



AGS 735 | Data-Informed Educational Leadership
Fall 2023 | Wednesdays, 5-8 pm | Online
McKeown School of Education

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Office Hours: By appointment, via Zoom

Course Description

Using data to inform one's leadership is crucial for aspiring educational leaders. This course will support future educational leaders in understanding how data can play a generative role in the work of instructional change and school improvement. In particular, candidates will gain knowledge about how collaborative processes, when paired with careful data collection and analysis, can lead to improved outcomes for students.

Global Goals

1. To understand the key role that data plays in the work of educational leadership.
2. To develop familiarity with many different types of data in educational settings.
3. To discover ways to both use existing data and to create opportunities to gather data to answer pressing questions.
4. To develop familiarity with and skills in collaborating with other educators in the use of data to drive school improvement.

Objectives:

1. Analyze the current sources of data available at teacher's school site.
2. Evaluate the utility of data in developing instructional plans.
3. Prepare instructional plans based on a specific set of data (from student work).
4. Assess and evaluate multiple models for analyzing student data.
5. Engage in multiple, structured conversations about student achievement data and reflect on this work via journal responses.
6. Prepare and lead a collaborative data team meeting using data from a school context. Reflect on this work through a written review.
7. Relate course content to a particular data-related project.

Instructional Objectives

1. Explore a number of different types of data that they may encounter in schools.
2. Demonstrate an ability to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative data and to discern when different types of data are necessary in order to more fully understand various problems of practice.
3. Develop skills that allow them to generate data to answer pressing educational questions.
4. Develop familiarity with and the processes for engaging faculty in collaborative work that includes the use of data in order to make informed decisions to drive school change.
5. Practice facilitating professional conversations with colleagues, as part of collaborative processes that use data to make informed decisions to drive school change.
6. Demonstrate their ability to display and synthesize data and to use data to plan for instructional change initiatives.

Note on (Online) Teaching and Learning in the Wake of Covid

The most important and enduring legacy of Covid for me, as a teacher, has been a shift in my priorities. To be clear: my first priority is your well-being, both physically and mentally. If you experience any challenges affecting your work in this course, please communicate with me as soon as possible. I don't need to know details, though you may share as much as you want to. I only need to know that you need to discuss alternative arrangements to help you get the most from the course. And if you are experiencing challenges more generally, I am happy to connect you with the resources you need.

Also, a word about online learning. Thankfully, our comfort and fluency with online learning has increased since the early days of the pandemic. Nevertheless, I understand distractions may impose at times. As such, I welcome children, siblings, roommates, pets, or wandering guests and understand if/when you need to step away briefly to take care of yourself or others. However, please make every effort to be fully present during synchronous sessions. Please keep your cameras on as much as possible. Please do not attend class while driving or attending a swim meet or making dinner. We all benefit when you bring your full self to class.

Course Format (Online, Blended)

This is an online, blended course. This means some work will happen asynchronously, but we will also convene five times. Synchronous sessions will be held on Zoom, from 5:00-8:00 pm on the dates below.

- Wednesday, October 25
- Wednesday, November 8
- Wednesday, November 15
- Wednesday, November 29
- Wednesday, December 13

Crew

During our first session, you will be assigned to a 4-5 person "crew." As a crew, you will be responsible for the learning of the group and the learning of each individual member. Your online reflections will be posted to a crew discussion board. Small group conversations during synchronous sessions will be held in crew. Consider these colleagues your first sounding board and support network. As a crew, plan to model "[expedition behavior](#)" for each other.

Required Text

There is one required text, with additional readings posted to Canvas. Consider purchasing the book from an independent bookstore. Please make sure to get the revised and expanded edition.

Boudett, K. P., City, E. A., & Murnane, R. J. (2013). *Data wise: A step-by-step guide to using assessment results to improve teaching and learning*. Revised and expanded edition. Harvard Education Press. [[Bookshop](#)]

Course Requirement Categories

There are two categories of work for this class.

- Weekly online work and class participation
- Data-Informed Needs Assessment

No final exam will be given in this course.

