

# Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement

## *Five Profiles of Promising Practices*



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Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

# Project Overview:

## Purpose of the Profiles

The purpose of these profiles is to demonstrate what evidence-based decision making looks like in practice. By highlighting this process, these profiles will help to guide others with important points to consider as they use evidence to select and implement interventions to improve student outcomes.

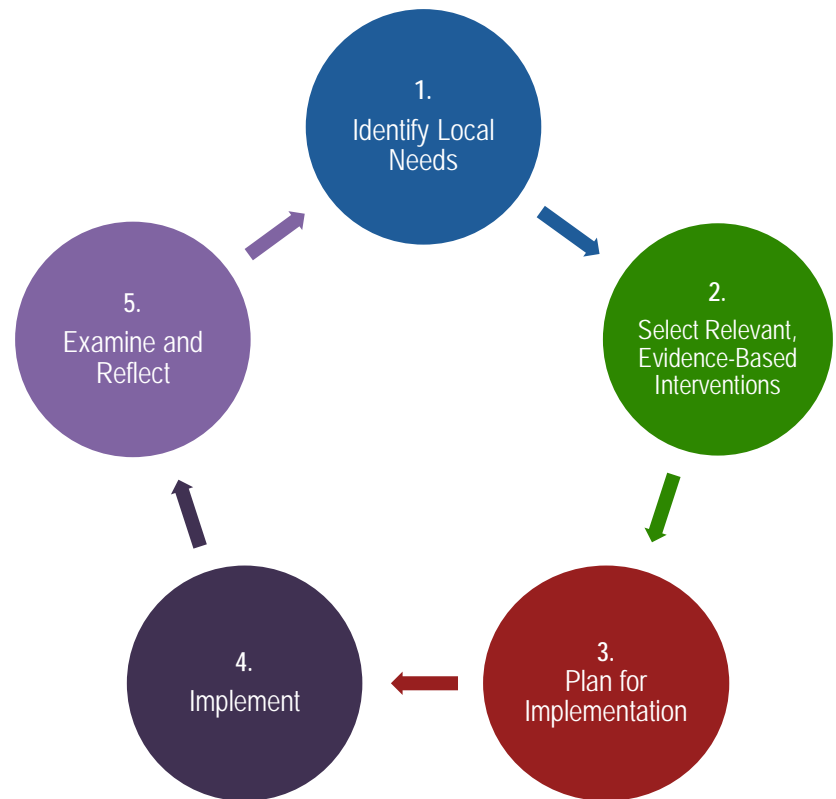
This project identified four sites to profile (states and districts) that promote promising practices in the selection and implementation of evidence-based interventions to improve student and teacher outcomes. Among the promising practices highlighted are examples of how in 2009-2012 these sites used evidence to select interventions that have the potential to align to the new standards for levels of evidence as described in ESSA. The profiles document the promising practices, successes, challenges, and lessons learned related to the implementation of evidence-based practices in these sites.

# Project Overview:

## Conceptual Framework

The design and analysis of the profiles focus on understanding how each site followed steps of an evidence-based decision-making cycle (see figure). The analysis highlights how processes, tools/artifacts, and relationships were leveraged throughout the cycle.

The profiles aim to make visible the decision-making process for using evidence-based practices and are not intended to highlight specific interventions or advocate for the use of particular evidence-based practices/research.



*Figure 1. The evidence-based decision-making cycle for strengthening the effectiveness of investments.\**

\* Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>

# Project Overview:

## Guiding Questions

Guiding questions were identified to align to the conceptual framework of the Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments to uncover the following main points:

- The process the district or state used throughout all five steps of an evidence-based decision-making cycle (i.e., identifying local needs, selecting relevant evidence-based interventions, planning for implementation, implementation, and examining and reflecting on interventions for school improvement);
- The tools/artifacts, resources, and relationships that each site leveraged for support throughout the steps of an evidence-based decision-making cycle;
- The identified student and teacher outcomes the district or state intended to achieve by implementing the intervention and how these outcomes were monitored for continuous improvement;
- The realities encountered or lessons learned throughout the entire evidence-based decision-making cycle, and;
- Recommendations for other districts and states to consider when engaging in the process of using evidence in the selection and implementation of interventions targeted for school improvement.

# Project Overview:

## Methodology

The profile development process for each site was limited to interviews with select staff members and review of available documents.

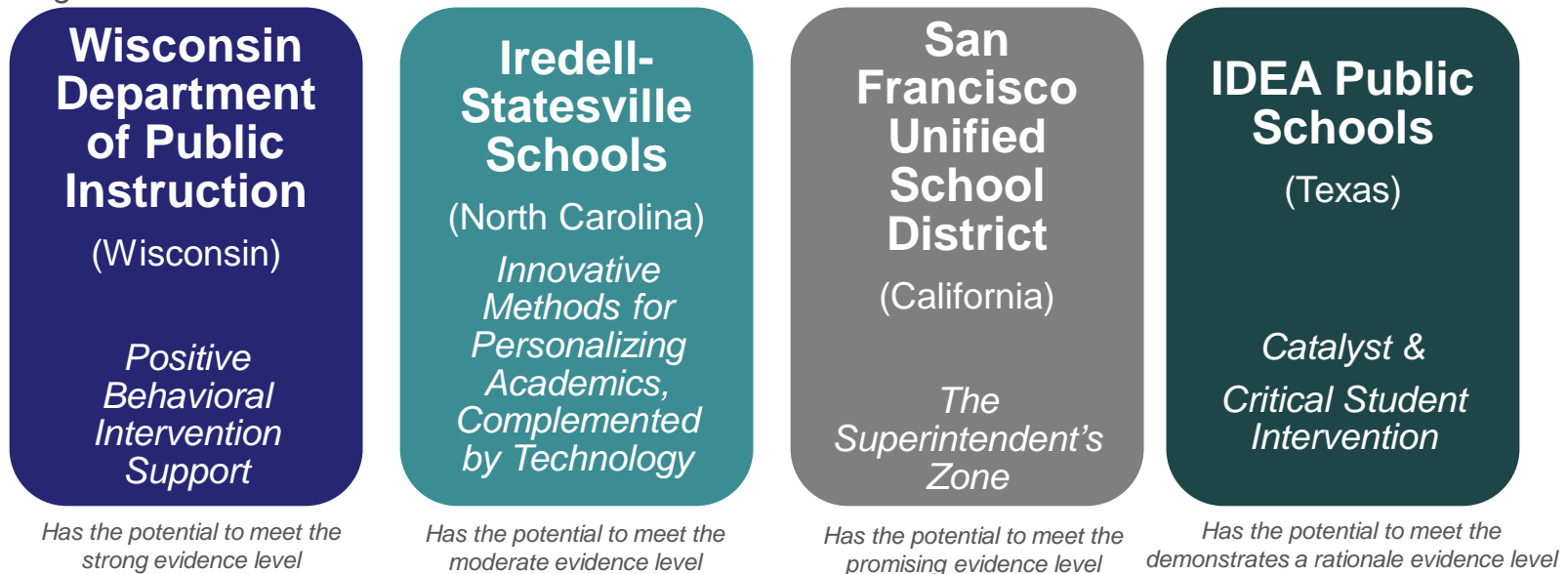
- **Interviews:** A structured interview protocol was designed in alignment with profile guiding questions and tailored to the role of each interview participant. Interviews were conducted with representatives from each site in September and October 2016. The number of interviews per site ranged from five to seven, with an average of six interviews. To the extent possible, interview participants included school, district and/or State leadership, project directors, implementation specialists, external partners and evaluators at each site.
- **Document review:** The interview research team identified and analyzed tools, artifacts, and resources to provide additional context for each phase of the project life cycle (see the Appendix of Resources Used section for examples of these documents).

# Project Overview:

## Profiled Sites

The sites selected for the profiles include one State educational agency and three local educational agencies, including one public charter school district. Although the four sites represent different geographic and demographic contexts, together they share a focus on evidence-based decision making for school improvement. Each site has its own unique strengths, challenges, and lessons learned at various points in the evidence-based decision-making cycle. For each site, the figure below includes the intervention of focus and the highest potential evidence level that could be supported by the research described in the process of developing these profiles.\*

Figure 2. Profiled Sites



\*Disclaimer: The potential rating is based solely on the site-reported evidence and research design that was reviewed by the site at the time of selection of the intervention, which was prior to the posting of the non-regulatory guidance and ESSA requirements. We cannot confirm if the evidence noted in each profile meets the standards set out in the ESSA. A full review of the evidence, under the standards set out in Section 8101(21) of the ESSA, would be necessary to confirm the italicized rating.



# Project Overview:

## Organization of the Site Profiles

Each of the following profiles are organized into six sections:

1. **Context and description of intervention:** This information situates the evidence-based decision-making process within the context of the specified site. It also provides a general description of the intervention that is featured in order to help make visible the decision-making process for using evidence-based practices.
2. **Profile findings:** The findings are presented in alignment to the steps in the evidence-based decision-making cycle conceptual framework as outlined in the Department's [non-regulatory guidance for strengthening education investments](#).
  - **Step 1: Identify Local Needs**
  - **Step 2: Select Relevant Evidence-Based Interventions**
  - **Step 3: Plan for Implementation**
  - **Step 4: Implement**
  - **Step 5: Examine and Reflect**
3. **Outcomes:** Highlights student and teacher outcomes for the site.
4. **Summary of strengths and challenges:** This summary identifies overarching strengths and challenges in the site's approach to evidence-based decision making for school improvement.
5. **Lessons learned:** Identifies lessons learned throughout the evidence-based decision-making cycle.
6. **Appendix of resources used by site:** A list of resources gathered from the site during the development of the profile are provided and linked to the steps of the evidence-based decision-making cycle in which they were utilized.

Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement

# **WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

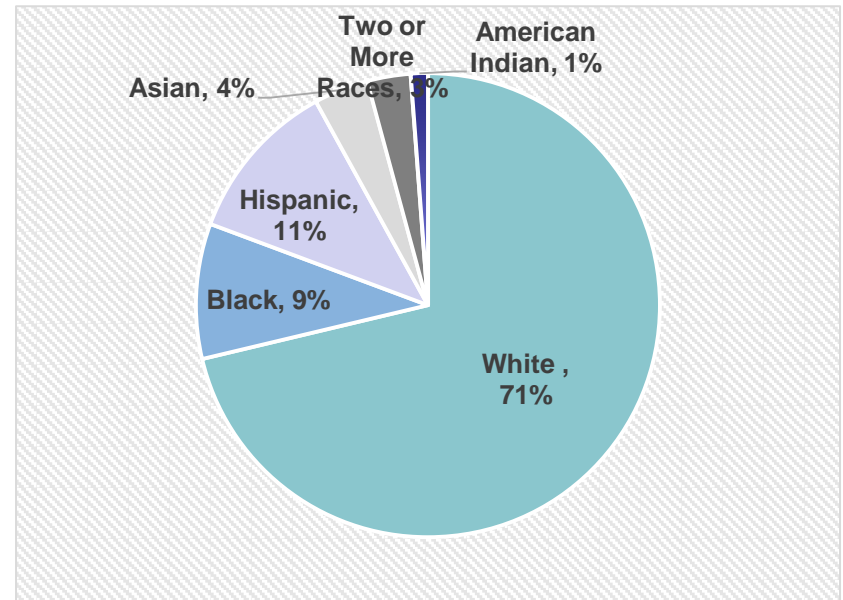


# Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: Context

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI) serves **867,137** students in **2,215** schools.\*

- **39.5%** of students are Economically Disadvantaged.
- **13.7%** of students are Students with Disabilities.
- **5.4%** are English Language Learners.

Chart 1. Student demographics in SY 2015-16.



**Fact:** Wisconsin is a “*highly local control state*.” More local responsibility is legally granted to its school districts than to WI DPI.

\*Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2016). Wisconsin Public Schools at a Glance: [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/eis/pdf/schools\\_at\\_a\\_glance.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/eis/pdf/schools_at_a_glance.pdf)

# WI DPI:

## Description of the Intervention

This profile highlights WI DPI's use of evidence-based decision making in supporting statewide implementation of **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**.

- **About the intervention:** WI DPI created a PBIS Network as a statewide intervention in an attempt to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Within the Network, PBIS is the framework that districts in WI use to adopt and organize evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.
- **Design:** Since its establishment by WI DPI in 2009, the Wisconsin PBIS Network has supported statewide implementation of PBIS through professional development, technical assistance, and other supports for schools and districts. The WI PBIS Network operates within the Wisconsin Response to Intervention (RtI) Center, a collaboration between the Cooperative Educational Services Agency (CESA) Network and WI DPI. Planned simultaneously, both the Center and the Network are funded by WI DPI.

### PBIS Network Goals:

- *Increased graduation rates*
- *Decreased disproportionality in student achievement (no gaps)*
- *Increased number of students college and career ready*
- *Increased opportunities for life-long learning*

### Spotlight: Responding to Local Needs.

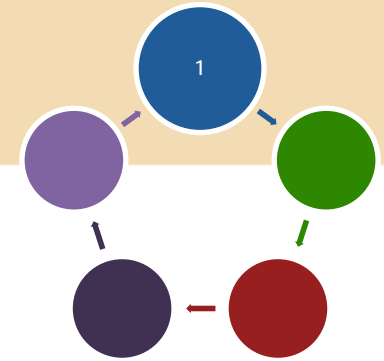
In 2009, PBIS became a statewide initiative in response to a groundswell of support from local school districts, advocacy organizations, and WI DPI, supported by national research. Prior to the creation of the WI RtI Center's PBIS Network, districts in Wisconsin reached out to national PBIS experts and neighboring implementing States.

# WI DPI:

## Step 1: Identify Local Needs

In order to better understand the local need for PBIS and support early implementation, the WI DPI:

- Created internal cross-departmental team between academic and non-academic divisions (e.g., Special Education, Student Prevention and Wellness) to ensure that PBIS complemented an academic system of supports;
- Assembled a State leadership team including representatives from within WI DPI, CESAs, advocacy groups, IHEs, professional organizations, related initiatives, and local school districts, and;
- Designed and conducted a Needs Assessment to better understand local needs in implementing RtI, including PBIS, with assistance from American Institutes for Research (AIR). The needs assessment leveraged an online survey of schools, districts, and CESAs to better understand the following key areas:
  - Current familiarity with the State's vision of RtI;
  - Implementation levels for both academics and behavior;
  - Context of RtI practices;
  - Current levels of skills and knowledge of both leadership and staff, and;
  - Professional development past experiences as well as training needs around RtI Systems.



### Spotlight: Ongoing Identification of Local Needs.

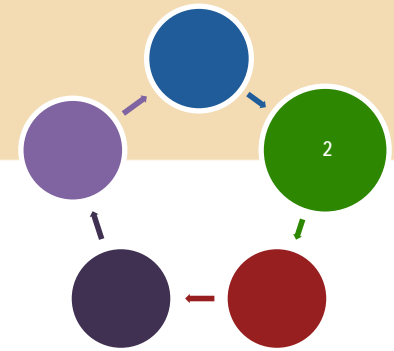
WI DPI continues to analyze their data to understand and better support different contexts for implementation. For example, large urban districts tend to be early adopters due to high suspension rates. Small districts and high schools have unique challenges that require customized implementation.

# WI DPI:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

WI DPI relied heavily on evidence in selecting PBIS, including:

- Promising results from early adopter districts in Wisconsin;
- Support from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Assistance (TA) Center on PBIS;
- Results being achieved using PBIS by other States (e.g., Illinois, Florida, and Maryland);
- Evidence shared by external PBIS experts (e.g., Lucille Eber and Susan Barrett);
- A review of the literature on implementation and outcomes of PBIS (see text box), and;
- Use of research on culturally responsive practices to inform the development of WI DPI's PBIS approach (e.g., Great Lakes Equity Center, Arizona State University).



### Examples of Literature Reviewed by WI DPI in 2009:

- Bradshaw, C., Koth, C., Thornton, L., & Leaf, P. (2009). Altering school climate through School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Findings from a Group-Randomized Effectiveness Trial. *Prevention Science*, 10, 100-115.
- Horner, R., Sugai, G., Smolkowski, K., Todd, A., Nakasato, J., & Esperanza, J. (2009). A Randomized Control Trial of School-wide Positive Behavior Support in Elementary Schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11(3), 113-144.

**Evidence base of the intervention:** Has the potential to meet the strong evidence level.\*

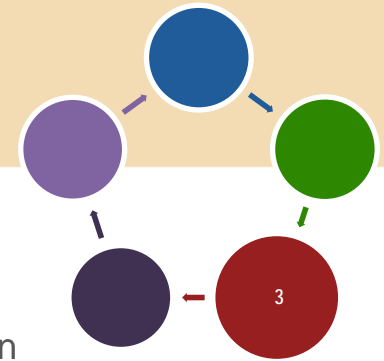
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# WI DPI:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

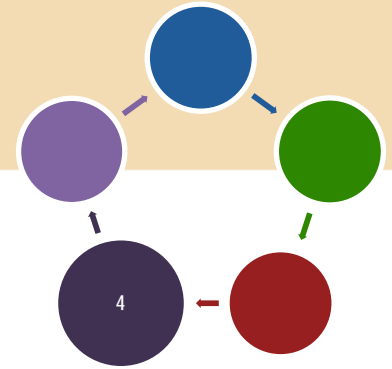
WI DPI simultaneously planned for the PBIS Network and the WI Rtl Center. As part of their planning process, they:

- Created an internal cross-division (e.g., Special Education, Student Prevention and Wellness) work group;
- Established a State Leadership Team with members from: State teacher/principal associations, parent groups, CESAs, practicing districts, and DPI;
- Identified resources to support a PBIS Network:
  - Support from Illinois on statewide implementation with guiding document and checklist, job descriptions, and hiring processes;
  - Support from the national OSEP TA Center for PBIS;
  - Support from PBIS Expert Lucille Ebert;
  - Funding from WI DPI;
- Consulted the OSEP TA Center for PBIS and other PBIS experts to brainstorm ideas related to support, obligations, staffing, statewide models, a rollout plan, and risks, and;
- WI DPI decided to create an external center due to a lack of capacity to provide direct support, to meet the growing demands for PBIS in the State.



