

Data Empowerment

Case Study

February 2021



**Branch Alliance
for Educator Diversity**

REDEFINING QUALITY EDUCATOR PREPARATION

Prepared by Harley Consulting Group

CONTENTS

Introduction	02
Defining Data Empowerment	03
Case Study Purpose and Approach	05
Data Summits	06
Interviews	09
Case Narrative #1	10
Case Narrative #2	12
Case Narrative #3	14
Analysis	16
Conclusion	19



INTRODUCTION

The Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED) is the only non-profit organization in the country dedicated to strengthening, growing, and amplifying the impact of teacher preparation at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), with the longer-range goals of both diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity for all students. Empirical evidence from research emphasizes the importance of educator diversity and its positive impact on students' academic and social and emotional development. MSIs have a rich history of preparing highly effective diverse educators who are equipped to succeed in the classroom and persist in the teaching profession, yet they often go unnoticed in the national conversation about diversifying the teacher workforce. They serve a broad spectrum of teacher candidates, including high percentages of those who are first generation and low income, and they do so with limited human and financial resources. Despite the unique value they offer, MSI's capabilities are often not well understood or acknowledged by the broader education field. Building awareness and public support for these critically important programs is an integral part of BranchED's work.

BranchED collaborates with MSIs and other key partners to foster strategic alliances; provide catalytic funds to spur collaboration and innovation; offer practical training and technical assistance to advance institutional outcomes; and ultimately amplify the unique contributions and voices of MSIs in preparing teachers who will educate America's citizens. BranchED created the *Framework for the Quality Preparation of Educators*, which serves as a roadmap for shaping Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) that meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. The Framework identifies six concrete principles for the design and implementation of high quality Educator Preparation Programs, including: Practice-Based Approach, Community of Learners, Data Empowerment, Intersectional Content, Inclusive Instruction and Equitable Experiences. When BranchED provides training and technical assistance, they create varied opportunities for EPP leaders and faculty to gain applicable knowledge and tools, including convening teams from different institutions to engage in shared learning and candid discussions, as well as ongoing individualized coaching. In some instances, the training and technical assistance provided incorporates multiple design principles from the Framework; in others, a single design principle is the primary driver.



DATA EMPOWERED MSIs

The broader goal of this case study is to gain insight into the impact of BranchED's training and technical assistance support that centers on the Data Empowerment design principle. The Data Empowerment design principle underscores the importance of creating and maintaining an active culture of inquiry. As defined by the *Framework for the Quality Preparation of Educators*, Data Empowered EPPs utilize “an authentic and ongoing cycle of evidence-based improvement that begins with asking thoughtful questions, moves through organizational learning and action, and ends with an evaluation of the effectiveness of actions taken.” The Data Empowerment design principal includes six indicators that help to illustrate how EPPs can evolve from “assessment-focused” to “inquiry-driven”.



Data Collection and Data Quality

The EPP routinely gathers valid and reliable attitudinal, observational, and outcome data on candidate performance, program quality, and EPP operations, as well as on PK-12 school system feedback and graduate performance.



Data Analysis and Interpretation

The EPP creates frequent opportunities to engage a broad base of stakeholders in exploring data together and engaging in open, honest, and collaborative dialog to analyze and interpret results, while acknowledging the limitations of data-informed practice.



Evaluation of Instruction

The EPP triangulates multiple sources of data to evaluate and improve instruction both within individual courses and practice-based assignments and across programs and EPP areas of focus.



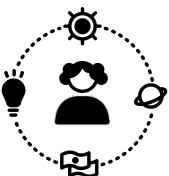
Formative Assessment

The EPP implements culturally responsive data practices to monitor candidate progress toward mastery of intended competencies and progression through the program in ways that enable both the provider and candidates to reflect upon indicators of progress and to improve over time



Quality Assurance

The EPP uses data to assess whether programs are achieving desired outcomes (program quality) and to benchmark program performance against comparable programs offered by other institutions.



Innovation and Systemic Change

The EPP uses data to spur and test innovations and to promote systemic change, while being good data stewards in protecting individual privacy and combating the racial and economic politics of data use in education

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE APPROACH

Program improvement through more effective data practice is one theme across the Data Empowerment indicators; as is the explicit goal of increasing cultural responsiveness and combating systemic inequities through effective and adaptive use of data. To fully grasp the intent behind BranchED’s approach to supporting MSIs in this area, it is critical to view these indicators as drivers of empowerment. MSIs navigate economic, political and racial challenges that other institutions do not, and as a result, data can serve to perpetuate existing inequities when leaders don’t feel equipped or empowered to tell their own stories with nuance. BranchED Founder, President, and CEO Dr. Cassandra Herring notes that “there is a sense that data is being ‘done’ to them... someone wants an accreditation report, something is due.” Herring highlights some of the ways in which increased awareness around data practice and data use can instead become a driver of equity and empowerment when MSI leaders and teams have access to the right tools, information, and peer supports. Effective technical assistance and support around data can:

- Ensure that EPP leaders and faculty have access to quality data that comes from quality assessments.
- Create a space where EPP leaders and faculty can have authentic conversations about areas for improvement with peers who have similar challenges around data.
- Empower EPPs with the right information to find and effectively support strong educator candidates.
- Increase candidates’ access to authentic assessments, and their ability to choose what assessments they take.