Specifications Grading

In this course – as with all courses in this program – the focus of your efforts should be on *your learning*. I want you to take chances, to be unsure and uncomfortable (and to be okay with that), to challenge what you may have previously thought, to challenge what I think and what the authors we read think, and to struggle when using new ideas for the first time.

In line with these values, I use *specifications grading*. My intent is to shift your attention from grades and towards learning and risk-taking. For each assignment, I provide guidelines to help you know what is expected and give you feedback on your work in many forms. Each task is graded “complete” or “incomplete,” and the following list outlines tasks you must complete to earn particular grades.

Note that the Data Informed Needs Assessment (DINA) must be completed to pass the course.

- To receive an A*
 - Attend all five synchronous sessions (excused absences don’t count as missed)
 - Complete all four reading reflections (with responses)
 - Complete the Data Tour
 - Complete all four DINA Memos
 - Submit a final written Data Informed Needs Assessment (DINA)
- To receive an A-*
 - Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than two of the following:
 - A reading reflection
 - A reading reflection response
 - A DINA Memo
- To receive a B+*
 - Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than three of the following:
 - A reading reflection
 - A reading reflection response
 - A DINA Memo
- To receive a B*
 - Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than four of the following:
 - A reading reflection
 - A reading reflection response
 - The Data Tour
 - A DINA Memo
- To receive a B-*
 - Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than five of the following:
 - A reading reflection
 - A reading reflection response
 - The Data Tour
 - A DINA Memo
- To receive a C+*
 - Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than six of the following:
 - A reading reflection
 - A reading reflection response
 - The Data Tour
 - A DINA Memo
- To receive a C*
 - Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than seven of the following:
 - A reading reflection
 - A reading reflection response
 - The Data Tour
 - A DINA Memo

To receive a D

- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than eight of the following:
 - A reading reflection
 - A reading reflection response
 - The Data Tour
 - A DINA Memo

If you are interested in learning more about this form of grading, here are a couple of books and a blog post that detail the logic and some of the mechanics:

- Blum, Susan D. (2020). *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*. West Virginia University Press.
- Nilson, Linda B. (2015). *Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time*. Stylus Publishing.
- Stommel, Jesse. (2018). How to ungrade. Retrieved from <https://www.jessestommel.com/how-to-ungrade/>

A Note About Resistance and Learning

Having spent many years in school myself, I can say that my best learning did not happen when I was comfortable. Rather, my best learning happened when I spoke up or asked hard questions or challenged what I was hearing. I often resisted these impulses, whether out of shyness or deference to authority, but *that impulse is important!* During this course, you may have moments when you feel yourself pushing back against ideas that I share or that you read about. That resistance holds something important for you to learn and to make sense of. In your spoken or written contributions to this class, please speak or write about *that* – that resistance – and not what you think I want to hear. Doing so, I believe, will benefit your learning and mine.

Course Rhythms

Our course website can be found on Canvas (<http://elearning.salemstate.edu>) and is accessible using your SSU Navigator username/password. New modules open after class each Wednesday evening, with work due the following Wednesday (occasionally there may be intermediary deadlines). As part of each week's module, I will post a welcome note to contextualize the readings and give you a checklist of tasks/assignments to complete. You should read this first.

Office Hours

Office hours are an opportunity for students to meet one-on-one with me. This time may be used to ask questions and clarify understandings of course concepts, work through connections between course theory and lived experiences, give me feedback on the course, and more. I realize that, as working professionals, your schedules are often tight and your time is precious, but so I am willing to work with your availability. I will make time for anyone who wants to meet one-on-one, either by Zoom or by phone. Please just [send me an email](#) and I'm happy to arrange it.

Course Requirement Details

Weekly Engagement

Our work in this course is driven by participation. Whether engaging in asynchronous online discussions or small group conversations during our synchronous sessions, your participation is vital to your learning and the learning of others in the class. To the extent possible, please be sure to bring your "whole self"

to our work together. Participation does not mean knowing the answer or putting only fully polished thoughts on the table. It means bringing conundrums, worries, partially-shaped ideas, and dilemmas to our conversations. Your uncertainty helps everyone grow. Weekly engagement is assessed by your participation in synchronous sessions as well as your responses to weekly readings.