# WI DPI:

## Step 4: Implement



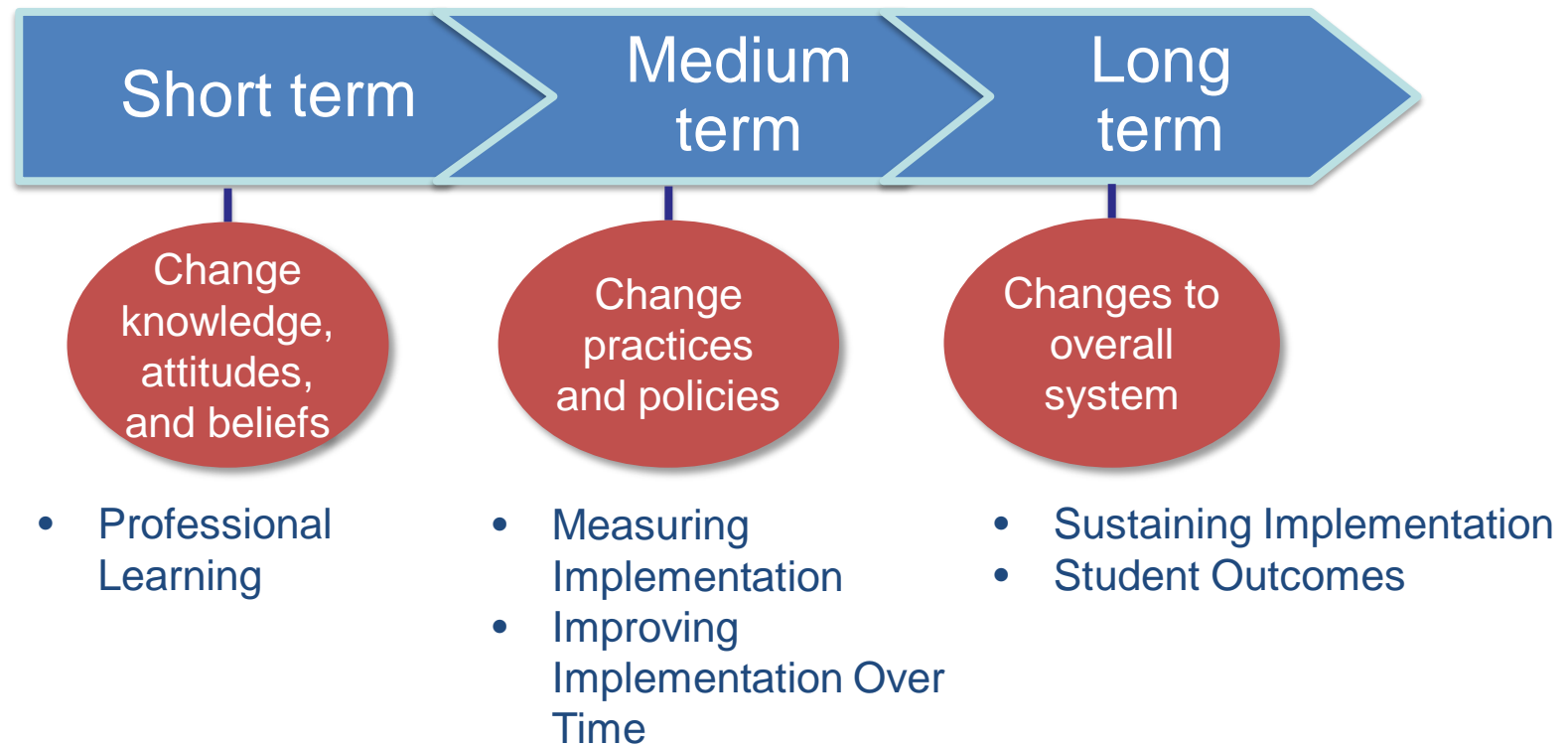
The WI DPI took the following key implementation actions:

- WI DPI hired key staff: WI Rtl Center Director, PBIS Network Coordinator, and a Research and Evaluation Coordinator.
- WI Rtl Center created vision and logic model (see logic model figure on [next slide](#)) to link strategies in short and long term outcomes.
- WI DPI created guidelines for a framework based on OSEP TA Center for PBIS.
- Created a regional service delivery model in collaboration with CESAs and based on their existing model.
- Developed evidence-based tools, resources, and targeted supports:
  - Adopted and customized tools and resources developed by the national OSEP TA Center on PBIS, which draw heavily from implementation science (e.g., implementation teams, coaches, hospitable environments). These tools proved necessary for the WI Rtl Center to roll out PBIS on a statewide basis in districts with varying contexts and in a local control State.
  - Created a required overview training to ensure that key district and school leaders understand and are willing to implement the PBIS with fidelity and provide ongoing support. Soon, they are planning to replace this training with on-site support from Rtl Center TA coordinators prior to implementation.
  - Created a standard set of training sessions, tools, and resources sequenced by tiers of intervention to ensure fidelity of implementation.
- Based on high demand for PBIS by districts across the State, WI Rtl Center has continued to revisit and update their infrastructure and service delivery model to support PBIS implementation throughout the State.



Figure 3. Summary high level version of WI Rtl Center Logic Model.

### How to Logically Move Toward Systems Change



# WI DPI:

## Step 4: Implement

The WI Rtl Center ensures that it is implemented in accordance with the design, in the following ways:

- An overview training session designed for all interested schools to attend;
- An agreement by leaders to commit to the success of PBIS including up-front commitments about staff, time, data systems, and collective staff commitment;
- Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ), a self-assessment tool, used by school teams (see box to the right);
- Statewide trainer-of-trainers model that requires at least two years of training and certification (WI PBIS Network staff who have been trained now provide the training to participating schools and districts);
- Integration of implementation science\* to drive processes, training, tools, and resources, and;
- Systematic collection, analysis, and use of training evaluation data (e.g., to measure training objectives, assess implementation, and monitor progress towards goals).

\* Implementation Science is the study of factors that influence the full and effective use of innovations in practice. The goal is not to answer factual questions about what is, but rather to determine what is required. (NIRN, 2015) Source: National Implementation Research Network. <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/implementation-science-defined>

**Spotlight: Ensuring Statewide Implementation.** The WI Rtl Center leverages an existing regional service delivery infrastructure for PBIS implementation. Through the Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs), the State has access to a pre-existing service delivery model, as well as strong relationships with local districts. CESA TA coordinators use BoQ results to help sites to improve implementation through targeted TA.

**Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ).\*\*** The WI PBIS Network uses the BoQ annually to understand strengths and weaknesses in PBIS implementation. BoQ is completed by an internal coach and PBIS team member each spring. Schools scoring 70% or higher are implementing Tier 1/Universal PBIS with fidelity.

<http://www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.org/fidelity-tools.html>

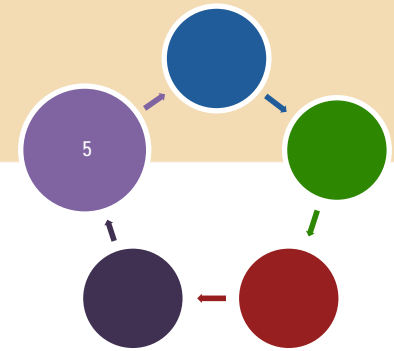
*\*\*Developed by the OSEP TA Center on PBIS.*

# WI DPI:

## Step 5: Examine & Reflect

The WI Rtl Center systematically uses data for performance monitoring and rigorous evaluation of effectiveness of the PBIS Network by:

- Tracking implementation of schoolwide and districtwide PBIS over time based on Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) data.
- Documenting changes in adult behaviors through the collection of training session evaluation data and follow-up survey data that include self-reporting of how they are applying what they learned in their schools.
- Monitoring fidelity of implementation assessments, documenting progress toward WI Rtl Center's goals.
- Documenting progress toward WI Rtl Center's goals through the collection of results data, including expulsion, suspension, office discipline referral (ODR), and student outcomes.



### Spotlight: 2015-2016 WI PBIS Network Implementation Results.

- Since 2008, 79% of Wisconsin schools have attended WI PBIS professional development;
- More than 50% of 2,215 schools in the State trained in Tier 1 PBIS, and;
- 61.5% of trained schools show evidence of Tier 1 (initial) implementation fidelity.

# WI DPI:

## Step 5: Examine & Reflect

The WI Rtl Center/PBIS Network is evaluating the success of its statewide implementation and service delivery model through a comprehensive statewide internal evaluation conducted by its Research & Evaluation Team.

- In the first two years of implementation (2009-2011), the WI Rtl Center worked with AIR, an external evaluator, to provide a program evaluation, as they developed internal capacity to conduct evaluation activities.
- The WI PBIS Network logic model is an evaluation roadmap that enables the PBIS Network to track implementation of strategies and progress toward key outcomes over time. The WI Rtl Center uses the logic model at both the Center and school levels.
- The OSEP TA Center on PBIS provides evaluation support on an as-needed basis. The PBIS Network's evaluation aligns closely with the Center's evaluation blueprint.

**The WI Rtl Center Annual Reports include progress on key indicators on the logic model:**

- *Decrease suspension rates*
- *Decrease suspension rates for the students with the highest needs*
- *Increase the number of schools participating in training at each tier (e.g., Tier 1, 2, or 3)*
- *Increase the number of schools implementing with fidelity at each tier*

### **Spotlight: Sustaining**

**Implementation.** WI DPI is working with the National Center on PBIS to fill a gap in the research around sustaining PBIS implementation. The study has taken place over three years (2012-2016) and includes 150 of Wisconsin's schools implementing PBIS, as well as schools in other States.

# WI DPI:

## Step 5: Examine & Reflect

Throughout the process of implementation, the WI Rtl Center engages a wide variety of stakeholders in the examination of and reflection on results, including:

- Internal audiences (e.g., WI DPI Cabinet, WI DPI Cross-Divisional Work Group, WI Rtl Center staff members)
- External audiences (e.g., Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, National Center on PBIS, State Leadership Team, Districts, Schools)

The WI Rtl Center tailors their communication to the needs of each audience. For example, they share the full report with the OSEP TA Center on PBIS. With schools, they highlight district-level infographics and success stories.

# WI DPI:

## Outcomes

### Student, Teacher, and School Outcomes (2015-2016):

- Since training for PBIS began in 2009, schools sustaining PBIS had a 47% decrease in the percent of students suspended from 2009-2016, while the State has had a 44% decrease.
- Over the past four years, 511 of the schools sustaining PBIS have decreased their suspensions by 41%, which translates into:
  - A total reduction of over 27,000 suspensions;
  - A gain of 66,422 cumulative school days of classroom time, and;
  - A savings of 40,280 hours of administrative time.

# WI DPI:

## Summary of Strengths

The WI Rtl Center demonstrates the following key strengths in their approach to evidence-based decision making for school improvement:

- **Streamlined data collection:** The PBIS Network's database and data collection processes and procedures include clear data definitions and support both ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement and dissemination of findings.
- **Use of evidence-based approaches and supports:** In developing the PBIS Network to implement PBIS across Wisconsin, WI DPI and the WI Rtl Center turned to nationally-recognized experts and research on PBIS as well as the evidence of local success within their State.
- **A focus on shared goals:** The goals of the WI PBIS Network are aligned with the goals of the WI Rtl Center and WI DPI's strategic vision for statewide Rtl implementation. The Network's logic model describes alignment between PBIS strategies and outcomes. Network leaders use the PBIS Network logic model to monitor and measure progress for short- and long-term outcomes on a regular basis and to drive their decision making. The Network works closely with participating schools and districts to create alignment and coherence as they implement PBIS based on their school-level action plans.

# WI DPI:

## Summary of Challenges

The WI Rtl Center continues to address these challenges in using evidence for school improvement:

- **Braiding academic and behavior supports as part of a culturally responsive integrated multi-tiered system of support:** Because there was a lack of national examples or models for the WI DPI to follow for integrating approaches and culturally responsive practices until recently, they have had to piece together different bodies of research. The OSEP TA Center for PBIS has many tools and assessments for behavior, but not for academics. Therefore, the Wisconsin Rtl Center has had to create academic assessments, which has raised many questions and unearthed varying perspectives among leaders about what effective instruction and assessment looks like in practice.
- **Linking the intervention to student outcomes:** Currently, access to consistent data across districts to make a causal link between PBIS and student outcomes is a challenge. Without these data, the PBIS Network is unable to measure the causal relationship between changes in adult behaviors related to PBIS and student achievement. This is important for replication across the State. The PBIS Network's Research and Evaluation team created common data definitions that helped to improve data consistency and quality.
- **Coordination and collaboration:** The PBIS Network partners with schools, districts, CESAs, WI DPI, and external organizations and experts. Coordinating partners' efforts and maintaining effective collaboration takes constant work to ensure that there is an ongoing process to collaborate and coordinate effectively across agencies to create coherence for schools.



# WI DPI:

## Lessons Learned

WI Rtl Center identified lessons learned throughout the evidence-based decision-making cycle. These lessons learned may benefit State educational agencies, districts, or schools seeking to implement evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**

- Use both formal and informal means of data collection to keep a pulse on interventions being implemented locally in support of school improvement.
- Develop a formal stakeholder advisory group, including State and local stakeholders and leadership, to support ongoing identification of needs and to review results at least on a quarterly basis.

- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**

- Develop partnerships with external organizations and experts that can support identification of research and evidence.
- Build on existing work (e.g., research-based initiatives, service delivery models) in your State or across the nation.
- Engage both internal and external stakeholders throughout the process of intervention selection to promote buy-in and alignment with the State vision.

# WI DPI:

## Lessons Learned continued:

- **Plan for Implementation:**

- Examine State context for implementation (e.g., resources, demographics).
- Develop and use a logic model to link strategies to outcomes and provide others with a “blueprint” for implementation.
- Identify other, potentially competing or complementary priorities within the State in order to effectively plan for implementation and sustainability of the intervention.
- Reach out to others using the intervention (e.g., centers, States, experts) to leverage the work that is being done.
- Create cross-divisional work groups within a State educational agency to support collaboration and coordination. These groups can help ensure that the intervention integrates within existing services and initiatives.

- **Implement:**

- Leverage existing regional support structures, if available, to support implementation and monitoring and improvement activities (e.g., provision of technical assistance or professional development). Their relationships with local districts and schools can be helpful in supporting ongoing data collection.
- To support statewide implementation, develop or adopt over-arching framework or approach before customizing the intervention to individual sites.

# WI DPI:

## Lessons Learned continued:

- **Examine and Reflect:**
  - Engage in systematic data collection processes with clear data definitions for school, district, and State levels. High-quality data are vital to effective data-driven decision making.
  - At least annually, reflect on data with others from multiple perspectives to validate findings and inform decision making.

## Appendix of Resources Used

The following resources and tools were identified in the process of developing this profile and may be helpful to States or districts using evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**

- Statewide Response to Intervention Needs Assessment Survey (Wisconsin Rtl Center, 2010). *Contact WI Rtl Center for a copy.*

- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**

- OSEP TA Center on PBIS: <https://www.pbis.org/>
- Bradshaw, C., Koth, C., Thornton, L., & Leaf, P. (2009). Altering school climate through School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Findings from a Group-Randomized Effectiveness Trial. *Prevention Science*, 10, 100-115.
- Horner, R., Sugai, G., Smolkowski, K., Todd, A., Nakasato, J., & Esperanza, J. (2009). A Randomized Control Trial of School-wide Positive Behavior Support in Elementary Schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11(3), 113-144.  
[http://www.sjcoe.org/selparesources/tiers/Randomized%20Control%20Trial\\_PBS\\_Horner.pdf](http://www.sjcoe.org/selparesources/tiers/Randomized%20Control%20Trial_PBS_Horner.pdf)

# WI DPI:

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

- **Plan for Implementation:**

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Implementation Blueprint: Part 1 – Foundations and Supporting Information (US Department of Education OSEP TA Center on PBIS, 2015)  
[http://www.pbis.org/Common/Cms/files/pbisresources/PBIS Part 1 18 Oct 2015 Final.docx](http://www.pbis.org/Common/Cms/files/pbisresources/PBIS%20Part%201%2018%20Oct%202015%20Final.docx)
- PBIS Implementation Assessment (PBIS Apps).  
<https://www.pbisapps.org/Applications/Pages/PBIS-Assessment.aspx>
- Schoolwide Implementation Review (WI RtI Center). <http://wisconsinrticenter.org/educators/rti-in-action/self-assessment-tools.html>
- The Hexagon Tool - Exploring Context (National Implementation Research Network)
  - Discussion & Analysis Tool:  
<http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/sites/implementation.fpg.unc.edu/files/NIRN-Education-TheHexagonDiscussionCaptureTool.pdf>
  - Video: [https://unc-fpg-cdall.oi.adobeconnect.com/\\_a992899727/ai-lesson1/](https://unc-fpg-cdall.oi.adobeconnect.com/_a992899727/ai-lesson1/)

# WI DPI:

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

- **Implement:**

- Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment. (U.S. Department of Education OSEP TA Center, 2015). <https://www.pbis.org/blueprint/implementation-blueprint>
- Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practices (Wisconsin Rtl Center, 2014). [http://www.wisconsinrticenter.org/assets/files/resources/1434982114\\_Cultural%20Competence%20Model.pdf?q=assets/files/resources/1470861601\\_Model%20to%20Inform%20Culturally%20Responsive%20Practices.pdf](http://www.wisconsinrticenter.org/assets/files/resources/1434982114_Cultural%20Competence%20Model.pdf?q=assets/files/resources/1470861601_Model%20to%20Inform%20Culturally%20Responsive%20Practices.pdf)
- WI Rtl: A Guiding Document (WI Rtl Center, 2010). <http://www.wisconsinrticenter.org/assets/files/rti-guiding-doc.pdf>
- Stages of Implementation Analysis: Where are we? (National Implementation Research Network).
  - Tool: <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/sites/implementation.fpg.unc.edu/files/NIRN-Education-StagesOfImplementationAnalysisWhereAreWe.pdf>
  - Video: <https://unc-fpg-cdi.adobeconnect.com/a992899727/ai-lesson7/>