BranchED’s Data Empowerment indicators capture a set of critical practice changes that all EPPs can leverage to become more technically proficient around data and ultimately establish an institutional culture of inquiry and continuous program improvement that allows them not just to support their candidates, but to help them thrive. For BranchED the work to support MSIs in this area through training and technical assistance is ultimately an effort to empower faculty to support candidate development, equipped with meaningful evidence to inform decisions they are making about their programs and on behalf of their teacher candidates.

CASE STUDY PURPOSE & APPROACH

BranchED engaged with an outside consulting firm, Harley Consulting Group (HCG), to conduct a program evaluation inquiry for the Data Empowerment case study. Although the training and technical assistance supports BranchED provides to support MSIs around data come in several different forms (including individualized coaching; tools to guide practice; and traditional trainings) in order to create a manageable scope for analysis, BranchED identified a singular technical assistance format to focus on for the purposes of this inquiry: the Data Empowerment Summit. BranchED's Data Summits are national convenings designed to function as highly interactive learning experiences for teams of EPP leaders and faculty. Participating teams bring samples of their own data and assessment tools and receive real-time constructive feedback; work collaboratively with leaders and faculty from other institutions to share best practices and challenges; and ultimately leave with the ability to apply core concepts from the sessions to strengthen their own assessment tools and practices and drive overall program improvement. With the broader aim of gaining insight into the impact of BranchED's Data Empowerment Summits overall, the following research questions drove the data collection and analysis for this case study:



Did participants leave the Data Summits with new skills and/or knowledge that could drive improvements in the quality of their data practices?



What types of policy and/or practice changes were participants motivated to make at their institutions as a result of participating in a Data Summit?



What do participants cite as the features of BranchED's Data Summits that motivated them to implement changes at their respective institutions?

A third question arose from the initial qualitative analysis of what past participants shared as they reflected on their experience during the Data Summits:



How did Data Summit participants view the technical assistance they received as a driver of equity and empowerment?

DATA COLLECTION

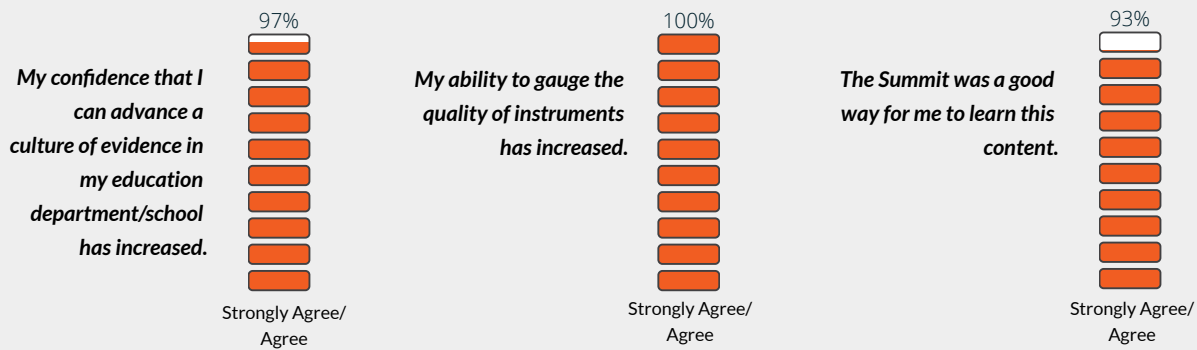
Several data sources were used to address the research questions driving this inquiry. Participant feedback surveys from the three Data Empowerment Summits held between 2016 and 2019 were reviewed to provide insight into participants' perceptions of their own learning as a result of the Summit(s) they attended. Assessment instrument evaluation data was reviewed to demonstrate the extent to which participants' capacity to create and/or gauge quality assessments improved as a result of attending one of BranchED's Data Summits. Finally, a series of interviews was conducted to explore the individual experiences of Data Summit participants, including the changes they implemented at their respective institutions after leaving the Summit(s) they attended. BranchED staff involved in technical assistance efforts around data practices—including but not limited to the Data Summits—were also interviewed to offer insight into the technical assistance approach and to provide additional contextual detail around the Data Summits, where applicable.

2016 DATA SUMMIT FEEDBACK

MAKING DATA AN ALLY (NOT AN OBSTACLE) IN PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Virginia Beach, VA 2016

The 2016 Data Summit focused on creating the conditions to build a culture of evidence; introducing the components of a comprehensive quality assurance system including guidance on evaluating the quality of assessment instruments and analysis strategies; and using evidence for program improvement. Highlights from the post-summit evaluation survey, which were overall strongly positive, demonstrate that all or nearly all participants felt that their ability to gauge the quality of assessment instruments and build a culture of evidence, essential goals of the summit, had improved as a result of their participation. Quotes from the feedback surveys underscore participants' positive response to the practicality of the content and their confidence in their ability to apply it.



The information will allow me to make necessary changes at my university to better develop validity and reliability.

Relevant, clear, engaging, and good exercises.