Data Tour

During our first asynchronous week, you will seek out and have a conversation with someone in your school or district who works with data and whose expertise and knowledge is right above yours. For example, if you are a literacy coach who works primarily with literacy data, you might seek out a principal or assistant principal who has access to and works with all kinds of data across the school. If you are a classroom teacher, you might sit with a content coach who can speak to how data is collected and used across classrooms. The purpose of this conversation is to deepen your knowledge of data use in your school or district. I will give you guidance on the kinds of questions you could ask. From your notes on the conversation, you will post what you learn to a course discussion board.

Data-Informed Needs Assessment (DINA)

The main work of this course involves the development of a needs assessment and initial plans, informed by data, to address a challenge within your school. The area of need you identify should be focused on *student learning* and should be one you are able to influence in some way. This process will be collaborative and guided by the Data Wise process, scaffolded across the arc of the course and in collaboration with your crewmates and colleagues in your school. I will provide information and tools to keep you on track. Periodically, you will submit “DINA Update” memos in which you respond to specific prompts to guide your thinking. These memos—along with work undertaken by a school-based data team that you convene—will shape the final submission. This assignment also serves as first Core Assessment for the TL/CAGS program. Please note that, for the final assignment, no late work will be accepted, except through prior arrangement due to unforeseen, extraordinary circumstances.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE (FALL 2023)

This syllabus is a guide for the semester. It represents the core work and readings for our time together. I may add readings or adjust the syllabus to respond to your needs across the semester. Please stay up-to-date via Canvas for these changes.

Rows shaded grey in the table below represent online modules when we will not meet in person.

Date	Guiding Questions	Readings/Media	Assignment(s) Due DINA activities in bold
Session 1: Oct 25	What counts as data? What assumptions or anxiety do we carry about data and achievement? How can we begin to think about data and achievement through a leadership and equity lens?	Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Datnow & Park, “Data use—for equity,” <i>Educational Leadership</i> In class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safir, <i>The Listening Leader</i>, “Key Challenge 4: Disconnected Data” (pp. 16-20) 	Review syllabus DINA Memo #1 (Opening Thoughts), completed in class

Date	Guiding Questions	Readings/Media	Assignment(s) Due DINA activities in bold
Session 2: Nov 1	How can I use data to help me understand areas of need at my school? How can we engage in conversations about data without reifying stereotypes about students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data Wise</i> (pp. 25-33) • Benson & Fiarman, <i>Unconscious Bias in Schools</i> (chapter 6) • Safir & Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (chapter 2) <p><i>Recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safir, "Street Data: A New Grammar for Educational Equity" (<i>Education Week</i> blog) 	Reading Reflection #1 Data Tour
Session 3: Nov 8	How do we develop assessment literacy in ways that are tailored to our work and our roles (current or future)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data Wise</i>, ch 2, (especially pp. 35-42, 55-63) • Safir & Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (chapter 3) • Browse: MA DESE, Assessment Glossary <p><i>Recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koretz, <i>Measuring Up</i> (ch 1) • Harvard EdCast, with Andrew Ho, "What Test Scores Actually Tell Us" (read/listen, 12:45) • Safir & Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (chapter 4) 	Reading Reflection #2 DINA Memo #2 (Forming Your Data Team)
Session 4: Nov 15	How do I frame a data-informed challenge? What is a learner-centered problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City et al., <i>Instructional Rounds in Education</i> (ch 4, pp. 83-98) • <i>Data Wise</i> (ch 4) <p><i>Recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data Wise</i> (ch 3) • Gehlbach, "Seven Survey Sins" (especially if you think you might use surveys) • Browse: DESE Visualizations Excerpt 	DINA Memo #3 (Initial Data) By Thanksgiving , hold first data team meeting