# WI DPI:

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

- **Implement:**

- Implementation Drivers: Assessing Best Practices (National Implementation Research Network).
  - Tool: <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/sites/implementation.fpg.unc.edu/files/NIRN-Education-ImplementationDriversAssessingBestPractices.pdf>
  - Video: <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/resources/video-vignette-18-implementation-drivers>

- **Examine and Reflect:**

- 2014-2015 WI Rtl Center Annual Report (Wisconsin Rtl Center, 2015).  
<http://wisconsinrticenter.org/assets/files/Annual%20Report%2014-15.pdf>
- Past WI Rtl Center Annual Reports:  
<http://www.wisconsinrticenter.org/administrators/resources.html>

Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement

# IREDELL – STATESVILLE SCHOOLS



**Iredell - Statesville Schools**

Together, Ensuring *Student Success* by Igniting a *Passion* for Learning

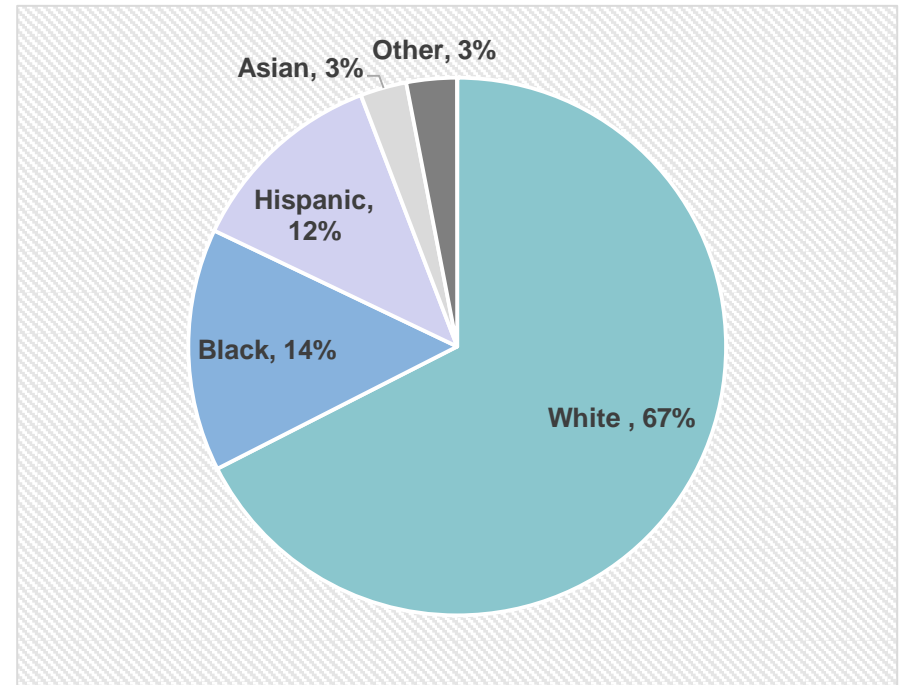


# Iredell-Statesville: Context

Iredell-Statesville (I-SS) Schools serves **20,733** students from a diverse geography of rural, suburban, and urban communities in **36** schools.\*

- **42.8%** of students eligible to receive free or reduced price meals.
- **9.5%** of students with disabilities served under IDEA.
- **4.8%** of students with limited English proficiency.\*\*

Chart 2. Student demographics in SY 2014-15.\*



**Fact:** The district has received both an [Investing in Innovation \(i3\)](#) and a [Race to the Top – District \(RTT-D\)](#) grant from the Department. I3 is designed to expand the implementation, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student outcomes; RTT-D aims to support improvements in teaching and learning that leads to improved student outcomes.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Description of the Intervention

This profile highlights I-SS's use of evidence-based decision making in developing and implementing its 2012 RTT-D project, **IMPACT: Innovative Methods for Personalizing Academics, Complemented by Technology**.

- **About the intervention:** Now in its final year of implementation, IMPACT is a blended learning project designed to improve educator effectiveness and student achievement in reading and mathematics in grades 6-12. IMPACT integrates 1:1 technology, digital content, and data-driven instruction for students with professional development and support for teachers and school leaders.
- **Relationship to COMPASS:** The project extends the key elements of the 2010 i3 grant ([COMPASS](#)), which leveraged research-based strategies to align teacher and principal professional development and support structures. While COMPASS focused on “high need” students (e.g., students in special education programs or who are English learners), IMPACT is designed to support improved outcomes for *all* students.

**IMPACT Project Goals:** The project goals, as described by the district, include:

- *Individualize student learning to build learning environments that improve learning and teaching through personalization strategies, structures, and supports for students and educators.*
- *Revolutionize instruction by accelerating achievement and deepening student learning by addressing the academic needs of each student while decreasing achievement gaps across subgroups.*
- *Cultivate high-quality educators by elevating teacher and leader effectiveness while expanding student access to excellent educators.*
- *Infuse cross-cutting data-driven decision making at all levels to support instruction and continuous improvement.*

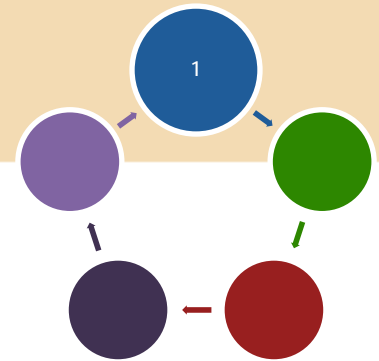
**Spotlight: Using Evidence in Selection.** Although research on personalized learning was still fairly new in 2012, IMPACT builds on the evidence supporting COMPASS, the district's earlier i3 grant, as well as its initial successes. I-SS also partnered with Research Associates to conduct a thorough review of the research on blended learning.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 1: Identify Local Needs

I-SS relied on its deep grasp of its data, support from external experts, and a comprehensive needs assessment to facilitate discussion of local needs and identify strategies to address those needs as part of its RTT-D grant application.

- **A collaborative approach:** A cross-functional team, including staff such as the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the Executive Director of Secondary Schools, and the Chief Financial Officer, among others, from within the district partnered with Research Associates to develop the IMPACT project.
- **Review of student data:** Based on initial findings from the COMPASS evaluation conducted by The Evaluation Group (TEG), the team knew they needed to focus on secondary schools. Too many secondary students were struggling in key math and literacy areas, such as math fluency and phonemic awareness. Analysis of feeder data, including summative assessment results, showed that students tended to perform at higher levels leaving elementary school than after their first year of middle school.
- **Needs assessment:** I-SS worked with TEG to conduct a needs assessment to identify areas of strength, as well as what support teachers, parents, and students would need to help the IMPACT project be successful.



**2013 IMPACT Needs Assessment.** Teachers, students, and parents were invited to complete separate online surveys exploring their familiarity and comfort with computer technology and blended learning practices. To reduce data collection burden, all survey questions were administered during previously scheduled events (e.g., existing surveys, parent meetings). Results informed the district's professional development activities.

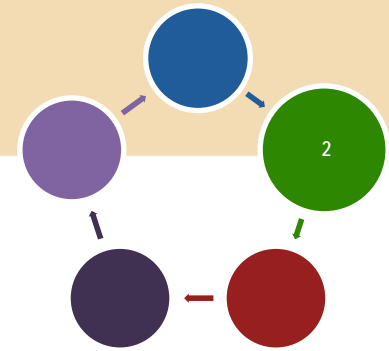
# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

In developing COMPASS, the district looked to:

- Experts in special education from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction;
- Local practitioners/specialists;
- Guidance from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC);
- External expertise from the Florida Reading Resources Center, and;
- A review of the research literature on professional development, professional learning communities, and Response to Intervention.

**Spotlight: The Value of Evidence.** In developing the i3 project, the project leads stress that they had to learn the “*difference between research- and evidence-based*” interventions – that is, the difference between programs that are only theoretical suggestions of what might work versus programs that have been proven to be effective. I-SS looked to interventions with evidence of success because they couldn’t afford to implement a project that might not improve student outcomes.



### Examples of Literature Reviewed by I-SS in 2009:

- Marzano, R. (2009). *Leading edge anthology: On excellence in teaching*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Nunn, G., Jantz, P., & Butikofer, C. (2009). Concurrent validity between teacher efficacy and perceptions of response to intervention outcomes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 36(3), 215-218.
- Supovitz, J., Mayer, D., & Kahle, J. (2000). Promoting inquiry based instructional practice: The longitudinal impact of professional development in the context of systemic reform. *Educational Policy*, 14(3), 331-356.

**Evidence base of the intervention:** Has the potential to meet the moderate evidence level.\*

\*Disclaimer: The potential rating is based solely on the site-reported evidence and research design that was reviewed by the site at the time of selection of the intervention, which was prior to the posting of the non-regulatory guidance and ESSA requirements. We cannot confirm if the evidence noted in each profile meets the standards set out in the ESSA. A full review of the evidence, under the standards set out in Section 8101(21) of the ESSA, would be necessary to confirm the italicized rating.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

In developing IMPACT I-SS also turned to research and evidence identified through:

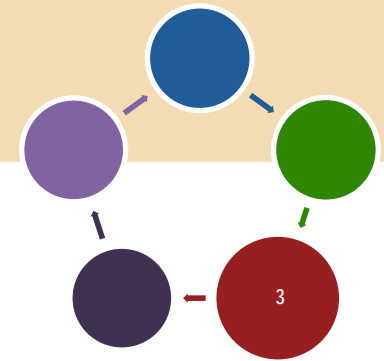
- The COMPASS evaluation, conducted by TEG: Using a short interrupted time series model with comparison schools, the researchers used propensity score matching to look at the effect of COMPASS, as compared with similar schools in North Carolina. Overall, the researchers found a positive effect of COMPASS in Grades 3-8.\*
- A partnership with Research Associates to conduct a thorough review of the research on blended learning.
- The existing knowledge-base from external organizations like the [Christensen Institute](#) and [Opportunity Culture](#) (a website developed by Public Impact and funded by several philanthropies), as well as experts in the field of blended learning, for an implementation model for blended learning.
- The North Carolina State Improvement Project (NC SIP): Guidelines for Selecting an Effective Program: In ongoing efforts to select new reading interventions, I-SS turns to this evidence-based selection checklist. The selection process includes a focus on examining the existing evidence base, using tools such as the WWC and the Best Evidence Encyclopedia. The district used this process in the recent selection of iReady, a technology program supporting adaptive learning, which replaced a previous component of the IMPACT project.

\* TEG indicated that this evidence has the potential to meet What Works Clearinghouse Standards with Reservations. However, this rating has not been independently validated.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

In the first year of the project, I-SS tailored project activities to the context of the district and to each of its schools.

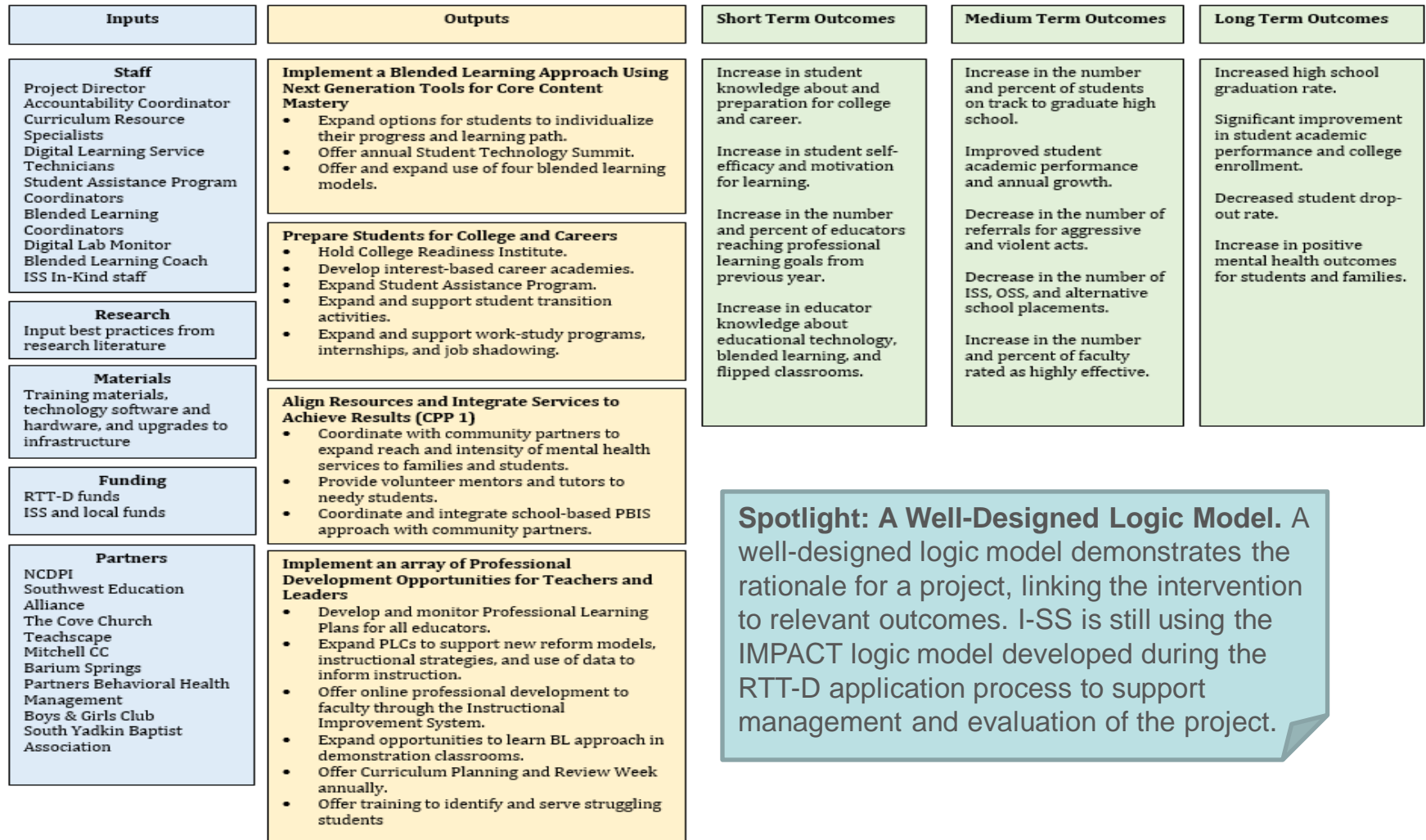


- **Logic model:** The district's cross-functional team outlined clear goals for the project and then walked through a logic modeling process, facilitated by Research Associates, in order to determine what activities needed to take place to improve student achievement and educator effectiveness – to create a “theory of change” for the product (see IMPACT Logic Model graphic on [next slide](#)).
- **Readiness assessment:** The district worked with Education Elements, an external organization with expertise in blended learning, to conduct a readiness assessment of each participating school in order to support selection of a blended learning model for that school. The readiness assessment was designed to provide school-based leadership with the necessary information to select and customize one of four blended learning models based on those developed by the Christensen Institute, a non-profit think tank.
- **Device pilot:** In order to select a technology device to support 1:1 learning in the district, the district [piloted](#) two operating systems and two types of devices (tablet and laptop) among selected students, teachers, and staff members who used the pilot devices over a four-week period both at school and home. Their involvement provided the project with the benefit of their professional wisdom, as well as critical buy-in later in the implementation process when challenges arose.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

Figure 4. IMPACT Logic Model.



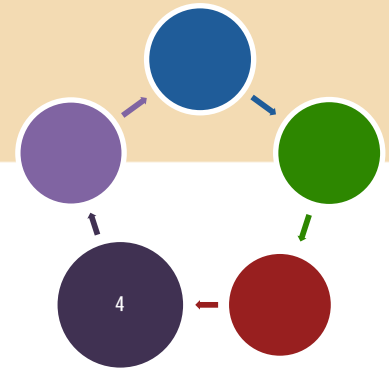


# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 4: Implement

Supported by TEG, the district closely monitors progress toward its goals, as well as the quality of implementation in each school. Key tools supporting the work include:

- **Data dashboard:** An [Online Data Dashboard](#) provides stakeholders (e.g., principals, coaches, and teachers) who have approved access information about implementation progress. The Dashboard was developed by TEG and is updated quarterly. It tracks progress toward meeting program objectives and includes analysis of student, teacher, and parent surveys and observational data on administration, professional development, and student outcomes.
- **Fidelity index:** A [Fidelity Index](#) helps to show evidence of the extent to which schools are implementing the project as intended. The Fidelity Index expands upon a similar, research-based model developed by TEG for the COMPASS project. It looks at four areas (quality, dosage, reach, and reaction) across four domains (individualized student learning, student transition activities, professional development, and data-driven decision making). The evaluators assign a score to each participating school, which is used in both the formative and summative evaluations of the project in order to compare high- and low-fidelity schools.



**Spotlight: A Customized Approach.** The district's approach to project implementation has been tailored to each school through school-based supports. For example, Blended Learning Coaches (now Blended Learning Instructional Facilitators) have been trained in blended learning (e.g., technology, student choice, station rotation, etc.) by the district and provide targeted support to both teachers and principals in each school.



# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

Even before the project, the district emphasized reviewing and using data in a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle at every level, from the superintendent to the students.

**Plan-Do-Study-Act.** PDSA is a continuous improvement model that includes the following four stages\*:

- **Plan:** A continuous improvement team studies a problem that needs to be solved, collects baseline data on that problem, elaborates potential solutions to that problem, and develops an action plan.
- **Do:** The team implements its action plan, collects data on its intervention, and records developments.
- **Study:** The team gauges the success of the intervention by comparing baseline and new data, analyzes results, and documents lessons learned.
- **Act:** The team determines what to do with its results. Depending on the success of its intervention, the team may choose to adopt, adapt, or abandon its tested solution.

\* Source: Best, J. and Dunlap, A. (2014). *Continuous Improvement in Schools and Districts: Policy Considerations*. Denver, CO: McREL International.

**Fact:** In 2008, the district was one of only three applicants to receive a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for its continuous improvement approach. The Award is presented annually by the President of the United States to organizations that demonstrate quality and performance excellence.