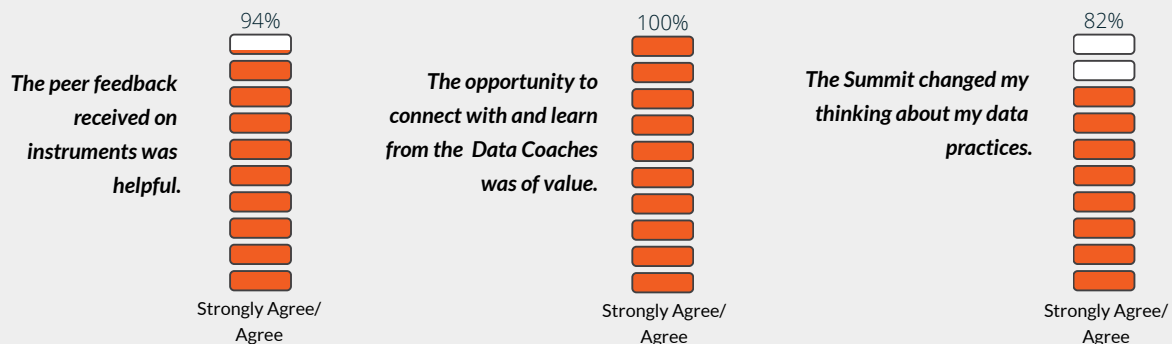


2017 DATA SUMMIT FEEDBACK

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: FROM ROADBLOCKS TO RESOURCES

Austin, TX 2017

The 2017 Summit was designed to allow participating teams to develop the knowledge and skills needed to advance a culture of excellence and evidence in their programs that is characterized by collecting, analyzing, and effectively using a variety of data to help answer guiding questions about the performance of their candidates, programs, and operations and to make data-empowered improvements. Key activities, which reiterated and deepened the content presented in the 2016 summit, included having teams reflect on their institutional data practices and draft action plans for improvement with the support of Data Coaches at the Summit; and using rubrics to gauge assessment quality in order to provide feedback on other participants' institution-made assessments. A snapshot of the overall summit evaluation below shows high levels of satisfaction in key areas related to changes in assessment practice and to the feedback received from colleagues.



2019 DATA SUMMIT FEEDBACK

FALL LEARNING SUMMIT

Chicago, IL 2019

The key goals of the 2019 Learning Summit were to empower attendees to be able to apply appropriate methods of reliability or validity checking to the instruments used for thorough and accurate assessment of program data; to use a set of tools and strategies to enhance data based decision making processes; and to return to their institutions with useful knowledge and re-energized about working with data. Highlights from the post-summit evaluation survey captured below reflect high participant satisfaction, particularly with respect to the practical utility of the content presented.

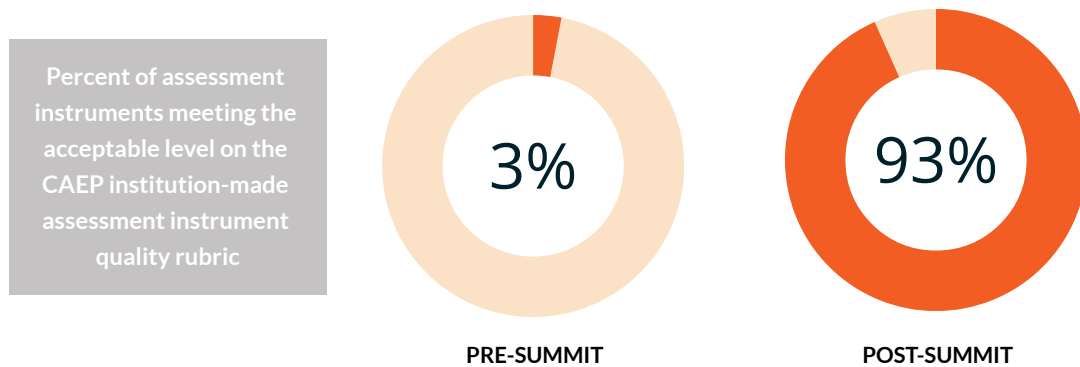


This was the best conference that I've been to since I've been in Higher Education. I walked away with a wealth of information that will help me in my current role.

Every part of this experience was excellent.

