

ACTIVITY 2 — HIGHLIGHTING PITFALLS

Springsteen Charter School Case Study

Time 0:15–1:35 (1 hour 20 minutes)

Objectives	
Core Objectives (presenter): • Pre-assess participants for prior knowledge of data-driven instruction. • Analyze a case study on failed implementation of data-driven instruction and identify false drivers of student achievement. • Understand that even with the best of intentions, data-driven instruction can still fall short.	Core Objectives (participants): • Analyze a case study on failed implementation of data-driven instruction and identify false drivers of student achievement. • Understand that even with the best of intentions, data-driven instruction can still fall short.
Materials and Handouts	
Materials: • PowerPoint • Poster paper (one pad per 8–10 people) • Large markers (one set per 8–10 people) • Method to put up posters (tape, tacks, or whatever suits the room) Handouts: • Springsteen Charter School (Use Grade 5–12 version or K–5 version as appropriate)	Differentiation and Adjustments for Group Size and Type • There are two versions of the Springsteen case study: one targeted to K–5 schools, the other targeted to Grade 5–12 schools. If you have a mixed group, use the 5–12 case study for everyone. • You can save workshop time by assigning this case study for homework: in that case you can adjust the opening to having the group summarize the case study, and then move immediately into the role play with Marc Jones. • If you have a large group (seventy people or more), you can save time by setting up the small groups in advance. Try to mix up all groups for this case study; there is no value to having people in their normal teams.

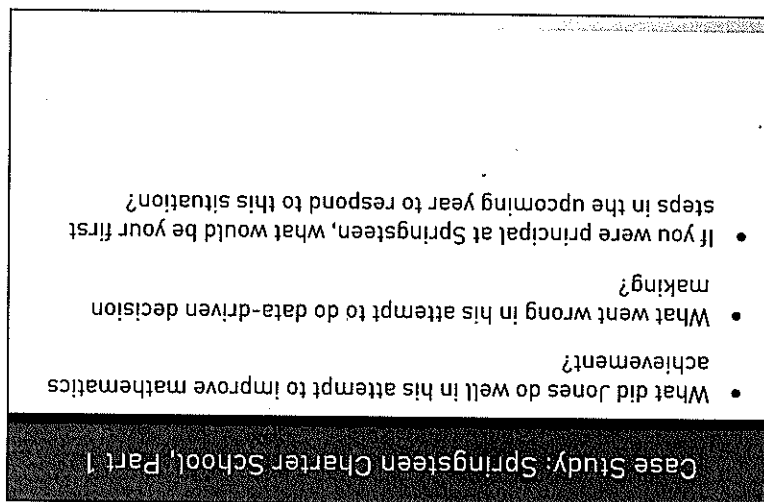
Case Study Introduction (0:15–0:20)

Display a slide based on Figure 7.3.

Set expectations: Begin with an example of a charter school that tried to use effective data-driven decision making:

- Dive into each level of analysis as if this were your school.
- Always have one part of your mind focused on what connections this district has with yours.
- In essence, then, you should find commonalities between this case and your own and think through how you can apply these lessons to your city.

Figure 7.3 Springsteen Case Study Introduction.



Set context for case study:

- Marc Jones, the principal of Springsteen Charter School, has tried unsuccessfully to launch data-driven instruction.
- Jones has hired you to come to school, analyze what went wrong, and explain what he should do about it.

Key questions to answer while reading case study:

- What did Jones do well?
- What went wrong?
- What would be your first steps to improve math achievement?

Read Case Study (0:20–0:35)

Marc Jones Role Play (0:35–0:50)

Take the role of Marc Jones and let participants ask questions about the case (use “Large-Group Participation” box as guidance).

Large-Group Participation

Read the case study carefully so you can embody Marc Jones as well as possible. The key is to choose answers that are *not* the key drivers that make data-driven instruction effective. You can refer back to the introduction—particularly the sections titled “Eight Mistakes That Matter” and “Roadside Distractions: False Drivers”—as a review. Almost all the common errors are explicitly embedded within the case study. Allow the group to ask questions for fifteen minutes total. With a minute left, warn them when you can only take one or two more questions.

Likely audience questions: Why did you switch to the TerraNova but not include the open-ended questions? OR Why did you choose the TerraNova?