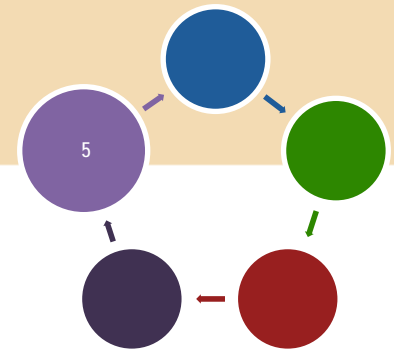
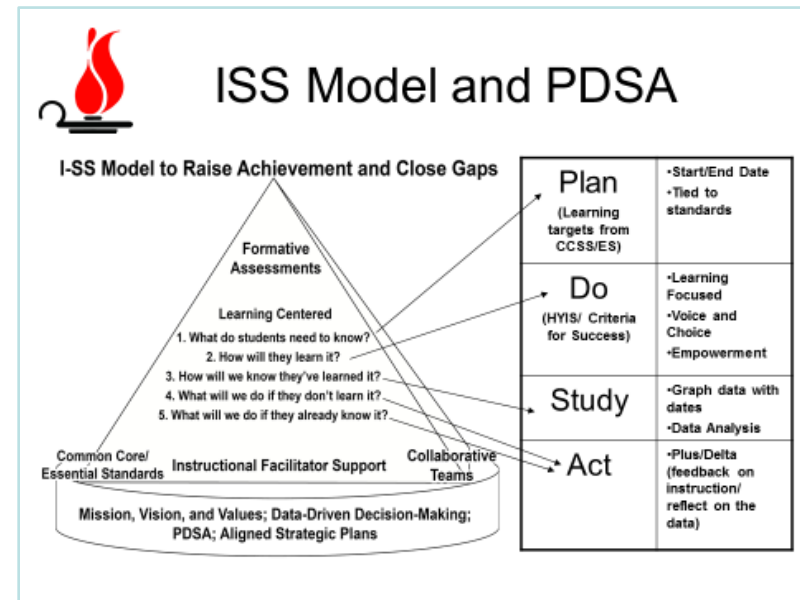


Figure 5. How PDSA ties together the I-SS learning model.\*\*



\*\* Source: Iredell-Statesville Schools. (2013). PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle). Retrieved from: <http://iss.schoolwires.com/Page/41235>

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

To support PDSA at the district-level, staff have established routine processes for collecting, analyzing, and reviewing data on educator effectiveness and student academic and behavioral outcomes, to understand trends and make programmatic decisions. Processes include:

- Weekly team meetings to review data aligned to goals in the district's [strategic plan](#), including student achievement and behavioral data (e.g., attendance, discipline) and teacher evaluation data;
- Quarterly meetings with school leadership to review benchmark assessment data, and;
- Mid- and end-of-year full-day reviews of trends in student achievement on the State's summative assessments by principals, coaches, and district leadership.

At the school-level, I-SS has established frequent opportunities to review formative assessment data to ensure that these data are used for decision making. Opportunities include:

- Regular “data days” when coaches review data with teachers;
- Professional learning community meetings;
- Weekly administrative team meetings, and;
- Meetings between classroom teachers and parents and/or students.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

Additionally, I-SS reviews TEG's evaluation findings on a quarterly and annual basis, through:

- Quarterly updates to the online data dashboard showing updates on program implementation collected through the Fidelity Index, student and teacher focus groups and surveys, and classroom observations of randomly selected teachers, as well as progress on program goals;
- Quarterly updates highlighting key implementation findings and reviewing successes and challenges in the evaluation process;
- Annual evaluation reports providing specific information about the relationships between implementation and outcomes, with updates on eight performance measures (see text box);
- Annual snapshots for each school, summarizing school-level implementation data from the previous year, and;
- An Excel workbook including the data that informed the annual reports and school snapshots, with separate tabs for each school and a summary tab for the district, to support identification of trends.

### **Performance Measures:**

1. Performance on summative assessments
2. Decreasing achievement gaps
3. Graduation rates
4. College enrollment
5. Students' social-emotional health
6. Student attendance
7. Teacher and principal effectiveness
8. College and career readiness

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

The district has made changes to the project based on findings from the data on numerous occasions. For example:

- Early in the project, the district shifted its approach to implementation to provide more autonomy to principals in identifying the school's approach to blended learning based on feedback from educators.
- The district revised its program and selection criteria for the Highly Effective Educators Team, educators identified as highly effective based on a district-developed rubric and placed in the highest need schools within the district, when teacher evaluation data showed that the program had not always identified the most effective teachers.
- This year, the district decided to focus on Understanding by Design, an educational planning approach that emphasizes looking at outcomes in order to design curricula, assessments, and instruction, when classroom observations identified a need to support educators in selecting standards-based activities.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

Throughout implementation, I-SS has tailored its approach to sharing IMPACT evaluation findings with key stakeholders based on their role. For example:

- **School leadership:** School-level snapshot reports are provided annually to school leadership in July, prior to the planning week that takes place in most schools, so that principals and coaches can use the data in planning conversations.
- **District leadership:** The project management team presents IMPACT data at Cabinet and School Board meetings.
- **Teachers, parents, and students:** To involve school-level stakeholders in the evaluation findings, last year the district presented awards to schools that showed the highest fidelity of implementation, as well as those that showed the most improved outcomes for students.
- **Community members:** The district website includes a [section devoted to the project](#), where evaluation findings are posted.

**Spotlight: Sharing Findings with the Public.** To improve communication about the results with the public, the external evaluator created a video highlighting key findings from the evaluation of the COMPASS project's impact. Although I-SS has not yet decided how to share the results of IMPACT's summative evaluation, they may do something similar.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

In addition to using data to monitor and improve the project, the district also contracted with TEG to conduct a summative evaluation of the impact of the project on the project's primary outcomes: career and college preparedness and teacher effectiveness, leveraging the fidelity index to create comparison groups of high- and low-fidelity schools. Research questions include:

- *Does preparedness differ between high- and low-fidelity schools?*
- *Are there differences in ACT, Explore, and PLAN scores between high- and low-fidelity schools?*
- *Are there differences in motivation and learning strategy between high- and low-fidelity schools?*
- *For teachers, does participation in IMPACT predict their teacher effectiveness rating?*

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Outcomes

**Preliminary Findings:** Although the summative evaluation of IMPACT is not yet complete, formative evaluation findings are promising. For example, as of the beginning of the 2016-17 school year:

- Quality of implementation has increased each year of the project.
- Observational data indicates that data-driven decision making is increasing.
- On surveys, faculty are rating their technology, blended learning, and personalized learning knowledge higher than in previous years, as quality of implementation increases.
- Student persistence when confronted with challenging activities appears to be increasing, based on findings from student surveys.

*"[Faculty] are better able to identify what an individual student needs in order to be successful and better able to create personalized learning strategies and bring in resources that they have at their disposal through technology."*

- Evaluator, reflecting on survey findings

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Summary of Strengths

I-SS demonstrates the following key strengths in their approach to evidence-based decision making for school improvement:

- **A focus on what works:** The district turns to rigorous research on what works in education in order to select interventions, including those in the IMPACT project. District leaders stress that they do not have time to waste on programs that *might* work. Instead, as much as possible, they look to evidence-based interventions.
- **An improvement mindset:** Long before the IMPACT grant, district leadership instituted a relentless approach to reviewing and reflecting on their data to understand and address areas for improvement. The PDSA continuous improvement process has been implemented at the district, school, and classroom levels. Both district- and school-level staff stress that PDSA is now a part of the district's culture.
- **Partnerships with outside experts:** In developing the IMPACT grant, the district was not afraid to seek support from outside experts to fill gaps in district knowledge and capabilities, including review of research and evidence. Long-standing partnerships with TEG and Research Associates, in particular, have provided the district with unbiased feedback that recognizes the district's unique context.



# Iredell-Statesville:

## Summary of Challenges

I-SS continues to address these challenges in using evidence for school improvement:

- **Availability of proven interventions:** In the process of selecting interventions, the district has found that many interventions have only a light (e.g., an internal evaluation) or non-existent evidence-base. This has been a challenge in selecting math interventions, in particular. For elements of the IMPACT project, the district has had to rely on promising, rather than proven interventions, and supplement evidence with their own evaluation activities.
- **An abundance of data and data collection activities:** The district, together with their external evaluator, collects a wealth of data on the IMPACT project, as well as on their other programs. Both district- and school-level staff indicate that it can be time-consuming to analyze and use all the data. Establishing routine processes for reviewing the data has been vital to ensuring they are used. Additionally, the district acknowledges that they risk overwhelming teachers and students with data collection activities, particularly surveys. To offset the data collection burden, the district has worked with the external evaluator to be strategic about data collection, building it into existing activities.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** District staff describe stakeholder engagement as an area of some success, but also an ongoing challenge. As one district leader commented: *“Just because your program is evidence-based, doesn’t mean staff will support it.”* For example, although the district obtained signatures in support of the project from school staff during the grant application process, informal feedback during early implementation reflected a lack of support for aspects of the project. The district brought in a team to facilitate a conversation among the district- and school-level stakeholders about what was and wasn’t working and brainstorm next steps.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Lessons Learned

The district identified lessons learned throughout the evidence-based decision-making cycle. The following recommendations may benefit other districts or schools seeking to implement evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**
  - Know the local context, including existing vision/goals, demographics, and culture, and ensure that the intervention can be integrated into that environment. Assess the alignment of the intervention to the local context at the development stage.
  - Involve those with practical experience as educators in project management at the district level.
  - Identify all relevant stakeholders, particularly those who may need to sign off on the project or elements of it at later dates, in order to effectively communicate with them about the project. Leverage research and evidence in communication to help secure stakeholder buy-in from the beginning.
- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**
  - Take time to understand the difference between research- and evidence-based. Know what it means for an intervention to have strong, moderate, or promising evidence.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Lessons Learned continued:

- **Plan for Implementation:**

- Pilot! Test the intervention, or aspects of it, both to ensure it is appropriate for the local context and to gain buy-in from key stakeholders.
- Allow for flexibility in the approach to implementation. Particularly in the case of district-wide implementations, ensure that the approach is flexible, rather than “one-size fits all.”
- Communicate from the beginning and throughout the project through multiple touch points, including focus groups and meetings. The project should not be a surprise to any stakeholders, each of whom should feel involved throughout the development and implementation process.

- **Implement:**

- Assess what is working on an ongoing basis using both formal and informal data collection methods. Involve key school and district personnel in weekly, monthly, and bi-annual meetings for review of the data in order to adjust the intervention, as needed.

- **Examine and Reflect:**

- Avoid becoming overwhelmed by all the data collected. Invest in resources to analyze data and establish processes to review and reflect on the data.
- Develop innovative methods for collecting data that leverage existing data collection tools, meetings, or processes at the local level.
- If resources permit, develop a strong partnership with an external evaluator in order to generate unbiased feedback on interventions. This evidence can provide critical validation of internal research.

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Appendix of Resources Used

The following resources and tools were identified in the process of developing this profile and may be helpful to other districts implementing evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**

- Collins, K., Holliday, L., and Burrows, T. (2013). IMPACT Needs Assessment Final with Executive Summary. Columbia, SC: The Evaluation Group.
- Iredell-Statesville Schools. (2014). IMPACT Logic Model.

- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**

- Best Evidence Encyclopedia: <http://www.bestevidence.org/>
- Christensen Institute: <http://www.christenseninstitute.org/>
- Felton, R. (2003). Guidance for Selecting an Effective Program. Raleigh, NC: The North Carolina State Improvement Project (NC SIP): Improving Instruction for Students with Disabilities: <http://ncsip.org/reading/documents/GuidelinesforSelectingaReadingProgram.pdf>
- Florida Center for Reading Research: <http://www.fcrr.org/>
- Iredell-Statesville Schools. (2010). Investing in Innovation (i3) Application: COMPASS: Collaborative Organizational Model to Promote Aligned Support Structures. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2010/narratives/u396c100105.pdf>
- Opportunity Culture: <http://opportunityculture.org/>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

# Iredell-Statesville:

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

- **Plan for Implementation:**

- IMPACT Pilot Project Device Selection: <http://www.iss.k12.nc.us/Page/47912>

- **Implement:**

- District Reform Support Network. (2016). *Transforming the Culture of Teaching and Learning: Four Race to the Top-District Grantees' Implementation of Personalized Learning*. Washington, DC: District Reform Support Network.  
<https://rttd.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/12121>
- IMPACT. (2015). Classroom Walkthrough Rubric.

- **Examine and Reflect:**

- Baldrige National Quality Program: <http://www.iss.k12.nc.us/Page/38119>
- Holliday, L. (2016). *IMPACT Evaluation Findings: 2014-2015*. Columbia, SC: The Evaluation Group: <http://www.iss.k12.nc.us/Page/50061>
- Holliday, L. (2016). *IMPACT Fidelity Index: 2015-2016 Results*. Columbia, SC: The Evaluation Group: <http://www.iss.k12.nc.us/Page/50061>
- IMPACT Data Dashboard: <http://www.iss.k12.nc.us/Page/50061>
- The Evaluation Group. (2015). *Impact Evaluation Plan FAQ*. Columbia, SC: The Evaluation Group.

Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement

# **SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**



**SFUSD**

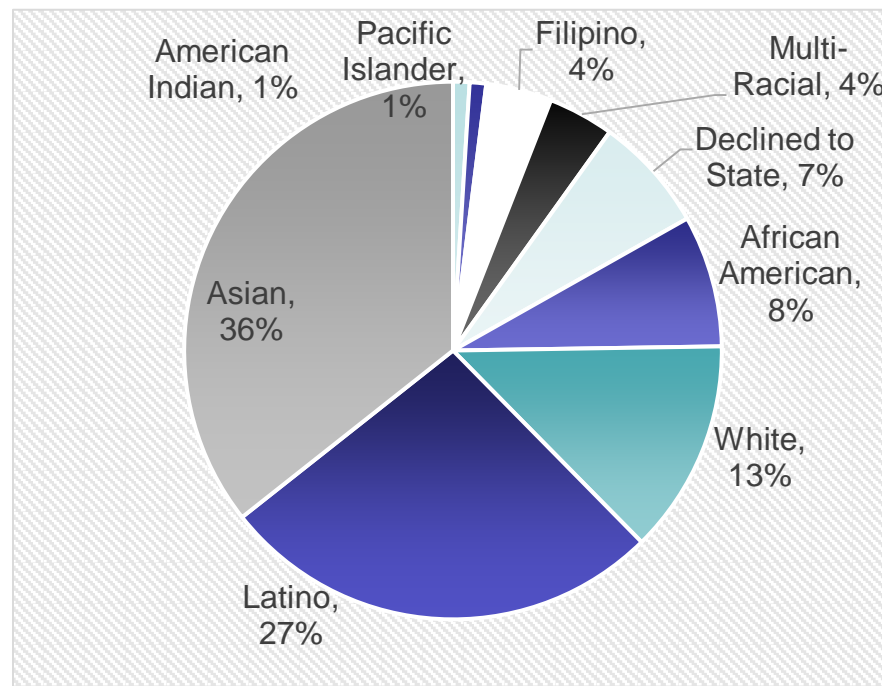
**SAN FRANCISCO  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

# San Francisco Unified School District: Context

San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) is the seventh largest school district in California, educating **55,320** students in **143** schools.\*

- **60.4%** of students eligible to receive free or reduced price meals.
- **10.9%** of students with disabilities served under IDEA.
- **30.9%** of students with limited English proficiency. \*\*

Chart 3. Student demographics in SY 2015-16.\*



**Fact:** San Francisco was a recipient of a \$45 million School Improvement Grant (SIG) from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to address the needs of schools identified by the state of California as “persistently low-achieving schools.”

Sources: \*San Francisco Unified School District. (2016). SFUSD Facts at a Glance. <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/about-sfusd/overview.html>

\*\*2013 Civil Rights Data Collection Survey Results. <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Home>

# SFUSD:

## Description of the Intervention

This profile highlights SFUSD's use of evidence-based decision making in selecting and implementing the **Superintendent's Zone**.

- **About the intervention:** Implemented in 2010 partly using federal SIG funding, the Superintendent's Zone (the Zone) was a systemic approach, with district leaders devising coordinated, multi-component structures and strategies, to improve clusters of underperforming schools within SFUSD. The district is using evidence of what worked in the Zone, now fully implemented and evaluated, to scale the reform approach of this intervention to the district level.
- **Target population:** The intervention targeted sixteen schools located in the district's Bayview and Mission neighborhoods. Ten out of the sixteen schools received federal SIG funding as "persistently low-achieving schools."
- **Approach:** The Zone's approach was grounded in the five essential supports, based on the research of the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium):
  - 1) Building leadership capacity;
  - 2) Providing instructional guidance;
  - 3) Building professional capacity;
  - 4) Creating a student-centered learning climate, and;
  - 5) Strengthening parent-community ties.

**Primary Goal:** *Disrupt persistently low achievement in SFUSD's most underserved schools by providing additional resources and supports to help these schools accelerate student achievement.*

**Spotlight: A Research-Based Approach.** The Superintendent's Zone was grounded in the research of the [UChicago Consortium](#), a partnership between researchers from the University of Chicago and Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Their analysis of longitudinal data from hundreds of Chicago public schools provided a research-based framework of essential supports that facilitate school improvement.

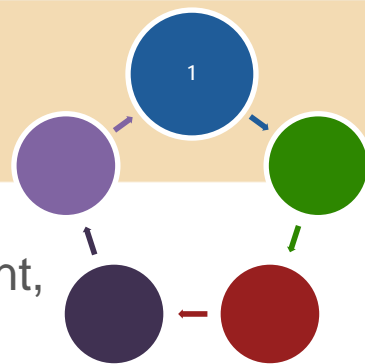


# SFUSD:

## Step 1: Identify Local Needs

**Needs Assessment:** An inter-departmental team (e.g., Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Assistant Superintendent, and representatives from the Research, Planning, and Assessment Department) collaborated to conduct a needs assessment to identify schools most in need and support planning for early implementation.