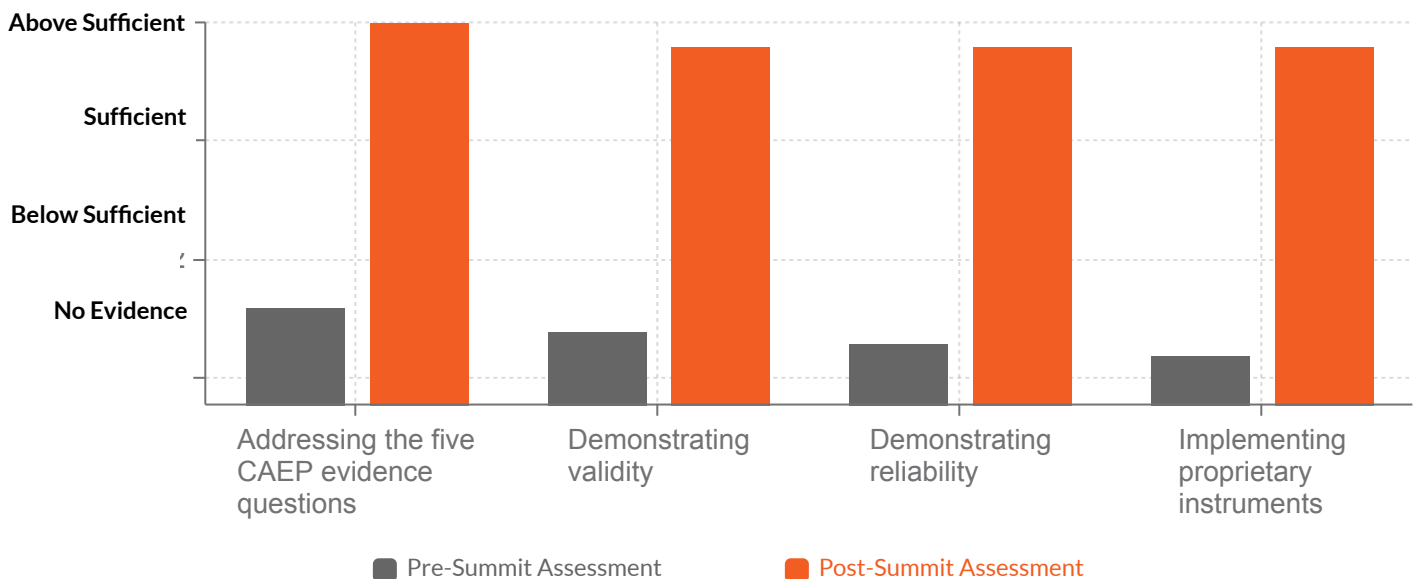
ASSESSMENT IMPROVEMENT RESULTS

One of the targeted outcomes for BranchED’s Data Empowerment Summits is that participating EPP faculty and leaders will improve the quality of their key assessment instruments. To track progress in this area, BranchED asked participating teams to submit existing assessment instruments as pre-work, prior to arriving at the Summit. BranchED staff then evaluated the assessment instruments using the CAEP Evaluation Rubric. Participating teams revised and resubmitted their assessment instruments after the Summit and the instruments were evaluated again as a post-training assessment. To ensure reliability, the assessments were evaluated by multiple raters; and self-assessments by participants were not included. Below is a summary of the results of the assessment evaluations from multiple Data Summits. The first visualization shows that the percent of the assessment instruments reviewed that met the overall standard of "acceptable" according to the CAEP rubric increased from 3% on instruments submitted prior to the summit to 93% on revised instruments submitted after the summit.



Additional ratings included the degree to which participants could demonstrate increased knowledge, skills, and understanding of key aspects of assuring assessment instrument quality. Pre and post-Summit assessments were used in this case as well. Ratings included; Above Sufficient, Sufficient, Below Sufficient, and No Evidence. The bar graph below shows the average rating for participants in the pre-Summit assessment in each area compared to the post-Summit assessment. In all four areas measured, average ratings rose from between No Evidence and Below Sufficient in the pre-Summit assessment to at or approaching Above Sufficient (the highest ranking possible) in all areas in the post-Summit assessment.

Objective Evaluation of Work Product



INTERVIEWS

An initial round of interviews was conducted by HCG in June and July of 2020, involving 10 participants from past Data Summits, three of whom were experienced MSI faculty members who also served as facilitators to support content delivery at the Summits. Interview participants were selected by BranchED leaders with the goal of identifying individuals who reported having taken steps to implement changes at their respective institutions based on their experience at the Data Summit(s) they attended. During the initial round of interviews, the HCG team also interviewed five BranchED staff members, including the Chief Executive Officer, a Research Associate, the Vice President of Programs and Services, a Data Coach and Systems Manager and a Continuous Improvement Coach.

The HCG team conducted follow-up interviews in September 2020 with three of the MSI faculty members who participated in the initial round of interviews. These participants' experiences were selected to highlight in this case study after considering the following factors from their initial interviews:

- They were able to articulate specific components of the Data Summit(s) they attended that prompted a change or changes in practice when they returned to their respective institutions.
- Collectively, the participants selected experienced all three of the Data Summits (2 of the 3 participants attended both the 2016 and 2017 Summits, while another attended the 2019 Summit).
- They represent a range of professional experiences. While all three work for different institutions in different regions of the country, all three are employed (or were employed at the time of the interviews) in different faculty positions involving data within a college of education at an MSI.



CASE STUDY NARRATIVES

CASE NARRATIVE #1

Angela¹, a Professor of Early Childhood Education and an edTPA Coordinator, attended BranchED's Data Summit in Chicago in August 2019 with two colleagues she had only known for a short time, during the first few months of her first year in a leadership role. She describes the Data Summit as “powerful”. At the Summit, Angela experienced something that was novel in her professional life: as a leader and a woman of Color at an HBCU, she found herself collaborating in an intimate workshop setting with leaders from across the country who worked at institutions where the majority of the students were also people of Color. In this context, she experienced new insights about how to use data to drive out systematic biases in Educator Preparation Programs; how to create meaningful evaluation questions about Educator Preparation Programs; and how to involve more stakeholders in the assessment process (including the community, the university, PK12 school partners and the teacher candidates themselves).

