central office and school administrators must understand and model exemplary data literacy skills for staff, as well as support the development of teacher-level data leaders.

Leaders invested in professional development, making time for collaborative inquiry, and modeling data use practices that work. Over a three-year period, these efforts resulted in growth from 53% to 84% of schools meeting API targets. Overall, the district met API targets in 2013 for every student subgroup except students with disabilities, and that still represented a 29-point average jump over their 2009 API base.

Education leaders in Rowland Unified can be applauded for their firm understanding that there is no “magic bullet.” Change takes time, commitment, and grit; and they planned for the long and steady road toward improvement.

- [Read the complete study](#)

Danvers Public Schools

Danvers, MA

At Danvers Public Schools, a suburban district outside of Boston on Massachusetts' northeastern coast, principal Sharon Burrill and her staff at Ivan G. Smith Elementary are taking a sharp look at data, to guide them in making the best instructional decisions for their 275 students. "We're working with a comprehensive data analysis process with the goal of translating it into improved student achievement," said Burrill. "With constant refinement of instruction, we aim to tweak and improve our teaching for the next day."

- [Read the complete study](#)

Lewis-Palmer School District

Colorado Springs, CO

When principal Aileen Finnegan struggled with how to boost achievement at Wildflower Elementary in Colorado Springs, Colo., a school dealing with the effects of an economically disadvantaged, high-mobility population, she found the answer in a unique process of collecting, analyzing and using data...

- [Read the complete study](#)

Mountain City Elementary School

Mountain City, TN

With a recent federal designation as a Blue Ribbon School and nearly 100 percent of its students reaching proficiency in every assessed subject, Mountain City Elementary, located in the far reaches of rural northeastern Tennessee, is hardly recognizable as the school it was just a few years ago. Gay Triplett, who was beginning her tenure as the school's principal nine years ago, recalls bracing for a very different designation: a "school in need of improvement"...

- [Read the complete study](#)

Nashua School District

Nashua, NH

Just six years ago, Janet Valeri faced one of the biggest challenges of her career as an educator. Named principal of Amherst Street School in Nashua, N.H., Valeri had been chosen to lead this elementary school in its third year as a "school in need of improvement." As a result, the school was forced to offer choice as well as supplemental educational services after school and was teetering on the brink of having to develop a plan for restructuring...

- [Read the complete study](#)

Dennis-Yarmouth School District

Yarmouth, MA

Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District in Cape Cod, Mass., may not be one of the country's largest school districts, but this district serving 3,500 students in seven schools is a microcosm of the challenges facing all school districts today. Located in the heart of one of the nation's most popular tourist regions, the district serves a community that is somewhat transient, with a wide variety of income levels - nearly 40 percent of all students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. In addition, Dennis-Yarmouth is grappling with educating a growing population of English Language Learners (ELL) - a situation that nearly every district in the country seems to be facing....

- [Read the complete study](#)