Marc Jones response: Like I said in the case, adding the open-ended questions would have delayed the scoring by an additional month, and I didn’t want to wait that long to do analysis with the teachers. Besides, the TerraNova test representative told me that the Multiple Choice version was still a good predictor of state test performance, so we did that version for the sake of being able to do analysis right at the beginning of the school year. *Likely audience question:* It shows here that your students struggled with problem solving on the Stanford Nine. How did your teachers address critical thinking and problem solving in your class?

Marc Jones response: Every one of my teachers created mini-assessments for their class, and all of them included open-ended word problems that were focused on critical thinking. We spent a lot of time talking about that, and my teachers responded—every one of them cares deeply about teaching critical thinking. *Likely audience question:* It says that you didn’t classify special education students except in extreme cases. Why?

Marc Jones response: I had seen in my previous schools how special education students had been relegated to isolated classrooms where expectations were lower for them than for anyone else. I had also experienced how our African American males were disproportionately labeled “Emotionally Disturbed” and put into isolated classrooms. I didn’t want to repeat this discrimination, so we built a full inclusion model where all students took classes together.

Likely audience questions: How did you verify that students were actually learning? OR Did you actually track how students were doing?

Marc Jones response: Of course we tracked how students were doing. That’s why we had the giant data wall in the teachers’ room: we didn’t just track overall student performance, we tracked how each student was doing on every standard. Teachers would constantly change the status of a student when they had reached proficiency in their classroom. I tell you—we are very data-driven!

Likely audience questions: How were the teacher mini-assessments aligned to the state test? OR How did you make sure that teachers created quality assessments?

- Marc Jones response:* Since our state tests are secret, we cannot see them, and no past copies have been released. So we looked at the TerraNova data reports and created assessments that address the standards that the report listed as weaknesses for our students. The teachers all created their own assessments according to their students' needs.
- Likely audience questions:* What was the quality of the teaching? OR How did you work to make your teachers better?
- Marc Jones response:* I worked hard to improve my teachers. I observed them and gave them lots of feedback; that's the most important thing you can do to develop your teachers. My fifth-grade math teacher is especially strong, and I always praised her strong teaching.
- Likely audience questions:* Did you provide any support for students that were struggling? How did you deal with all the different learning needs in one classroom?
- Marc Jones response:* We talked a lot about differentiated instruction so that teachers tried to design activities that allowed students to learn at their own pace.
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- Small-Group Work (0:50-1:10)**
- Record answers on chart paper and designate one person who will present answers to the large group.
- Answer the three questions on the slide:
- What did Jones do well in his attempt to improve mathematics achievement?
 - What went wrong in his attempt to do data-driven decision making?
 - If you were principal at Springsteen, what would be your first steps in the upcoming year to respond to this situation?

Large-Group Presentations (1:10–1:30)

Share out; each group has a minute to say their conclusions. Subsequent groups are not allowed to say anything that has already been said. Review your checklist of important points to see if they have been addressed.

Large-Group Presentations—Key Points

Continue participation until each key observation listed here has been brought up. Note that the audience does *not* need to say the exact line as printed—the substance of the observation is enough. If the audience is lost, use the question prompts to get them back on track, but try to do so as little as possible.

Key points to make sure groups mention (or mention yourself during conclusion):

- Jones accepted the test representative's description without checking the test himself. What's a test representative's goal? To sell more tests! Everyone is going to claim that their tests are aligned, but the truth is that standards vary wildly from state to state. So you need to check the test for yourself.
- Jones asked students how they felt about themselves and not what they knew and how they knew it.
- Teachers subjectively decided when students achieved mastery without looking to actual performance. The charts in the teachers' room tracked student performance, but they were entirely based on teacher opinion of whether students had mastered the standard or not.
- Standards-based report cards are good in theory, but they can easily fall into the trap of stating their opinion for each standard's mastery rather than having concrete assessment of each standard (because of the sheer volume of standards that had to be filled out for each student).

Big Ideas (1:30–1:35)

State any key points that weren't given by a small group, or points that you want to give greater emphasis to than what the group gave.

So in conclusion:

- Year-end results are not enough to make an action plan that will work.
- Lists of standards are not enough.
- "Power Standards," "professional learning communities," or any other single bell or whistle will not be enough either.

So the question, then, is what will be enough? What has to happen at the classroom level to create genuine change?

Core Conclusions Stated by Facilitator

- "Alignment" means different things to different people.
- I've never met a teacher who didn't think he taught "critical thinking."
- Using "open-ended questions" does not guarantee achievement or rigor.
- Year-end results are not enough.
- Lists of standards are not enough.
- So what has to happen to lead to genuine change?