Date	Guiding Questions	Readings/Media	Assignment(s) Due DINA activities in bold
Session 5: Nov 22 Happy Thanksgiving!	How do I find the root of the challenge? What is a problem of practice? What are the different types of data (across multiple timeframes) that will inform this work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data Wise</i> (ch 5) • Datnow & Park, “5 (good) ways to talk about data,” <i>Educational Leadership</i> • Skim: Benson & Fiarman, <i>Unconscious Bias</i> (ch 9) • Review selected protocols for use with your data team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affinity protocol (<i>DW</i>, p. 230) ○ Why-Why-Why (<i>DW</i>, pp. 113-114) ○ ATLAS (steps 1-3, link) ○ 5 Whys (link) 	Reading Reflection #3 By Thanksgiving , hold first data team meeting
Session 6: Nov 29	How do I move toward action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data Wise</i> (ch 6) <i>Recommended</i> • Skim: <i>Data Wise</i> (ch 7) 	DINA Memo #4 (Action Planning)
Session 7: Dec 6	How do I create authentic learning environments for shared sense-making of data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safir, <i>The Listening Leader</i> (pp. 189-197) <i>Recommended</i> • Safir & Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (ch. 8) 	Reading Reflection #4 Second data team meeting complete
Session 8: Dec 13	What support do I still need to become a data-informed leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No readings 	DINA Draft (as much as possible, for feedback)
Dec 18	Final Papers due by 11:59pm		

Acknowledgments

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Attribution

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MORE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols

Students must comply with any university health and safety protocols for the current academic term. Students should review the updated Covid-19 information found at www.salemstate.edu/covid19.

Equity Statement

“Salem State University is committed to providing equal access to the educational experience for all students in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act and to providing all reasonable academic accommodations, aids and adjustments. Any student who has a documented disability requiring an accommodation, aid or adjustment should speak with the instructor immediately. Students with disabilities who have not previously done so should provide documentation to and schedule an appointment with the Office for Students with Disabilities and obtain appropriate services.”

Emergency Statement

“In the event of a college declared critical emergency, Salem State University reserves the right to alter this course plan. Students should refer to their college email for further information and updates. The course attendance policy stays in effect until there is a college declared critical emergency. In the event of an emergency, please refer to the alternative educational plans for this course located in course handouts. Students should review the plans and gather all required materials before an emergency is declared.”

Additional Emergency Statement

In the event of a University declared critical emergency, Salem State University reserves the right to alter this course plan. Students should refer to www.salemstate.edu for further information and updates. The course attendance policy stays in effect until there is a University-declared critical emergency. In the event of an emergency, please refer to the alternative educational plans for this course, which will be posted on Canvas. Students should review the plans and stay up to date via Canvas.

Citations and Attribution

Please ensure that all work you submit is your own, and cite your sources when you use them. The work of education involves creativity and being resourceful. Often, this means looking elsewhere for ideas. That is encouraged in this course. However, you must attribute those ideas to the original authors when you use them. Failure to do so, in the form of plagiarism (even if unwitting) can result in a grade of 0 or further action with the SSU administration. Please visit this site for further information about citation and attribution: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

Bibliography*

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- Mandinach, E. B. & Honey, M. (2008). *Data-Driven School Improvement: Linking Data and Learning*. Teachers College Press.
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- Safir, S., & Dugan, J. (2021). *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation*. Corwin.

* Not every cited work appears in the syllabus, but they're all useful for data-informed leadership!

- Schildkamp, K., Poortman, C. L., Ebbeler, J., & Pieters, J. M. (2019). How school leaders can build effective data teams: Five building blocks for a new wave of data-informed decision making. *Journal of Educational Change*, 20(3), 283–325.
- Shea, M., Murray, R., & Harlin, R. (2005). *Drowning in Data? How to Collect, Organize, and Document Student Performance*. Heinemann.
- Stantcheva, S. (2022). *How to Run Surveys: A Guide to Creating Your Own Identifying Variation and Revealing the Invisible* (Working Paper No. 30527). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/stantcheva/files/How_to_run_surveys_Stantcheva.pdf
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