- **Framework:** The UChicago Consortium's five essential supports served as a guiding framework for understanding the specific areas for growth within each school using a range of quantitative and qualitative data.
- **Data and analysis:** A data profile was compiled for each individual school using both input and output variables to capture a range of school characteristics. Input variables focused on student demographics and teacher stability and experience. Output variables were student achievement, achievement growth, and social-emotional climate variables. Data included indicators of racial isolation, human capital, and academic and behavioral performance and trends (disaggregated by race and program). Compared to other schools in the district, the Zone schools were identified as the bottom 10% on a composite score. In addition, principals provided data about their improvement efforts and the supports most needed in their schools.
- **Findings:** Specific areas for improvement were identified at individual schools. However the analysis revealed very similar needs existed across schools. The needs assessment findings helped to confirm that *"the problem of low performance in schools was a systemic problem, requiring a systemic solution."*

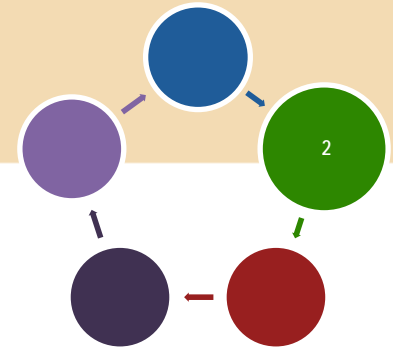


**Spotlight: Alignment to the SFUSD Strategic Plan.** The Superintendent's Zone was the product of extensive planning and needs sensing, prior to receiving the SIG grant. It effectively operationalized SFUSD's strategic plan, which focused on access, equity, achievement, and accountability in order to increase the achievement of all groups of students and dramatically accelerate the achievement of targeted groups of students.

# SFUSD:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

SFUSD examined its own context, as well as multiple research-based frameworks for reform in developing the Zone.



- **Context:** The needs assessment confirmed challenges that district leaders were already seeing in school and district assessment data. Most troubling, in 2010, the district had the highest average student performance of the large urban districts in California, but the widest gap between the district average and the lowest performing students. Data trends from 2010 illustrate gaps in both English Language Arts and Mathematics on California Standards Tests (CST) for students in grades 2-7:
  - 28% of Zone students scored at or above proficient on the CST English Language Arts compared to the 56% district average.
  - 23% of Zone students scored at or above proficient on the CST Mathematics compared to the 55% district average.
- **Existing research:** While, at the time, there was little research on systemic approaches to reform, the research of Anthony Bryk and his colleagues in the UChicago Consortium provided an underlying framework for the Superintendent's Zone. Zone leadership also adopted specific, research-based instructional frameworks, such as the balanced literacy approach of [The Literacy Collaborative](#).

### Examples of Literature Reviewed by SFUSD in 2010:

- Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Heinemann, 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912.
- Newmann, F.M, Smith, B., Allensworth, E., Bryk, A.S. (2001). Instructional Program Coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 23: 297.

**Evidence base of the intervention:** Has the potential to meet the promising evidence level.\*

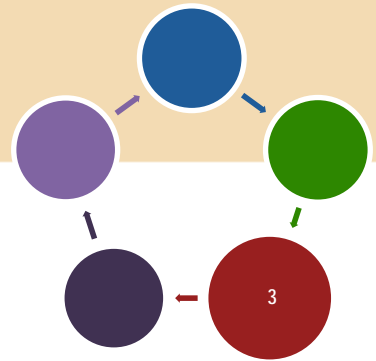
\*Disclaimer: The potential rating is based solely on the site-reported evidence and research design that was reviewed by the site at the time of selection of the intervention, which was prior to the posting of the non-regulatory guidance and ESSA requirements. We cannot confirm if the evidence noted in each profile meets the standards set out in the ESSA. A full review of the evidence, under the standards set out in Section 8101(21) of the ESSA, would be necessary to confirm the italicized rating.

# SFUSD:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

**Structures and Systems:** Guided by the UChicago Consortium's framework, SFUSD re-organized its structures and systems to ensure they could support, sustain, and monitor reforms across all schools in the Zone. For example, they:

- Built **professional capacity systems**, focused on professional development, coaching, and collaboration including establishing central teams to support the schools identified as having the most needs based on the needs assessment, reducing the number of schools under the Zone Assistant Superintendent's supervision, providing schools with instructional coaches, and re-writing job descriptions for principals and teachers;
- Created **instructional guidance**, including selecting, hiring, and training, a "troop" of instructional coaches, selecting a balanced literacy approach, and creating a comprehensive professional development model for it;
- **Supported parent/school community** ties by establishing a family liaison at each school and at the Zone-level and implementing a full service community schools approach at Zone schools to provide academic, health, and social services to students and family members with the resources available via community based partners, and;
- Developed a structure conducive to **using data for continuous improvement**, including re-organizing master school schedules to create early-release time within the work day for data-driven planning and collaboration.



**Spotlight: Building the Knowledge of the Core Team.** The district conducted a year-long study group around the UChicago Consortium framework in order to help the team understand the research base and what it meant for implementation. They also took a team of Zone leaders around the country to learn what worked and what did not work in other contexts, and took them to off-site research-based professional development.

# SFUSD:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

**Learning Networks:** The district created six key structures to support adult learning networks:

- **Instructional Learning Teams (ILTs)** at each school focused on the goal of analyzing data to make decisions for continuously improving instruction. ILT teams, consisting of principals, literacy coaches, the instructional reform facilitator, two classroom teachers, and other key leadership staff, conducted classroom observations and then used a standard protocol to debrief what they saw in order to calibrate observations and collect teacher and student data to inform professional development.
- **ILT networks** were organized to support learning across schools, with professional development focused on sharing best practices and practicing activities, such as data-driven decision making.
- **Grade-level collaborations** among teachers supported analysis of work of “focal students” representing students in a particular band of performance. Teachers utilized student assessment and observation data as they participated in cycles of inquiry as a team.
- **Instructional rounds** provided opportunities for district- and school-level colleagues to conduct observations of classrooms in different schools and debrief those observations using a structured protocol.
- **Instructional coaching** supported teachers in implementing elements of the Zone’s instructional frameworks, such as balanced literacy.
- A **coherent set of professional development** supported learning at many levels, including district teams, coaches, instructional reform facilitators, principals, and teachers, with an emphasis on data-driven decision making.

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

**Resources:** Finally, the district identified and secured the resources necessary for operationalizing their theory of action, including:

- **District leadership support:** Throughout the planning and development of the Zone, the Assistant Superintendents had the sponsorship of the District Superintendent for any needed supports.
- **Funding:** The district secured federal SIG funding to partially support implementation.
- **External partnerships:** The district secured external partnerships from Partners in School Innovation, Literacy Collaborative, and Teachers College, CTI Coaching Training Program, as well as various community-based partnerships.

*“You can’t match a support or intervention without understanding with a degree of accuracy the level of student learning, the level of educator understanding and leadership competence; I don’t see how you can make strategic decisions without as clear as possible assessments of what the evidence suggests.”*

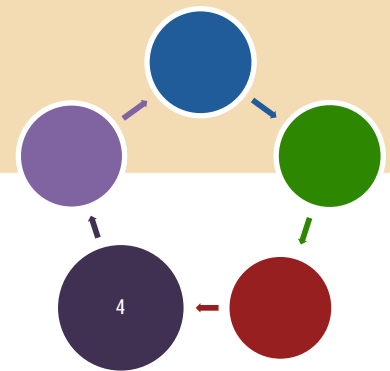
- Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, Innovation, and Social Justice

# SFUSD:

## Step 4: Implement

**Supports for Implementation:** The district established internal structures for professional learning and coordination, as well as external partnerships, to support school improvement.

- **Staffing:** Strategic recruitment of experienced principals from within the district and principals with experience as “turnaround principals” selected through a screening process to build a team of school leaders who were like-minded and aligned to mission and goals of the Zone.
- **Professional learning:** Within the Zone, the district supported ongoing professional learning through ILTs at each school, networks of ILTs, grade-level collaborations, instructional rounds, instructional coaching, and professional development.
- **Coordination:** At each school, Instructional Reform Facilitators, hired and developed by the district’s Research, Planning, and Assessment Department, coordinated intervention activities. They leveraged a results-oriented cycle of inquiry to provide professional development to Instructional Reform Facilitators around topics such as equity and systemic use of data.
- **External partnerships:** The district has a wide range of external partnerships, including those with [Partners in School Innovation](#), [Literacy Collaborative](#), [Teachers College](#), and community-based partnerships, which they have leveraged throughout implementation. Partners in School Innovation supported Zone schools by supporting data analysis discussions after each benchmark assessment.



**Spotlight:**  
**Instructional Rounds.**  
Based on [work by researchers at Harvard University](#), the district created structures for colleagues from different schools and central district staff to examine problems of practice together through observations or “rounds.” These school and district leaders would then use a structured debrief protocol to review data and plan for next steps.

# SFUSD:

## Step 4: Implement

**Ensuring Quality of Implementation:** The district instituted processes, including regular use of formative and observational data, to ensure that schools were implementing the intervention as designed.

- **Formative data collection and review:** The district collected and reviewed formative assessment data, including multiple academic (i.e., ELA and math benchmark assessment results) and non-academic (i.e., attendance, tardies, suspension, EL re-classification, report cards, parent participation in workshops, student safety surveys, Advanced Placement participation and results) indicators.
- **Observations:** Superintendent Zone leaders conducted observations of grade-level collaboration meetings, as well as instructional rounds in order to understand the learning taking place locally. The district identified the components of an effective ILT team, and used them to develop an observation tool in order to understand ILT progress and support improvements.
- **Resources:** Resources communicated expectations across the Superintendent's Zone. For example a one-pager, the "salmon sheet," was placed in every classroom and used in every observation, outlining the work and articulating expectations for all instructional staff.

**The "Salmon Sheet":** This one-pager served as a road-map for those implementing the Superintendent's Zone in schools. It included literacy expectations and assessments, as well as all instructional frameworks, including pacing, scope, and sequence.

**Spotlight: Data-Driven Professional Development.** The district used formative and observational data to inform professional development offerings, going so far as to align their school-level professional development calendar to data releases. Zone-level principal meetings were focused on the same topics as school-level professional development to support alignment across the Zone schools.



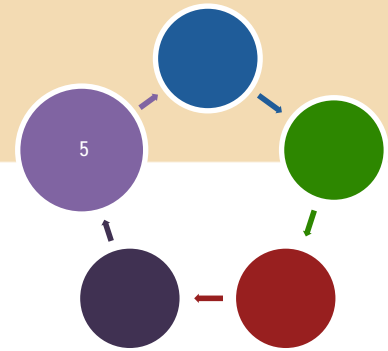
# SFUSD:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

### Using Evidence for Continuous Improvement:

The Zone's networks of learning used a [Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry](#) (ROCI) in their decision-making processes. The SFUSD Research, Planning, and Assessment team supported this process by providing timely analyses and reports, as well as training and professional development in the use of data for planning and improving instruction.

- Instructional reform facilitators used data protocols to examine data, review data, and create plans based on the data in collaboration with ILTs and in grade-level collaborations. These teams examined benchmark data in six week cycles of inquiry to inform professional development needs.
- District and school leaders leveraged instructional rounds to collect observation data, particularly around changes in adult and student behavior and learning.
- Zone leaders used a school capacity rubric to rate schools, citing evidence from the UChicago Consortium framework.
- Zone leaders also held two retreats a year to review data, including data from the school capacity rubric, observations of ILTs, and student academic performance.



**Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry:** ROCI operates cyclically and includes five steps designed to support continuous organizational learning and improvement (i.e., set goals, plan, act, assess, reflect, and adjust). In SFUSD, networks of learning facilitated the use of data in analyzing problems and planning next steps. For example, data from common benchmark assessments and literacy assessments were examined by teams at both the school- and district-levels using ROCI. SFUSD emphasizes the critical role of *relational trust* in facilitating this process.



# SFUSD:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

**Evaluating the Success of the Intervention:** In 2012-13, the district designed and conducted an internal evaluation under the Stanford-SFUSD Partnership.

- **Purpose:** The evaluation examined structures, policies, and practices supporting schools in the Zone; shared this learning across the district; and provided evidence for how to scale this work.
- **Methodology:** Conducted during implementation, the evaluation was both formative and summative and relied on multiple forms of data collection, including interviews, observations, document analysis, stakeholder surveys, and student academic, behavioral, and climate/culture outcomes. It examined three research questions:
  - **Question 1:** *What are the structures, policies, and practices that support the Superintendent's Zone strategy in SFUSD? At the district level? At the school level?*
  - **Question 2:** *What resources were used to support the practices and structures across the Superintendent's Zones? How were those resources allocated?*
  - **Question 3:** *What are the systemic solutions and implications of the work implemented within the Superintendent's Zone associated with district-wide reform and coherence?*

**Spotlight: The Stanford-SFUSD Partnership.** The Stanford-SFUSD partnership supports as many as thirty ongoing collaborations between researchers at Stanford and the district. The partnership is mutually beneficial: Its goals are to support administration in using research in decision making, identify existing evidence, and help researchers do useful research. A researcher based at a non-profit partner, [California Education Partners](#), coordinates the Stanford-SFUSD partnership. She reports directly to the Deputy Superintendent and spends part of her time in the district office and part of her time at Stanford.

# SFUSD:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

**Disseminating Findings:** Whenever possible, SFUSD has shared outcomes with key audiences at the Zone- and school-levels.

- **Zone-level audiences:** The Zone's key audience was the Board of Education. Other stakeholders included community partnerships, and national audiences (via conference presentations and visits from other districts). Results were shared during:
  - **Initial Planning**, through a [press release](#) about SIG funding;
  - **Implementation**, through another [press release](#), [Board public presentations](#) and annual updates, district cabinet-level meetings, and;
  - **After Implementation and Evaluation**, through a [journal article](#), white paper, and a secondary external study by a SFUSD research partner on SIG three-year effects.
- **School-level audiences:** Principals regularly review data with school councils. They also share outcomes with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

# SFUSD:

## Outcomes

**Outcomes:** After three years of implementation, the Superintendent's Zone has not only improved student outcomes, its approach has transformed schools and, ultimately, changed district practice. Internal evaluation found:

- **Student Outcomes:**

- **English Language Arts:** Between 2010-2012, participating schools posted almost *double* the gains of other district schools in English Language Arts.
- **Mathematics:** Participating schools posted *triple* the gains in mathematics as compared to the district. Growth was six times the growth of the rest of the district in Grades 2-7 and eight times the growth compared to the district overall, including high schools.
- **Behavior:** Participating schools also posted improvement in suspension and attendance rates. The Bayview and Mission attendance rates increased by two and three percent respectively; their suspension rates decreased by seven and ten percent.

**Spotlight: External Research Study Finds Significant Outcomes.** Inspired by a research collaboration on another SFUSD project, Sun, et al. (2016) estimated the effects of the SIG interventions on student outcomes by comparing students in SIG schools with students in non-SIG schools in the district. Results of the analysis indicate that the SFUSD SIG reforms significantly increased average student achievement in math and ELA (significantly narrowing the achievement gap of the lowest performing schools), reduced number of unexcused absences, and improved school desirability for district families.

# SFUSD:

## Outcomes

- **Other Successes:**

- **Expanding enrollment:** Schools within the Zone that were previously facing declining enrollment under San Francisco's school choice system are now at capacity.
- **District-wide implementation:** The district is scaling what worked within the Zone to the district more broadly. The most recent two district strategic plans are written around the five essential supports and some of the best practice evidence at these sites. School leaders from within the Zone are now working in district-level positions to bring what they learned from their work in the Zone to the district more broadly.

*"[W]e did reform [the Superintendent Zone] schools, and I think they have sustained themselves even two to three years later. Personally, when I walk into those schools the structures, the systems, the level of communication between teachers, between coach and teacher, between principal and coach, within their ILT, is so highly advanced that I don't think I can mimic that in any of the other schools and that is not something that is measurable unless you see it. And then you have to get the variability in so you know how good it is."*

- Chief of Research, Planning, and Assessment

# SFUSD:

## Summary of Strengths

SFUSD demonstrates the following key strengths in their approach to evidence-based decision making for school improvement:

- **Systems support for evidence use:** Structures and processes enabled the use of evidence in decision making in the Superintendent's Zone. For example, ROCI provides a framework for reviewing and discussing data; school site and central office content and facilitation experts; a dedicated internal research team provides capacity for data analysis and use; and intra- and inter-school ILT networks facilitate this process at the school and district levels.
- **Internal and external research capacity:** This district's Research, Planning, and Assessment team provides actionable and timely information to improve and evaluate the district's initiatives. Additionally, their strategic partnerships with external researchers provide further capacity to identify, implement, and evaluate interventions. Their partnership with Stanford exemplifies the role of these partnerships in supporting effective evaluations, as well as dissemination of findings to a broader audience in the field.
- **Relational trust:** Early in implementation, SFUSD focused on building relational trust among teachers and principals, gathering and using their feedback in implementation. Relational trust has been critical to providing a context in which adult learning can take place throughout the process of continuous improvement.

# SFUSD:

## Summary of Challenges

SFUSD continues to address these challenges in using evidence for school improvement:

- **Stakeholder buy-in:** In the early stages of planning and implementation there was initial school and community concern about school turnaround reforms. Some school leaders faced political pushback because of the chosen SIG reform model being implemented at their school. SFUSD leaders utilized data to help structure conversations with stakeholders to build trust and support. For some, it was not until the students' performance started to accelerate that they began to support the reforms.
- **Hiring and retaining educators:** Enculturating and training a new group of teachers is an ongoing challenge, particularly given the Zone's emphasis on collaboration around evidence use. District leaders indicate that it sometimes felt like they were in a constant state of staff development, though building relational trust with educators has been vital to the continued success of the intervention.
- **Documenting and sharing findings:** Although the district had strong practices in place for documenting student learning, they have had to learn how to better document and share successes in adult learning in addition to student achievement. Promoting school leaders from within the Zone to district leadership positions has helped to share findings. Internal evaluation activities have also focused on sharing what is working within the Zone.
- **Differing operations and outcomes for Zones:** Though there were positive gains in both neighborhoods, the Mission Zone experienced successes earlier and faster than the Bayview Zone. In addition there were some staff members in the Bayview Zone who felt a sense of isolation because of an unequal distribution of resources across Zone Schools. The Mission Zone had a majority of schools funded by SIG (7 out of 9) compared to Bayview (2 out of 7).