When Angela returned to her institution after the Data Summit, her experience continued to influence her actions and her mindset. She was particularly motivated to eliminate unintentional bias in assessment tools being used in courses she taught as part of her institution's Educator Preparation Program. She had observed that candidates' lesson plans were being evaluated using a writing-intensive assessment tool and the results indicated that they were struggling. She was motivated to look deeper into those results after her time at the Summit. While she recognized that some of her students were struggling with the format, she had deeper concerns that the assessment itself was flawed- with an over-reliance on lengthy narrative response, it offered an imprecise measure of specific skills she wanted candidates in her courses to be able to demonstrate. “This wasn't fair”, she said. “[Candidates] got a score [on each detailed written response provided] but no real insight on what they needed to improve on in practice [for lesson planning].” Angela was motivated to advocate for a less writing-intensive but equally rigorous lesson plan rubric to drive the focus and format of the assessment. The goal wasn't to make the assessment easier to pass; it was to make the tool less biased in terms of modality and more tightly aligned with the lesson planning skills being assessed. To achieve a greater degree of alignment and precision, the new tool was broken down into specific lesson sections, it referenced specific standards, and highlighted documented transitions between activities.



¹ All names used in this case study are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.

CASE NARRATIVE #1 -Cont-

For Angela the Data Summit was also a motivator to involve more community stakeholders in the process of evaluating her institution’s Educator Preparation Program, bringing additional stakeholders into the assessment process in meaningful and inclusive ways. The first critical step she took was “establishing relationships to have conversations” with stakeholders from the community who were invested in the work happening in her institution’s Educators Preparation Programs. Angela then went on to establish an advisory board that included representation from community college partners, organizations that service the local area, and a group of current undergraduate and graduate students in the college of education. The board’s decisions to-date have been driven by data, with an emphasis on reducing programmatic bias.

These changes haven’t come without challenges. Angela admitted in her follow-up interview in September 2020 that she was struggling to make the program assessment changes stick. She noted that there is currently limited diversity in the staff at her institution. She feels the impact of age gaps and cultural gaps within the faculty. But Angela is also accustomed to advocating for change in the face of resistance. She experienced racism in her own experience as a teacher candidate : “From the way I was advised [as a candidate], I was told that I should have a backup career because most Black students couldn’t pass the [teacher certification] test. I went back to school for educator preparation and I was working a full time job...[and I] asked if there were accommodations for working students. I was told if you don’t like it you can work at Burger King.” During her time as a teacher candidate, she often felt like she didn’t have a voice. Equipped with growing momentum about how to create change in the field, using data as a powerful driver, Angela is more determined to ensure that candidates involved in the programs she leads can also become drivers of change. “They are the ones going through the experience...[and they should be] involved in decision-making.” She sees data as a powerful lever to better prepare people to become educators and to include their input in that process. “[Teacher candidates] should be heard...both what they are experiencing and how they feel [about the program they are part of].”

RELEVANT DATA INDICATORS



Data Collection and Data Quality



Formative Assessment



Data Analysis and Interpretation



Innovation and Systemic Change

The Data Summit sparked progress across a several of the Data Empowerment indicators captured in BranchED’s Framework for the Quality Preparation of Educators. The changes Angela worked to make to the lesson planning assessment tool being used in her course represent an effort to increase **Data Quality** as well as progress in the **Formative Assessment** indicator, where she took steps to implement more culturally responsive data practices and revised the assessment to more precisely reflect the lesson planning practices students were being evaluated on. She also demonstrated growth in the **Data Analysis and Interpretation** indicator, by expanding the base of stakeholders who were included in discussions about early childhood assessment practices in her program. Finally, she demonstrated a growing commitment to using data to promote **Innovation and Systemic Change** by working to amplify student voices to ensure they have opportunities to provide meaningful input about the preparation programs they are part of and ensure those programs are meeting their needs as emerging professionals. and graduate students in the college of education.

CASE NARRATIVE #2

Toya* is currently a Department of Education Chairperson at a small private HBCU. She attended the Data Summit in Virginia Beach in 2016, as well as the subsequent summit in Austin, TX in 2017, both while serving as assessment coordinator/CAEP coordinator for a different institution than the one she works at now, accompanied a three-member team of colleagues. She recalls the 2016 summit as being “bowl me over helpful in helping us think about what [assessments] we already had.” The experience not only helped the team think about productive revisions to existing assessments by allowing them to demonstrate validity and reliability, it helped them consider data as a tool for improving their programs. Those “revolutionary ideas” helped Toya see her role more clearly in terms of how to take information that the programs were producing and organize it to drive coherent and meaningful action. One thing that was especially effective about the design of the data summits for Toya and her team was the intentionality and specificity of each workshop which allowed participants to draw immediate, practical takeaways while building a better holistic understanding of their strategy around gathering meaningful, accurate data.

