

# Data, Research, Policy & Politics

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# Purpose

- Introduce a framework for educators and business leaders to understand how data, research, policy and politics interact and (at times) conflict
- Culminate with a proposal to shape educational policy using sound data and good research while working in the eye of the political storm

# Background

- The *aspirational* goal is data-driven policy decisions
- Few admit to not having/using data
  - Unless it's political
- Perception - policy is often developed with little-to-no data
- Reality – politics influenced by little-to-no research
- What's the difference?

# What are Data?

Student ID	School Name	AIMS SS	Gender	Race	Free/Reduced Lunch
100254	Gem Charter	465	1	latino	1
100255	Mesa Prep	489	0	white	0
100256	Park View	500	0	white	0
100257	S. Sturgeon	380	1	black	1
100258	AmeriSchools	422	0	latino	1
100259	Happy Valley	467	1	white	0
100260	Salt River	367	0	latino	1
100261	Nosotros	444	1	latino	1
100262	Mohave	503	1	asian	0
100263	Arts Academy	435	0	white	0

# The Power of Anecdotes: All Cases are not Equal

Student ID	School Name	AIMS score	Gender	Race	Free/Reduced Lunch
100254	Gem Charter	465	M	latino	1
100255	Mesa Prep	489	F	white	0
100256	Park View	500	F	white	0
100257	S. Sturgeon	380	<u>M</u>	<u>black</u>	<u>1</u>
100258	AmeriSchools	422	F	latino	1
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# Are Data Enough?

- Data alone are minimally informative
- Data must be transformed to be useful
- Aggregation & Counts
  - Can not answer comparison questions or determine how much change is enough
- Need research to transform data into useful information

# What is (good) Research?

- Structured inquiry
- Open-ended questions
- Answers narrow questions
  - No single study presents the whole picture
- What is “the” research that politicians reference?
  - A general conclusion based on the results from a collection of individual research studies

# What is Policy?

- Differentiate between policy as regulation and policy as ideas
- Regulation - decisions intended to achieve a specified outcome
- Ideas – overarching paradigms in a competitive process in search of “windows” for intervention
- Both concepts are rational and rely on research for credibility

# A Few Policy Ideas

- Market-based reform
- Value-added analysis
- Lead with Five
- Reenrollment
- Immigrants as citizens

# What are Politics?

- Competition between groups
  - Metric = most people (i.e. votes)
- Data sources include public opinion (polls)
- Do not *need* data to influence education politics
- Anecdotes and imagery are powerful

# Political Environment vs. School Environment

- Political environment
  - Incrementalism out – entrepreneurialism in
    - Big goals, Big shifts
    - Shaped by few
    - Initiatives announced and sold to an unknowing public
- School environment
  - Incrementalism always in
    - Target current (known) problems
    - Gradual progress
    - Avoid big errors

# 3 Ways to Influence Politics and Policy

1. Appointments – those favored by sitting officials (formal or informal)
2. Legal – craft legislation, courts that serve as a check and balance
3. Research – credibility derived from outside the legislative/policy process

# Putting it Together

- We have data
- No systematic way to generate original research
- What are the big ideas? A brief content analysis of the mission statements for:
  - ASBA - continuous improvement of student success by providing leadership and assistance to public school governing boards
  - AEA - free, quality, public education . . . differences enrich our society . . . learn, grow, and progress
  - ABEC - Sustaining collaboration between business and education leaders to improve and invest in K-12 as an element of a superior public education system and economic future for Arizona.

# Leading with Research . . .

## A Proposal

- Two-fold Agenda
- Capture current state of education
  - Influence policy enactment
  - Defend against political winds
- Generate big policy ideas
  - Reconsider traditional ideas in a changing world
  - Use education history and the power of prediction to drive future debates

# Changing Roles

- Education officials – extend beyond “what is” to consider “what should be”
- Business leaders – recognize schools as special organizations
- Universities – pitch in to find answers as well as point out problems

# Other Successful Models

- Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) – original research and face-to-face interaction
- North Carolina Data Center – data repository to expand data access and who controls the questions
- Consortium on Chicago School Research – community participation research model
- Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI) – official research arm of the State Board of Education

# Next Steps

- Review current efforts – determine if sufficient time spent on crafting future possibilities in addition to pursuing current strategies
- Take a long term perspective – policy ideas are years in the making and waiting

# Thank You!

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