# SFUSD:

## Lessons Learned

The district identified lessons learned throughout the evidence-based decision-making cycle. These lessons learned may benefit other districts or schools seeking to implement evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**
  - Use a broad range of data in order to understand the local need.
- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**
  - Leverage researcher partnerships during the selection and needs assessment process.
- **Plan for Implementation:**
  - Plan for scaling the intervention district-wide. Be thoughtful about scope and sequence of implementation for a targeted number of schools.
  - Have systems in place to reflect on process and outcomes in order to use evidence to make changes.
  - Build time into the school year for continuous improvement to take place.
  - Focus on developing relational trust among school and district staff from the beginning.
  - Make expectations clear and establish learning and support systems for meeting those expectations for educators prior to accountability.

# SFUSD:

## Lessons Learned continued:

- **Implement:**

- Use evidence from continuous cycles of improvement to strategically tailor professional development.
- Organize schools around effective systems frameworks and deliberate instructional frameworks to support school improvement efforts.
- Teach leaders how to strategically use fiscal and human capital resources.

- **Examine and Reflect:**

- Develop an internal reflective mind-set and sense of urgency and accountability.
- Use data on an ongoing basis to determine whether interventions and supports provided to schools are effective.
- Form and use strong researcher partnerships, including those within the district research department.
- Develop a culture of considering evidence throughout the decision-making cycle. Processes and systems at both the district and school levels should support reflection on practice and outcomes in order to make adjustments.
- Relational trust is critical in the process of examining and using data.



## Appendix of Resources Used

The following resources and tools were identified in the process of developing this profile and may be helpful to other districts implementing evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**

- SIG Grant Application Executive Summary: <http://www.nctq.org/docs/sig-executive-summary.pdf>

- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**

- Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED518995>
- District Progress Report-Walking the Talk (2010): <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/progress-report-2010.pdf>
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Heinemann, 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912. <http://eric.ed.gov/?q=guided+reading%3a+good+first+teaching+for+all+children&id=ED400506>
- Strategic Plan-Beyond the Talk (2008): <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/strategic-plan-beyond-the-talk.pdf>

# SFUSD:

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**

- Newmann, F.M, Smith, B., Allensworth, E., Bryk, A.S. (2001). Instructional Program Coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 23: 297. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ648251>
- Beyond the Talk (2010-2012): [http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/initiatives%20and%20plans/files/Beyond%20the%20Talk%20Implementation%20Plan\\_040411.pdf](http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/initiatives%20and%20plans/files/Beyond%20the%20Talk%20Implementation%20Plan_040411.pdf)
- District Progress Report- Walking the Talk (2012): [http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/Strategic%20Plan/files/SFUSD\\_Strategic%20Plan\\_End%20of%20Year%20Report\\_Final%20Draft\\_062812.pdf](http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/Strategic%20Plan/files/SFUSD_Strategic%20Plan_End%20of%20Year%20Report_Final%20Draft_062812.pdf)

- **Plan for Implementation:**

- The Literacy Collaborative: <http://www.literacycollaborative.org/index.php>
- Partners in School Innovation: <http://www.partnersinschools.org/>
- CTI Coaching Training Program: <http://www.coactive.com/coach-training>

- **Implement:**

- City, E.A., Elmore, R.F., Fiarman, S.E., and Lee Teitel. (2009). *Instructional Rounds in Education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED515267>

# SFUSD:

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

- **Implement:**

- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED530692>

- **Examine and Reflect:**

- Research partnership between Stanford and SFUSD mediated by Laura Wentworth: <http://caedpartners.org/>
- District Strategic Plan 2013-15: Impact Learning Impact Lives: <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/SFUSD%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>
- District Strategic Plan 2016-19: Transform Learning Transform Lives: <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/2016-19-strategic-plan.pdf>
- Press release 2010: <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/news-and-calendars/files/archives/8%2024%2010%20Lowest-Performing%20Schools%20set%20to%20Receive%20Unprecedented%20Support.pdf>
- Press release 2012: <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/news/current-news/2012-news-archive/08/sf-students-show-academic-achievement-gains.html>
- Graphs: <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/news-and-calendars/files/2012-cst-results-graphs.pdf>

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

- **Examine and Reflect:**

- Board presentation:  
[http://web.sfusd.edu/Services/research\\_public/rpa\\_CST\\_power\\_point/SFUSD%202012%20STAR%20Results-Board%20Meeting%20--%20September%2025,%202012%20%28pdf%29.pdf](http://web.sfusd.edu/Services/research_public/rpa_CST_power_point/SFUSD%202012%20STAR%20Results-Board%20Meeting%20--%20September%2025,%202012%20%28pdf%29.pdf)
- Journal article: <https://www.joomag.com/magazine/leadership-magazine-jan-feb-2016-v45-no-3/0067286001452036965?page=34>
- Final Evaluation Report: From Vision to Action, An Incubator of Best Practice--The Superintendent's Zone: A case study of San Francisco Unified School District's Effort to Provide Strategic Interventions and Supports to its Most Underserved Schools.
- Sun, M., Penner, E., & Loeb, S. (2016). *Resource- and Approach-Driven Multi-Dimensional Change: Three-Year Effects of School Improvement Grants*. Working Paper.

Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement

# IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS CATALYST

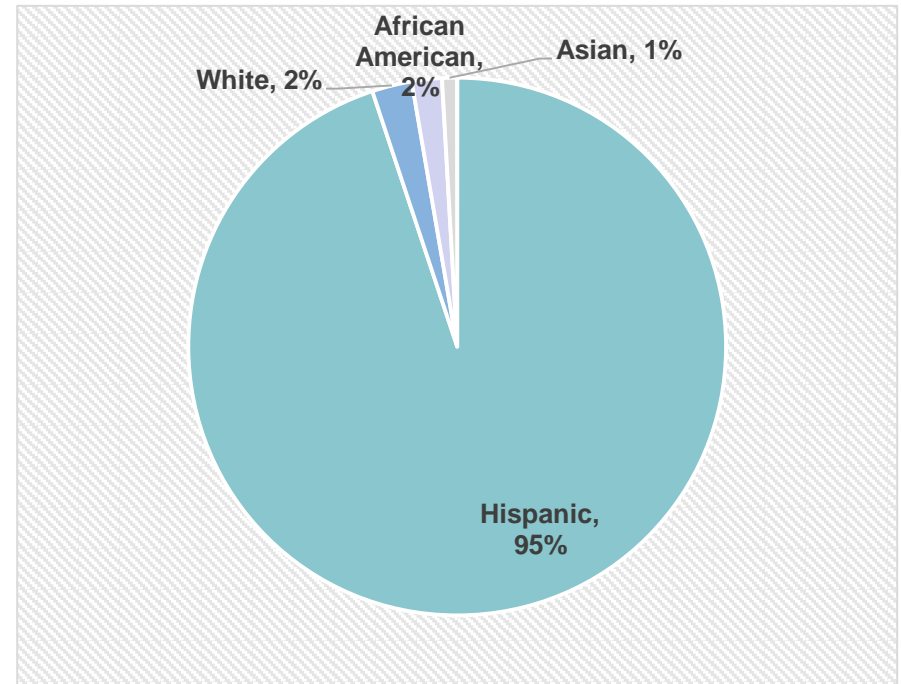


# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst: Context

IDEA Public Schools (IDEA) is a Network of **51** public charter schools serving **28,891** students across three Texas regions.\*

- **86.5%** of students eligible to receive free or reduced price meals.
- **4.4%** of students with disabilities served under IDEA.
- **30.2%** of students with limited English proficiency.\*\*\*

Chart 4. Student demographics in SY 2014-15.\*\*



**Fact:** IDEA is a recipient of a \$29,241,967 Race to the Top – District (RTT-D) grant to expand blended learning to middle schools and support teachers to use data well.

Sources: \*IDEA Public Schools. (2016). 2016-17 Organizational Goals.

\*\*Texas Education Agency. (2015). Snapshot 2015: <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/snapshot/2015/index.html>

\*\*\*2013 Civil Rights Data Collection Survey Results. <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Home> Percent of students enrolled in gifted and talented program not reported in 2013.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Description of the Intervention

This profile highlights IDEA's use of evidence-based decision making in developing and implementing Catalyst.

- **About the intervention:** Catalyst, designed in 2012 as part of IDEA's \$29,241,967 RTT-D grant, provides daily targeted skill development to *all* students in participating campuses to develop reading, mathematics, and non-academic college and career readiness skills.
- **Target population:** All students in grades 6-12 within the 14 IDEA campuses participating in the RTT-D grant.
- **Design:** Students are assessed and placed into leveled groups every four weeks: Critical, Reinforcement, Enrichment, and Acceleration. Each level offers students targeted instruction to support and accelerate learning through a variety of instructional methods aligned to learning needs, including small-group instruction, adaptive software, distance learning, and project based learning. An Individualized Learning Specialist oversees Catalyst at each campus in collaboration with an administrator.

### Catalyst Student and Teacher Goals:

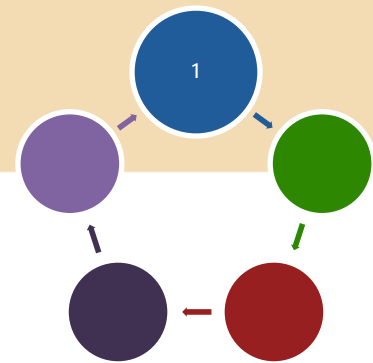
- (Long-term goal) Support every student to go to college, including students who are traditionally underserved.
- Get every student on grade level by 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Build non-academic skills for all high school students in enrichment and acceleration.
- Support students to score 21 or above on ACT tests and to pass AP tests.
- Ensure teachers understand individualized learning as an important tool for achieving classroom goals.
- Increase the number of teachers who understand the importance of closing skill gaps and the role of incremental improvement and small group instruction in that process.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 1: Identify Local Needs

**Identifying the Need:** Data from student assessments, as well as information from classroom walkthroughs, observations, and campus visits, played a critical role in identifying the need for a new approach to IDEA's intervention period.

- **Classroom walkthroughs and observations:** During informal classroom walkthroughs and observations of teachers, campus and Network leaders observed that the intervention period could be improved to achieve better results for all students. They identified opportunities for improvement, including matching teacher qualifications to student learning needs, reducing instructional group size, and standardizing structures and processes for identifying and serving students with different skill levels.
- **Student assessment data:** Both Renaissance STAR and State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment data showed less-than-expected growth for critical students (e.g., 0.8 grade-level growth across IDEA, with a range of growth across campuses).
- **Campus visits:** At the time of the RTT-D grant, many of IDEA's campuses were already testing ideas to improve the intervention period. In writing the grant, Network leaders went from campus to campus for input on problems with the existing intervention period and potential solutions. Catalyst leaders describe the process of problem-solving with principals as critical to identifying local needs and, ultimately, to developing an intervention that could address those needs.



**Spotlight:**  
**Relationships with Stakeholders.** IDEA's Chief Development Officer at the time of the RTT-D grant had been a principal and understood well the challenges with the existing intervention period. As the key decision maker in the development of the RTT-D grant, he relied heavily on strong relationships with principals in gathering feedback to identify and respond to local needs.

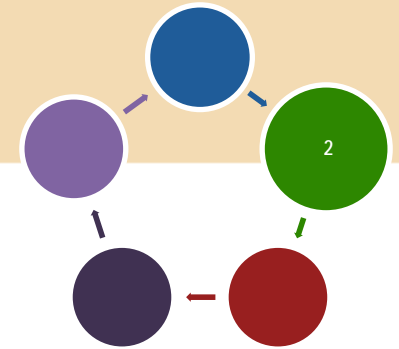


# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

In the beginning, Catalyst was based on evidence from feedback from campus leaders and a formal pilot. However, IDEA continued to test and improve intervention strategies well into the second year of the work in order to refine the model.

- **Feedback from campus leaders and teachers:** The same campus visits that identified the need for Catalyst also supported Network leaders in developing solutions. Many of these campuses shared learning from “mini pilots” to test intervention practices within their local contexts.
- **Official pilot:** Prior to implementing the grant at scale, IDEA piloted Catalyst on four campuses. Evidence from the pilot informed the design and rollout of the intervention with in-depth information on what strategies worked at the classroom level (e.g., policies related to decision making about the selection of software, specific software applications).
- **Ongoing testing:** At the onset of the project, campuses had freedom to select from 10-12 software applications. In year two of the project, IDEA used Renaissance STAR student data from these campuses to identify the strongest of these applications, including two primary and three secondary software applications (e.g., Rosetta Stone, News ELA, Achieve 3000), for use in Catalyst.



**Spotlight: Piloting the Intervention.** IDEA's RTT-D grant application provided a high-level plan for Catalyst, but did not identify specific strategies or interventions for the project. The official pilot, conducted during the 2013-14 school year, was the first formal pilot for IDEA and provided an opportunity to identify those strategies and interventions. Network leaders reviewed observational data collected by the campus leaders, data from Achieve 3000, and teacher feedback in order to refine Catalyst. They also met with campus leaders for their feedback.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

As part of the process of developing the RTT-D grant, including the Catalyst project, IDEA examined its own context and data obtained through a stakeholder engagement plan.

- **Context:** The needs assessment reflected “gaps” in student achievement in several areas:
  - 70% of students enter grade-level below reading.
  - English learners and special education student subgroups perform below peers on summative assessments.
  - Only 33% of students versus a goal of 50% achieve ACT composite score of 21.
  - Post-secondary attainment exceeds the national average for low-income students but still lags the average for middle class students.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** IDEA leveraged a stakeholder engagement plan to understand the root causes of these gaps, including one-on-one interviews, and focus group meeting sessions with Network leaders, school leadership, and faculty to collect information on what works and current gaps within instructional models and systems. They also held additional interviews and focus groups to identify solutions to meet the needs of educators and students.

**Evidence base of the intervention:** Has the potential to meet the demonstrates a rationale level.\*

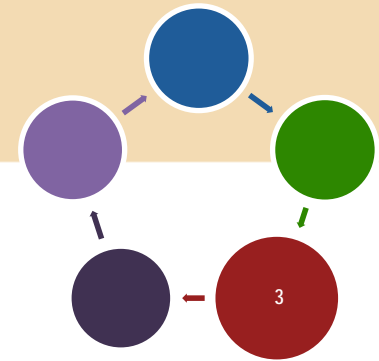
\*Disclaimer: The potential rating is based solely on the site-reported evidence and research design that was reviewed by the site at the time of selection of the intervention, which was prior to the posting of the non-regulatory guidance and ESSA requirements. We cannot confirm if the evidence noted in each profile meets the standards set out in the ESSA. A full review of the evidence, under the standards set out in Section 8101(21) of the ESSA, would be necessary to confirm the italicized rating.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

IDEA has developed a framework and approach to implementing Catalyst.

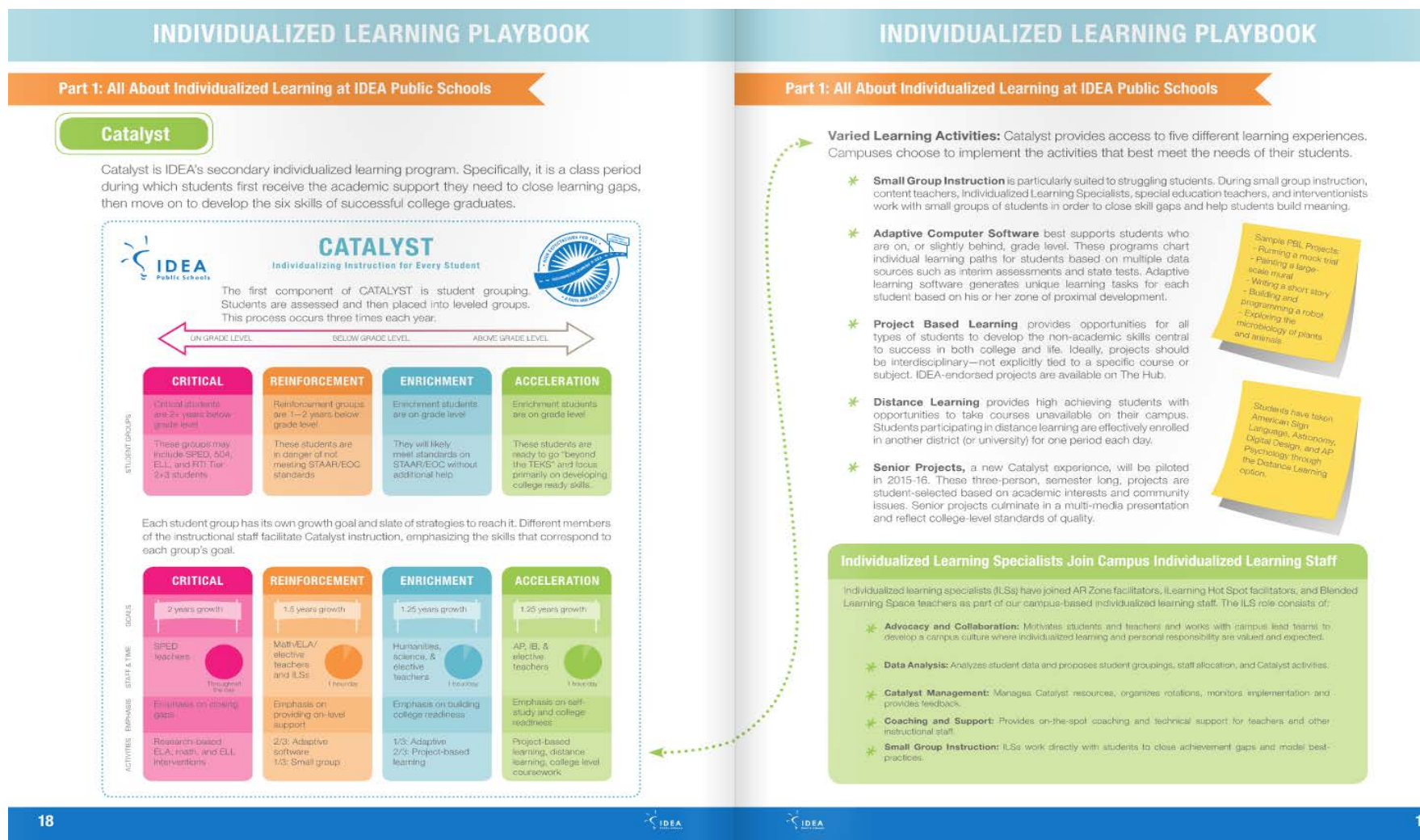
- **Framework:** The [Individualized Learning Playbook](#) describes Catalyst's framework (see framework figure on [next slide](#)), as well as its alignment with Network goals and other individualized learning programs. The framework offers campuses a roadmap for planning and implementing the core components of Catalyst, including methods for identifying and grouping students, descriptions of the intervention period and core content, the delivery approach, and a data collection and analysis timeline and procedures.
- **Approach:** IDEA offers a standardized structure and set of processes for all campuses using Catalyst coupled with flexibility based on campus needs. In 2012, the Network created a logic model and theory of action, linking project activities to goals that evolved over time, showing how Catalyst is likely to improve outcomes over time.