The lessons Toya learned about improving assessment tools at the Data Summit had some immediate positive impacts when she returned to her campus. Her team was able to demonstrate validity and reliability for existing assessments and make impactful changes as needed. However, some of the more nuanced challenges around data that impacted her program persisted, despite having established better practices to align assessment tools. Toya noted that for small MSIs, there are unique demands around data that have an outsized impact compared to larger schools. These challenges include having access to sufficient, ongoing data expertise and the ability to establish credibility around the program data with very small student samples. At the Data Summit, Toya felt the benefits of “having someone to help you review your assessments, [and provide input on] what is missing and what should be included.” But when Toya worked to share some of what she learned in her subsequent role at another institution without the team of colleagues she attended the Summit with, it was an ongoing struggle- one that took time and attention away from building relationships with teacher candidates and providing high quality supports.



CASE NARRATIVE # 2- CONT-

Reflecting on the Data Summits also prompted new insight for Toya about how the biases of certain types of assessment practices were impacting the candidates in her program. One particularly persistent bias that Toya has observed related to standardized assessments for teacher certification involves the perception about 'who is a viable teacher candidate.' "We know there is bias in standardized testing yet we continue to use those same instruments universally [when it comes to assessing candidate readiness]...What is wrong with the system that only 5% of graduates can pass a basic skills test?" Toya noted that in this context, many students in her program are so intimidated that they don't even take the certification tests necessary to officially complete the program, even after taking a number of program courses. The Data Summit prompted Toya to look more closely at how candidates were moving through their programs over time and connecting those trajectories to their certification results, including whether or not they opted to take the certification test. This analysis revealed a new information about subsets of students who were opting not to take the test, including potential warning signs in candidates' trajectories that indicated a need for additional intervention Toya and her fellow faculty ad previously not had on their radar.

Finally, Toya identified another aspect of the Data Summit experience that was powerful: the opportunity to share candidly with colleagues from other MSIs and HBCUs in a constructive space. "At some HBCUs people don't want to reflect badly on their institutions, so they don't share [their challenges with the data]. They sit on a problem because they think it will look bad for their institution. This may be a unique [regional] thing or a cultural thing. If we had an external support system where would be OK to reach out, small institutions like ours wouldn't have to do every single thing themselves." Reflecting on the complexity of the challenges they continue to navigate at her current institution related to data quality and educational equity overall, Toya says that she "can't overestimate the productive power of sharing [with peers at other institutions through BranchED's Data Summits]. Its tremendous".

Like Angela, Toya's experience at the Data Summit prompted a productive focus on **Data Quality**, specifically by highlighting the value of revising existing assessments in order to demonstrate validity and reliability. This increased focus on the quality of existing assessments subsequently led to increased confidence what the program assessments were telling Toya and her team about their program- an indicator of progress with respect to **Quality Assurance**. She also was able to employ new insight around **Data Analysis and Interpretation** that brought clarity to some of the results she and her team were seeing with respect to performance on teacher certification tests. Finally, Toya demonstrated increased desire for **Innovation and Systemic Change** as she was more apt to acknowledge some of the biased practices impacting candidates- such as the inequities inherent in their educational lives prior to entering the educator preparation pathway, as well as the biases inherent in standardized assessment tools used to identify potential candidates for professional certification.

RELEVANT DATA INDICATORS



Innovation and Systemic Change



Data Collection and Data Quality



Quality Assurance



Data Analysis and Interpretation

CASE NARRATIVE # 3

Grace* is an Assessment Facilitator at a College of Education who attended both the Data Summit in Virginia Beach in 2016 and the Data Summit in Austin, TX in 2017. Going into the first summit, Grace recalls that when BranchED requested data samples in advance of the Summit, “we knew we were in trouble when we got that data together...we needed a lot of help.” Grace attended the first Summit with two other colleagues. They were struggling with data: how to ensure validity and reliability and how to translate the data they were getting into meaningful action. She describes the experience at the Summit as “work”, which could at times be both nerve racking and grueling, but it was work that was appreciated. “It was intense, data driven, rich. It taught us so much about our program. Then it turned around and taught us how to analyze our own data.” She also saw teams from other institutions opening up about their data challenges: “We also saw that some of the other universities had some of the same experiences, [the same challenges] with not knowing what to do. It was instrumental in where we are today, we are in a much better position than where we are today.”



One of the ways Grace felt the Data Summit was particularly impactful was in prompting her team to use dispositional data differently to support candidates on their path to become professional educators. This was especially relevant for Grace as she is charged with supporting candidates in the alternate certification program at her institution. “When I got back to campus and started using the tools, I felt confident...that I [could] help with analyzing [different sets of] data which we do regularly and use that to fuel the program and to help our [candidates]. I have a responsibility to use that data to help them determine if they are on the right path.” This has included looking at candidates’ early trajectories in a number of different areas, including academic, socioeconomic and emotional indicators.

“I have a responsibility to use that data to help [our students] determine if they are on the right path.”

As candidates get further into the program at her institution, Grace has been working to increase the consistency and intentionality of how she reviews screener tests, looking at sub populations, and other [program assessments] to determine if candidates are ready to take their certification tests or if they need to be guided first through a study plan.

Another key takeaway for Grace from the Data Summits was a new way of looking at data through what she calls “an HCBU lens.” She reflected that as an MSI, “sometimes we get discouraged when our numbers look low”, especially when comparing sub populations to each other.