**Individualized Learning Playbook:** The Catalyst framework is described in detail in IDEA's [Individualized Learning Playbook](#). The Playbook is designed to be a comprehensive guide to implementing personalized learning in IDEA public schools. It includes resources for teachers and campus leaders to use in individualizing learning (e.g., tips for differentiating instruction, diversifying learning opportunities, supporting student ownership of learning; a year-long scope and sequence for individualized learning; and observation forms) through Catalyst and other programs.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst: Step 3: Plan for Implementation

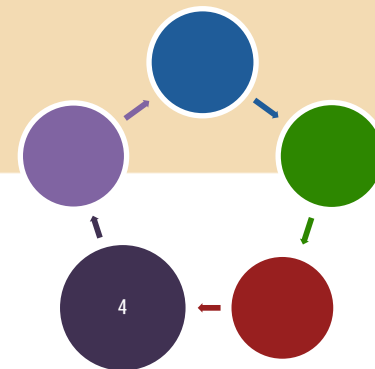
Figure 6. Catalyst framework, as described in the Network's Individualized Learning Playbook.



# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 4: Implement

IDEA provides campuses with a range of supports for implementation, including:



- **Individualized Learning Specialists**, assistant principals trained and mentored by the Network, who support Catalyst within each campus by working with both students and teachers. They provide direct instruction to students in Catalyst for 40-50% of their assignment and support teachers by providing observations and feedback, selecting and setting up software, and establishing and maintaining an intervention schedule.
- **“Admin” Partners**, campus leaders from each Catalyst campus who provide additional campus support to the Individualized Learning Specialists. Admin Partners also work closely with the Director of Individualized Learning to monitor progress and tend to implementation details (e.g., scheduling and staffing).
- An **Operating Guide**, a detailed scope of work outlining timelines for key project milestones, developed by the Network, which identifies implementation priorities by date.
- Weekly **Individualized Learning Specialist Professional Learning Communities** (PLCs) to share best practices, establish mutual accountability, and align practices across campuses.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 4: Implement

IDEA ensures Catalyst is implemented in accordance with its design through a range of tools, including:

- Administrative walk-throughs of Catalyst classes using an observation rubric (see rubric figure on [next slide](#)), included in the Individualized Learning Playbook, that defines teacher and student behaviors for the four delivery methods for Catalyst: small-group instruction, adaptive software, blended learning, and project-based learning. The rubric supports instructional coaching conversations about Catalyst between teachers and campus leaders.
- Annual surveys of students, teachers, and principals that collect data to inform and improve implementation. Teacher and principal surveys collect data on program effectiveness, implementation, and support, as well as perceptions about what is working and what needs to be changed. Student surveys collect data on student perceptions of Catalyst overall, their success in Catalyst, the value of Catalyst, the extent to which Catalyst is helping them in their core content areas and in their academics overall, as well as a variety of perceptions.
- Records of how Individualized Learning Specialists spend their time.
- Bi-annual site visits by SRI International to provide evidence based on a key set of questions (see text box).

### Example Site Visit Questions:

- *Which campuses implement Catalyst well? What are the factors that make these campuses successful?*
- *What other supports, if any, do students in Catalyst receive? How important is Catalyst compared to other supports? What does Catalyst provide them that other supports do not?*
- *In high schools where only struggling students receive Catalyst, what supports do the other students receive (if not Catalyst)? To what extent are all students' needs being met adequately?*



# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 4: Implement

Figure 7. Catalyst observation rubric.

**INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING PLAYBOOK**

**Part 3: Observation Forms**

**Observing Catalyst**

Campus: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions: Use the three right-hand boxes to note whether the scenarios below are being carried out at a **novice (N)**, **developing (D)**, or **proficient (P)** skill level.*

Logistics	N	D	P
<b>Materials Management:</b> COWs/headphones are secure, complete, and well-maintained.			
<b>Processes and Procedures:</b> COW distribution is smooth and efficient. Signin sheets are up to date and students use the technology appropriately.			
<b>Student Groups:</b> Students are grouped based on need (Accelerated, Enrichment, Reinforcement, Remediation/Critical). Remediation/Critical groups are fifteen or fewer students. The most impactful teachers are with the neediest students.			
<b>Active Monitoring:</b> 100% of students are on-task. Teacher is walking around, answering questions, and encouraging students.			
Adaptive Software	N	D	P
<b>Individualization:</b> Students are working on tasks aligned to their specific needs.			
<b>Student Self-Advocacy:</b> Students can explain what they are doing and how it helps them.			
<b>Tracking:</b> Students regularly track their own progress; can explain their learning goals.			
<b>Data Driven Instruction:</b> Teacher can name and justify the skills each student is working on. Progress monitoring evident.			
Small Group	N	D	P
<b>Focus on Foundational Skills:</b> Focus is on closing skill gaps via data-driven targeted instruction (IAs, Star, STAAR). Instruction looks different than what happens "in class."			
<b>Teacher-Student Interactions:</b> Instruction and student work based on individual student needs. Emphasis on one-to-one interactions rather than whole group instruction.			
<b>Constructing Meaning:</b> Students explain their thinking and connect new learning to previous experiences.			
<b>Student Ownership:</b> Students explain which skills they are developing and how to succeed at them.			

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**INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING PLAYBOOK**

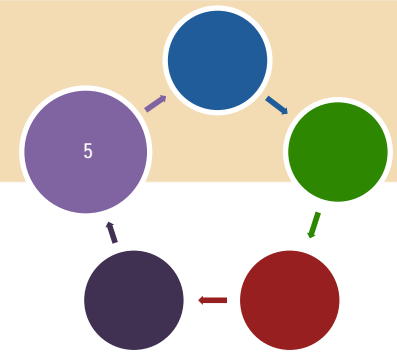
**Part 3: Observation Forms**

Project Based Learning	N	D	P
<b>Backwards Design:</b> Students can explain overall goal of project and criteria for success. Projects engage a multitude of skills but are not explicitly tied to class content.			
<b>Academic Rigor:</b> Students demonstrate a "college ready" mindset and professional standard of work. Synthesis, analysis, and creativity evident.			
<b>Project Management:</b> During class, 100% of students focused on achieving their projects goals. There is a palpable sense of positive urgency and excitement.			
<b>Student Independence:</b> Project deliverables reflect student interests and ideas. Students are the primary investigators and thinkers throughout.			
Distance Learning	N	D	P
<b>Student Selection:</b> Students represent the top 10% academically with a proven history of organization, self-discipline, and self-motivation. They always turn in their homework.			
<b>Student Enrollment:</b> All students enrolled the first day of school. All materials are ordered ahead of time, parent meetings have occurred, and budgets are balanced.			
<b>Mentoring:</b> Student progress is reviewed weekly. A teacher advocate helps students stay organized, make wise decisions, stay on task, and seek help as needed.			
<b>Tracking:</b> Every student has an current tracker with due dates, assignments completed, test dates, course requirements, and current grade. Trackers are updated weekly.			

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# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect



IDEA Public Schools systematically uses data for performance monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of Catalyst by:

- Reviewing Renaissance STAR data three to five times per year to monitor and measure progress in reading and math in comparison to national results and Catalyst goals;
- Reviewing Lexile Growth Scores each month and translating them into grade-level equivalent scores for campus leaders;
- Reviewing STAAR scores and Achieve 3000 data annually to measure progress toward Catalyst goals;
- Administering surveys of students, teachers, and principals on Catalyst implementation, effectiveness, support, satisfaction, and a variety of other perception data;
- Reviewing written feedback on implementation from site visits conducted by SRI International, external evaluators;
- Reviewing an Annual Evaluation Report in a data analysis workshop, an on-site meeting with Network and campus leaders facilitated by SRI International, the external evaluator;
- Quarterly “Step Back” meetings with campus leaders and Individualized Learning Specialists to review quarterly results, which include Renaissance STAR data aligned to the goals of each cohort along with comparisons to national averages, and;
- Review of Monthly Progress Reports at the campus and Network levels that include data collected through the Catalyst observation rubric (see rubric figure on [previous slide](#)).



# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Step 5: Examine and Reflect

Since 2013-14, the Network has contracted with SRI International as an external evaluator to conduct a formal program evaluation, which examines student outcomes using data from Renaissance STAR reading and mathematics.

### Key Evaluation Questions:\*

- *What are the overall achievement trends of Catalyst students?*
  - *What are the trends in progression on Ren STAR and STAAR/STAAR EOC:*
    - *By Tier (Critical, Reinforcement, Enrichment, and Acceleration)*
    - *By LEP status (Current LEP, Redesignated, Never Designated LEP)*
    - *By Model Intensity*
  - *What proportion of students make the expected progress, e.g., critical students should make 2+ years of growth, reinforcement students should make 1.5+ years of growth, etc.:*
    - *By Tier (Critical, Reinforcement, Enrichment, and Acceleration)*
    - *By Model Intensity*
    - *By Tier and Model Intensity*
- *How well does the Renaissance STAR predict whether students will pass STAAR?*

\*Source: SRI International. (2016). Evaluation of IDEA Public School's Race to the Top – District Grant.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst: Outcomes

**Initial Outcomes:** 2015-16 outcomes in reading and mathematics are promising:

- **Reading:**

- Critical students\* in grades 6-12 grew on average by 1.14 years;
- Reinforcement students (those with the next level of need) grew by 0.98 years, and;
- In Grade 8, where previously the Network had negative growth, students grew by 1.16 years.

- **Mathematics:**

- Critical students in grades 6-12 grew on average by 2.15 years;
- Reinforcement students grew by 1.97 years, and;
- These results enable IDEA's 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to take Algebra one year ahead of their grade-level peers in Texas and thus take Calculus their senior year.

*"Connecting district and campus data to individual students and to connect the program, kids' stories, and kids' growth." He said, "I have not seen it done as well in other places. We are changing the lives of specific students, closing gaps in important ways. We make adjustments when we learn it is not working."*

- A Network leader, describing Catalyst's greatest success

\* Critical students are students who are two or more years below grade-level and Reinforcement students are 1.5 years below grade-level in reading and mathematics on district and state assessment.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Summary of Strengths

IDEA demonstrates the following key strengths in their approach to evidence-based decision making for school improvement:

- **Culture of improvement:** Network leaders repeatedly pointed to IDEA's culture of improvement as critical to the development and success of Catalyst. IDEA regularly reviews data for what is and is not working, testing and improving their interventions accordingly. For example, Catalyst was shaped by learning from mini pilots that took place well before its implementation.
- **Collaborative approach to problem-solving:** IDEA Network leaders work closely with campus leaders in identifying and responding to problems of student learning evidenced by the data. Catalyst is the product of collaboration across every phase of the project life cycle, including identifying the need for a new intervention, developing the intervention, and, ultimately, implementing and monitoring and evaluating the success of the intervention.
- **Established systems and procedures:** Strong, carefully documented, systems and procedures support fidelity of implementation across IDEA. These systems and procedures were honed through careful review of pilot evidence on what did and did not work in campus. The end product is, according to one Individualized Learning Specialist, very supportive of teachers and students.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Summary of Challenges

IDEA continues to address these challenges in using evidence for school improvement:

- **Autonomy:** Catalyst leadership describe IDEA's *"results-driven culture with freedom"* as the single greatest challenge in using evidence to implement, evaluate, and improve Catalyst. The relative autonomy of each campus and the leaders within that campus, including the Individualized Learning Specialist, means that the Network must rely on strong, collaborative leadership, as well as relentless advocacy of their interventions, in order to ensure that campuses are engaged participants in Network priorities.
- **Communication:** IDEA's emphasis on collaboration requires more frequent communication. Therefore, communication networks must be continually reinforced and developed. The Network spans multiple regions across Texas. Given campus leaders' autonomy and narrow bandwidth, it can be challenging for Catalyst leadership to communicate effectively with them. Thorough implementation resources, such as the Individualized Learning Playbook, have been helpful in ensuring that campus leaders implement Catalyst with fidelity.
- **Technology:** Catalyst leverages adaptive software to collect student data critical for understanding students' progress and the intervention's potential impact. However, it can be time-consuming and challenging to pull data and create reports from these software, in particular, integrating software data into the Network's student information system. Additionally, campus staff indicate that maintaining technology is an ongoing challenge.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Lessons Learned

The Network identified lessons learned throughout the evidence-based decision-making cycle. These lessons learned may benefit other districts or schools seeking to implement evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**
  - Collaborate with school leadership in order to understand local needs.
  - Connect individualized learning goals to existing campus priorities.
- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**
  - Pilot testing interventions out prior to widespread implementation works.
  - Identify core values, and ensure that the intervention fits well within the school or district culture.
  - Use Rapid Cycle Evaluation, an approach to quickly determine effectiveness of interventions, to identify what works, and to provide feedback to support continuous improvement.
- **Plan for Implementation:**
  - Build in more lead time than initially thought needed in order to prepare stakeholders for implementation.
  - Make plans to scale and sustain implementation district-wide from the beginning of the project.
  - Ensure that campus leaders understand requirements for any new instructional or leadership roles.
  - Recognize that change takes times; prepare for incremental success and the occasional plateau.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Lessons Learned continued:

- **Implement:**
  - Have a compelling reason for all decisions, and communicate that reasoning often.
  - Technology is often a critical and time-consuming component of interventions, but it is secondary to the knowledge and skills of the people implementing the intervention.
- **Examine and Reflect:**
  - Identify key outcomes from the beginning, and ensure they align with school and district priorities.
  - Recognize that aggregate data identifies little about how an intervention is truly working. Success relies upon “drilling down” to teacher and student level data.

# IDEA Public Schools: Catalyst:

## Appendix of Resources Used

The following resources and tools were identified in the process of developing this profile and may be helpful to other districts implementing evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**

- IDEA Public Schools. (2012). Race to the Top-District Application for Initial Funding. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-district/awards.html>

- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**

- District Reform Support Network. (2016). Rapid Cycle Evaluation for Educators: A Primer on RCEs in the Race to the Top-District Program. <https://rttd.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/12475>

- **Plan for Implementation:**

- IDEA Public Schools. (2016). Individualized Learning Playbook: A Quick Guide for IDEA Staff to Support Individual Student Growth and Achievement. [https://issuu.com/ideapublicschools/docs/il\\_playbook\\_final](https://issuu.com/ideapublicschools/docs/il_playbook_final)
- Catalyst Logic Model
- Catalyst Theory of Change

- **Examine and Reflect:**

- SRI International. (2016). Evaluation of IDEA Public School's Race to the Top – District Grant. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement

# **IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## **CRITICAL STUDENT INTERVENTION (CSI)**



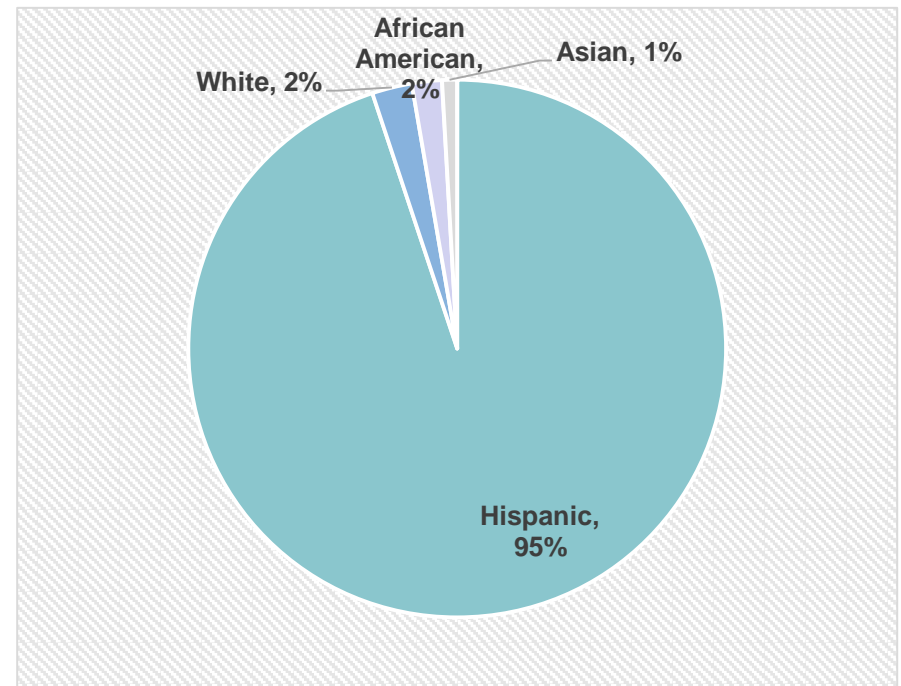


# IDEA Public Schools: CSI: Context

IDEA Public Schools (IDEA) is a Network of **51** public charter schools serving **28,891** students across three Texas regions.\*

- **86.5%** of students eligible to receive free or reduced price meals.
- **4.4%** of students with disabilities served under IDEA.
- **30.2%** of students with limited English proficiency.\*\*\*

Chart 5. Student demographics in SY 2014-15.\*\*



**Fact:** IDEA is a recipient of a \$29,241,967 Race to the Top – District (RTT-D) grant to expand blended learning to middle schools and support teachers to use data well.