CASE NARRATIVE # 3 -CONT-

Grace found it helpful to talk to teams from similar institutions about how to better understand those patterns. She also found it clarifying when the BranchED team at the Data Summit could contextualize these numbers, both in larger data sets, for sub-populations and through research. Ultimately this pushed Grace and her team to better understand their own program, actively engage with the research and the data to work to better serve their candidates.

Grace's experience at the Data Summit helped her team gain confidence about **Data Quality** and begin to develop more effective practice for **Data Analysis and Interpretation**. Tools to demonstrate validity and reliability of existing assessments were once again an important factor in driving progress in these areas for Grace and her team. Grace was able to strengthen her capacity to track candidates' trajectories throughout the program by considering new data as part of the analysis- an indicator of improvement in both her capacity for **Data Analysis and Interpretation**, as well as an emerging approach to **Formative Assessment** that offered new insight into candidates' progression over time. Finally, Grace progressed in the area of **Quality Assurance** after her experience at the Summit, where she recognized a need shift in her own thinking about how to interpret patterns of performance data, including a more intentional disaggregation of candidate subgroup data.

RELEVANT DATA INDICATORS



Data Collection and Data Quality



Data Analysis and Interpretation



Formative Assessment



Quality Assurance



Did participants leave the Data Summits with new skills and/or knowledge that could drive improvements in the quality of their data practices?

According to feedback data from all three Data Summits, participants indicated strong consensus that they learned new skills, particularly related to creating and evaluating quality assessment instruments. They also indicated increased confidence in their ability to use what they learned during the Summit to start to lay the foundation for an effective culture of evidence and inquiry at their respective institutions. Participants' perceptions about their increased knowledge with respect to assessment instruments was consistent with the results of the evaluation of institution-made assessment instruments conducted before and after each of the Summits. Across the board, the scores on the evaluation of institution-made assessment instruments increased by 90% from the pre-Summit ratings to the post-Summit ratings, indicating that participants made considerable progress in this area as a result of their Summit participation. All three participants featured in the case narratives also cited the foundational skills related to assessment instrument quality as one of the most valuable and impactful takeaways.



What types of policy and/or practice changes were participants motivated to make as a result of participating in a Data Summit hosted by BranchED?

Two clear themes emerged from the immediate steps Angela, Grace, and Toya took in response to their experiences at the Data Summits they attended. One is that they were prompted to interpret data differently; another is that they were prompted to change existing assessment tools and practices. Both Grace and Toya highlighted changes in how they interpreted existing data sets when they returned to their respective institutions. Toya gained new insight into the results she and her team were seeing when candidates took their certification tests at the end of the program—a realization that had significant implications for how they might support candidates and understand their trajectories as they move through the program. Grace was motivated to more actively engage with the research that she was exposed to at the Data Summit that could help better explain the patterns she saw for candidates in her program, and ultimately work to use the data to better serve them.

The Data Summits also prompted all three participants to take action to refine existing assessments tools and/or assessment practices. Toya indicated that her team returned to their institution with a new set of skills to improve existing assessments and increased capacity to demonstrate the validity and reliability of the results they produced. Grace highlighted efforts to use dispositional data differently to better guide candidates through her institution's alternative certification program; integrating new types of data earlier in the course of their participation in the program. Angela was motivated to change a specific program assessment to reduce unintended bias in its modality and to produce results that were more precisely aligned to the content candidates were learning. Not only will these efforts allow the MSI leaders and faculty the opportunity to improve the quality of the data they gather about their programs, they will also be able to provide more meaningful feedback for their candidates through better aligned assessment tools. In addition to helping individual candidates navigate their preparation coursework and benefit from meaningful feedback, these improved assessment practices create opportunities for their institutions overall to ensure that their programs that are more responsive to candidate needs.



What do participants cite as the features of BranchED's Data Summits that motivated them to implement changes at their respective institutions?

Participants noted that creating or increasing capacity to demonstrate the legitimacy of their programs' assessment tools was essential. By developing skills and being introduced to new methods to establish validity and reliability, participants gained confidence to push for more ambitious and expansive goals using data, with the understanding that the assessment tools informing their decisions were sound. These improved assessment tools and practices resulted in more confidence about how to assure data quality and interpret the data the programs were producing. Both Toya and Grace also noted that it was particularly effective to have been able to work with their own assessment tools to practice the new skills they learned during the Data Summits.

Another characteristic of the Data Summits that all three participants described as impactful was the ability to collaborate with fellow MSI leaders and faculty around shared challenges and best practices. Toya identified this aspect of the experience as particularly rare in her decades-long career in the field. The ability to engage candidly with other MSI faculty about the challenges that exist around the data was a catalyst for changing mindsets and practices.



How did participants view the technical assistance they received at the Data Summits as a driver of equity and empowerment?

When Dr. Herring reflected on some of the ways that MSIs could be empowered through the design of BranchED's technical assistance, she noted the importance of empowering EPPs to use quality data that comes from quality assessments. Whether this data comes from institution-made assessments or proprietary instruments, it is critical that EPPs have the tools and knowledge to leverage those instruments and the information they produce effectively. The technical assistance that BranchED offered at the Data Summits to help participants evaluate, refine and revise the tools they brought from their institutions had deep impact on the participants included in this case study. All three participants cited examples of post-Summit steps they took that illustrate increased confidence and ownership of assessment data that came as a result of having learned new methods to establish validity and reliability at the Summit that allowed them to improve the quality of their existing assessments.

Beyond the efficacy of new methods to increase the quality of existing tools and practices, another motivating factor that all three participants cited was that they were more attuned to equity as it relates to educator preparation data: how it is collected, how it is analyzed, how it is interpreted. On one hand, this was a heightening of existing concerns about broader inequities in the field that the data can bring attention to. As Toya explained, the experience underscored frustrations she already had about the inequity of the education system that was failing to prepare young people to be successful as teacher candidates: "What is wrong with your system that only 5% of graduates can pass a basic skills test? That to me is a huge pool of inequity, it says to me we are failing our students/ our citizens."

Having time to analyze and reflect on the patterns that exist in the data- with connections to research and guidance- also yielded constructive conversation and new insight. For Grace, being able to look at the same data she and her team had seen before through a new lens brought clarity and nuance to their interpretations about candidate performance, especially when comparing the performance of sub-populations. Having guidance around how to “pull that information apart” and reminders to explore the historical patterns that have shaped inequitable systems helped guide Grace and her team to see how they might draw more constructive conclusions from their data. Finally, the experience sparked new insight about the equity of specific assessment practices being used to gather data within programs at their institutions. For Angela, this meant being motivated to take action to change an important program assessment due in part to bias she identified in the assessment format.

The question of how these factors converge to empower MSI leaders and faculty to implement lasting change is an important one. All participants noted the immediate positive effects of having the tools and knowledge to take action to improve assessment practices and being more attuned to equity as a motivator for change. What is necessary for that initial sense of motivation and empowerment to be sustainable? Since the participants included in this analysis were reflecting on their experience at least a year after their participation in the Data Summits they attended, they were able to offer insight into some of the challenges EPP leaders and faculty could experience as they work over time to develop data empowered practices at their institutions. In the two years since her attendance at the Data Summit, Toya felt the effects of limited resources at her small institution making it increasingly difficult to devote time and effort needed to continue to improve and maintain credibility of their assessment tools and data. She also recognized that for a program with a very small staff, there was an ongoing need to have access to some type of ad hoc data expertise to continue to ensure that the changes they were making to assessment tools and practices were on the right track. In the year since she attended the Data Summit, Angela has encountered resistance among other faculty members when she has attempted to encourage them to adopt the new program assessment she developed- resistance she attributes in part to cultural differences and failure to recognize the inequity of the assessment practice she was working to address. Two years after her Data Summit experience, Grace has made strategic changes to the type of data she uses to inform supports for her candidates in the alternative certification program, but those changes haven't yet significantly impacted practice more broadly at her institution.

While it is unrealistic for BranchED—or any technical assistance partner—to be able to anticipate and support the various challenges MSIs may face around data in the longer term, one particularly promising design element from the Data Summits that BranchED should continue to leverage and expand is the cross-institution collaboration between leaders and faculty members. All three interview participants indicated that the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from other institutions was one of the most powerful aspects of the experience. Toya noted that she couldn't “overestimate the [productive] power of sharing [with other institutions]. Its tremendous”. Grace called the opportunity to discuss shared challenges with MSI leaders as “instrumental” in what she and her team were able to do to improve their data practices after the Data Summit they attended. Both Toya and Angela also noted that the opportunity to collaborate with MSI leaders in this way was incredibly rare in their field.

ANALYSIS

Leveraging the power of collaboration is already an intentional part of the design of the Data Summits as learning experiences. Describing BranchED's technical assistance for MSIs, Dr. Herring cited the importance of making space for leaders and faculty "to have authentic conversations about areas for improvement with peers who have similar challenges around data." As MSI leaders and faculty members come away from opportunities like the Data Summits with new ideas and knowledge and return to face both the opportunities and the challenges inherent in implementation, they stand to benefit considerably from being able to continue to collaborate with their peers. BranchED is uniquely positioned to continue to facilitate and ultimately work to expand a powerful network for established and emerging Data Empowered MSIs to engage in continuous learning and program improvement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data gathered from the Summits and the experiences of the participants featured here, the Data Summits BranchED hosted enabled participating teams to improve their assessment instruments, build confidence around new practices and draw productive attention and urgency to the connection between educator preparation data and equity. As leaders and faculty gain confidence about the quality of their assessment tools and practices, they become better positioned to make programmatic changes that are increasingly responsive to the needs and strengths of their teacher candidates. There was evidence that the participants featured here were able to make some impactful changes to that effect within the locus of their control (including specific program assessments, alternative certification pathways). The extent to which those changes expand in scope and persist over time remains to be seen, but there is clear promise in the continued administration of this type of technical assistance, coupled with an ongoing (and potentially expanded) virtual network for participants to share best practices and problem solve. Coupled with access to practical and effective technical assistance, this type of collaboration could create a powerful and durable source of shared expertise and support that allows MSIs to continue to increase the quality of their Educators Preparation Programs and become even more responsive the needs of the teacher candidates they serve.