Sources: \*IDEA Public Schools. (2016). 2016-17 Organizational Goals.

\*\*Texas Education Agency. (2015). Snapshot 2015: <https://rptsrv1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/snapshot/2015/index.html>

\*\*\*2013 Civil Rights Data Collection Survey Results. <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Home> Percent of students enrolled in gifted and talented program not reported in 2013.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Description of the Intervention

This profile highlights IDEA's use of evidence-based decision making in developing and implementing the **Critical Student Intervention (CSI)**.

- **About the intervention:** First implemented in 2013, IDEA's Critical Student Intervention (CSI) provides targeted support to students who are two or more years below grade-level in reading or mathematics. Supports are provided through small group instruction by special education teachers and intervention specialists for 45-90 minutes a day.
- **Target population:** All of the IDEA campuses use CSI in Grades 3-7 to provide additional support to "critical students" identified based on their performance on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and Renaissance STAR assessments in reading and mathematics.
- **Design:** Each campus has the flexibility to select its own *research-based* intervention program in reading and math. Campuses must collect, analyze, and share assessment data on a regular basis.

**Goals:** CSI aims to close the gap between special education students/critical students and non-special population students in terms of their academic performance in reading or mathematics, specifically:

- *50% of Students in CSI Achieve 2 Years Growth in Reading | Math (measured by Renaissance STAR)*

Last year, the CSI goal was posted in all of the common areas at IDEA campuses, along with the Network's other big "organizational goals," which include:

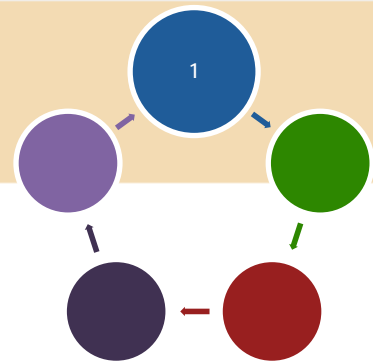
- *Average ACT score of 21 or higher;*
- *35% of Graduates Named AP/IB Scholars, and;*
- *25% of Students Matriculate to a Tier I/II College or University.*

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 1: Identify Local Needs

A collaborative team at IDEA (e.g., Director of Special Programs, CEO, and the Chief Academic Officer) reviewed the following data in order to identify local needs:

- **Campus- and Network-level assessment data:** Data from the STAAR and Network assessment results revealed inequities in student outcomes within the district, particularly a gap between special populations (i.e., English learners and students receiving special education services) and non-special populations. At the time, 43 of the 44 campuses had gaps between their special population and non-special population students, with the exception of IDEA McAllen College Prep.
- **Observational data:** Observational data showed the Network where existing interventions (e.g., pulling students out of core academic periods and after-school or Saturday interventions focused on test prep using a “hodge podge” of materials) were not working.



**Contextual factors:** Prior to selection of CSI, the Network faced two key challenges that made it clear that a Network-wide intervention was needed to support critical students.

- The Texas Education Agency (TEA) mandated the discontinuation of the modified state assessments for special education. IDEA needed to re-imagine their service delivery model to incorporate approaches such as CSI to support all students to take on-grade level state assessments, including the 1,500 students identified as critical within the Network.
- At several IDEA campuses, subgroups did not meet expectations on state assessments. These campuses were required to devise and submit improvement plans that included strategies to improve outcomes for subgroups.

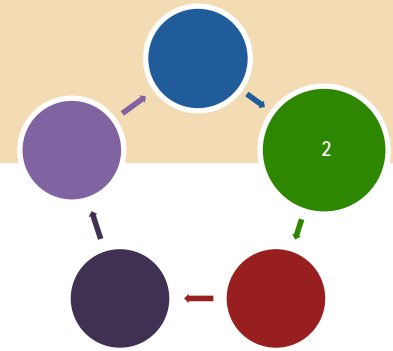
# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

CSI was selected and designed based on evidence from the Network's case study of IDEA McAllen College Prep, and partnership with external experts.

- **Case study:** In contrast to the Network overall, at IDEA McAllen there was almost no achievement gap between non-special and special populations. In addition IDEA McAllen special populations were consistently meeting Network goals for the percentage of students at Levels II and III on the STAAR assessments. Based on these outstanding results, the Network did a “deep dive” and a comprehensive case study to capture practices, structures, and systems that they used to inform the design and development of CSI.
- **Partnership with external experts:** IDEA leveraged an existing partnership with the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) and meta-analyses of direct instruction to support the selection and use of research-based interventions.

IDEA also engaged campus stakeholders during monthly meetings with Network Vice Principals (VPs) to discuss student data to identify campuses with greater success in student outcomes for special populations. Across the Network, principals provided evidence of what did and did not work on to support critical student outcomes. This stakeholder evidence was also used to shape the design of CSI.



**Case Study: What Works Right with Special Populations.** IDEA Director of Special Programs worked closely with the Principal of IDEA McAllen, as well as the IDEA CEO and the Chief Academic Officer to understand what was working for IDEA McAllen's special populations. Through observations and assessment data, the case study identified four key components of IDEA McAllen's success, including: 1) Early intervention; 2) Culture; 3) During-the day intervention; and; 4) The quality of instruction provided.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 2: Select Interventions

In developing CSI, IDEA worked closely with external experts at NIFDI who had compiled a research base on Direct Instruction:

- The research base from NIFDI includes:
  - [History of the Research on Direct Instruction](#): provides a summary of studies of the efficacy of Direct Instruction across a range of contexts. This research has consistently found strong evidence that students exposed to Direct Instruction have higher achievement than those using other programs.
  - [Bibliography on Direct Instruction](#): provides citations to hundreds of articles and books related to Direct Instruction. Two sections focus on studies of Direct Instruction's effectiveness, including studies using randomized control designs and quasi-experimental designs.

**Evidence base of the intervention:** Has the potential to meet the demonstrates a rationale level.\*\*

\* The WWC last reviewed interventions associated with Direct Instruction in 2007 focusing on Early Childhood Education only.

\*\*Disclaimer: The potential rating is based solely on the site-reported evidence and research design that was reviewed by the site at the time of selection of the intervention, which was prior to the posting of the non-regulatory guidance and ESSA requirements. We cannot confirm if the evidence noted in each profile meets the standards set out in the ESSA. A full review of the evidence, under the standards set out in Section 8101(21) of the ESSA, would be necessary to confirm the italicized rating.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

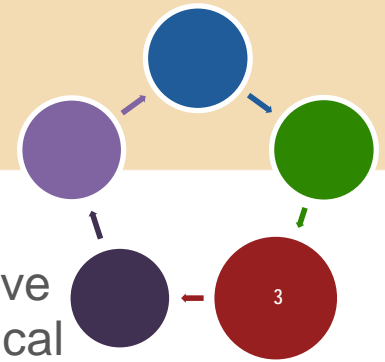
## Step 2: Select Interventions

The selection of the specific interventions IDEA campuses deliver under CSI evolved during the first two years of implementation.

- Initially, IDEA chose not to select the programs for each individual campus to use in implementing CSI, but rather, required them to select interventions that are research-based and geared toward struggling students.
- At the end of the first year, Network leaders collected and analyzed student achievement data to determine which of these initial CSI programs resulted in the most growth in student achievement.
- Using evidence from this initial year of implementation, IDEA developed a Network-recommended list of research-based programs that had resulted in the most student growth for campuses to select from.
- In addition to using evidence from student growth, IDEA also considered program cost effectiveness and the feasibility of providing in-depth training in the selection of programs for this list (e.g., Reading programs include Achieve 3000, Comp, Decoding, DISE, LLI, REWARDS, Triumphs and Math programs include DI, Digits, Do the Math, Envision, and Sylvan).

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation



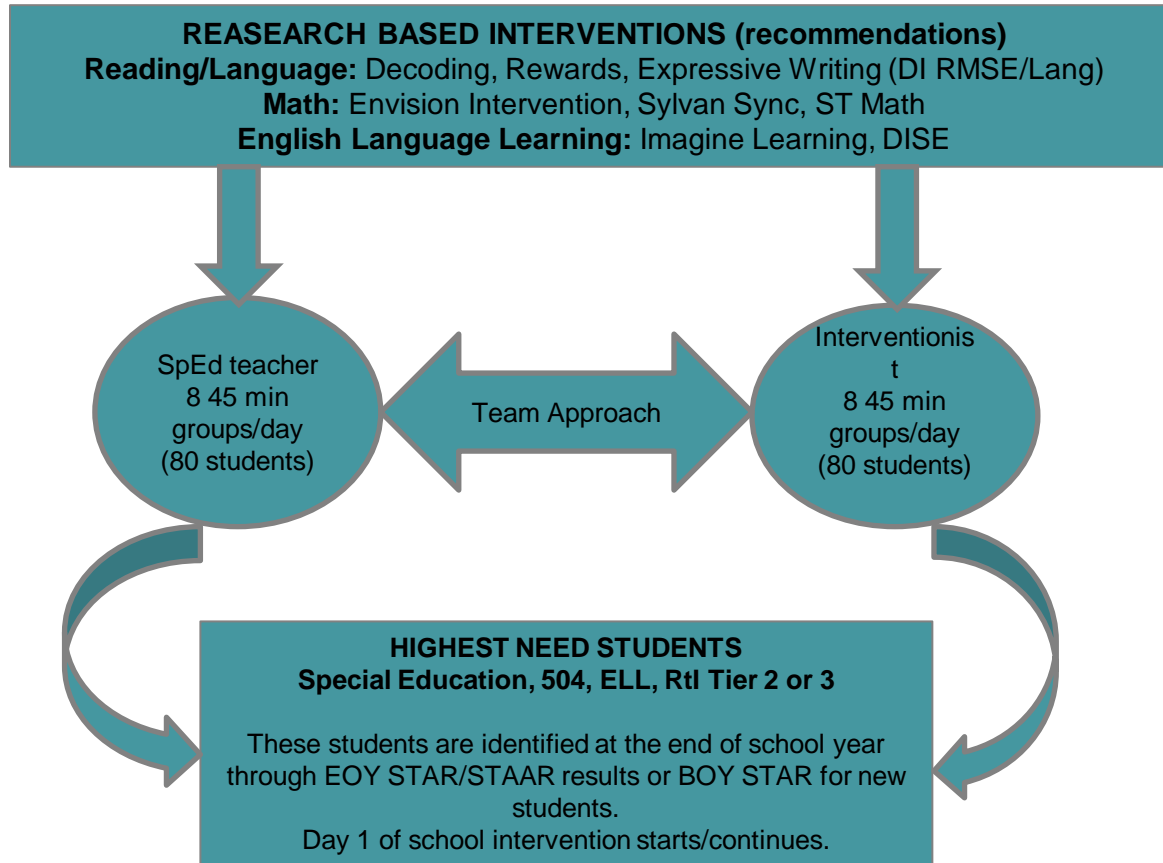
**Framework:** CSI has developed a framework for implementation based on evidence from the IDEA McAllen case study and collective evidence across the Network regarding what works to support critical students. This framework includes a service delivery model for implementing CSI (see figure on [next slide](#)). This framework offers campuses a degree of flexibility in selecting research-based interventions, as long as they subscribe to the following set of non-negotiables:

- Use of a research-based reading or math program geared toward struggling students, with evidence of proven results based on the CSI Renaissance STAR data reports;
- An intervention period during every school day of 45- to 90-minutes;
- Instruction delivered by a special education teacher or intervention specialist. In the planning for CSI, the intervention specialist position became a universal part of the central Network staffing model. All campuses were provided a minimum of one full time intervention specialist to support CSI implementation;
- Focus on critical students who have gaps in reading and/or math of two years or more as measured by STAR and/or failed reading and/or math STAAR from the previous year, and;
- Standardized collection, analysis, and sharing of assessment data on a regular basis.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 3: Plan for Implementation

Figure 8. CSI Service Delivery Model.

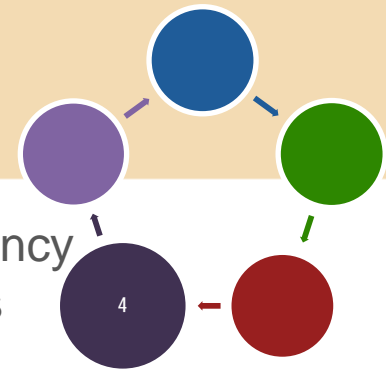


**Spotlight: Tool for Communication.** IDEA views the CSI service delivery model as an important tool to communicate to parents the unique approach IDEA uses to provide services and supports to critical students. IDEA does not provide services through a resource model, pulling students out of the general education classroom for support. All of the CSI supports provided to IDEA critical students are provided in the general education classroom. This model is used to ensure that all students are receiving grade level instruction by content experts.



# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 4: Implement



CSI requires adherence to the non-negotiables to promote consistency of implementation. To ensure the CSI framework is implemented as intended, IDEA has instituted various systems of ongoing support provided by Campus and Network leaders, Intervention Specialists, and external partnerships:

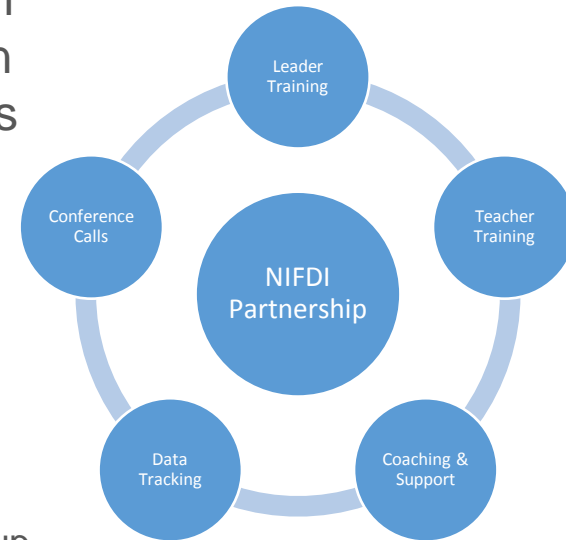
- The Network and partners provide preliminary training for CSI teachers and Intervention Specialists in the specific program they are implementing. Additionally, summer training is provided for all CSI programs being implemented including a one-week NIFDI training session in June, individualized learning training in June/July, and summer and quarterly trainings for new special education teachers and interventionists to review tracking progress, data collection, and Renaissance STAR.
- IDEA develops and schedules professional development sessions and supports one year in advance to facilitate better coordination with schools.
- CSI Managers and NIFDI coaches visit CSI classrooms on an ongoing basis, using a normed rubric to conduct observations (e.g., Teach Boost).
- Network VPs and the Academic Support Team (AST) meet weekly and monthly to discuss and solve issues that arise.
- In addition to NIFDI, IDEA has developed long term external partnerships that are instrumental for the implementation of CSI (e.g., Rosetta Stone and Imagine Learning supports language acquisition interventions, and; Do the Math provides support for math interventions). These partners work collaboratively with IDEA to determine Network training needs, provide on-site training across campuses, and assist with monitoring progress.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 4: Implement

IDEA uses their partnership with NIFDI to help implement the CSI Direct Instruction intervention programs, the Network's most utilized programs for reading. The five main components (see figure) to ensure effective implementation of these reading programs and guide instructional decisions are:

- **Teacher trainings:** Led by NIFDI trainers, professional development sessions are provided for all new IDEA teachers in the summer prior to their first day of school;
- **Leader training:** NIFDI facilitates “onboarding” trainings for principals, assistant principals, and Vice Principals of Schools;
- **Coaching and support:** An Implementation Manager assigned to a group of campuses provides coaching, training, and support for use of data for student progress monitoring;
- **Tracking data:** Training is provided to teachers in how to use their “daily trackers” to log evidence of lesson progress, assessments, and student independent work for use in collaborative instructional decision making with their Implementation Manager, and;
- **Conference calls:** Weekly or bi-weekly calls are held by the Implementation Manager to review student data and independent work to guide timely instructional decisions.



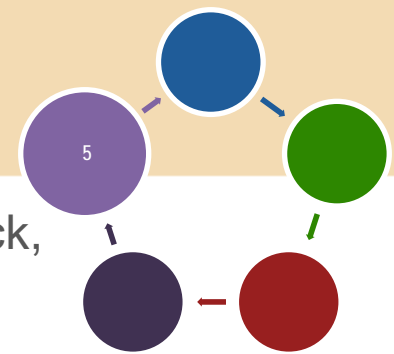
*Figure 9. NIFDI Partnership Model.*

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 5: Examine & Reflect

CSI leaders regularly utilize evidence from stakeholder feedback, professional development evaluation surveys, training quizzes, and student achievement data to evaluate the success of CSI implementation. The use of iterative cycles of performance monitoring have helped to refine and improve the implementation of CSI. Examples of changes for improvement are:

- **Changes to assessments:** IDEA altered their schedule for when Renaissance STAR data was gathered from one point in October to having a CSI progress monitoring schedule embedded in the assessment calendar for the entire school year.
- **Modifications to teacher training:** It was noted early on that interventionists did not often have the opportunity to see exemplar practices in action. CSI modified training to have interventionists and special education teachers trained together to ensure common understanding around roles for CSI, and scheduled intervention observations at schools with exemplar practices.
- **Adjustments to ongoing daily and weekly supports:** Initially NIFDI was holding calls with only participating campuses doing Direct Instruction Spoken English, Comprehension, Expressive Writing, or Decoding. After it was determined that campuses with this NIFDI call support showed the most growth, a mid-course correction was implemented so that all campuses with these programs would be on NIFDI calls and receive coaching. In addition data debrief calls were instituted with Interventionists and School leaders after CSI district data reports are released.



*"Our huge mission for ourselves and our kids is continuous improvement. This is never going to be "good enough." Things change and we can always improve. This varies by campus. We are always adding new schools and trying to improve.*

- Director of Special Programs

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 5: Examine & Reflect

Although there is no formal evaluation for CSI, IDEA regularly engages in data-driven performance monitoring to examine and reflect on key outcomes and the progress towards meeting CSI goals. Performance monitoring includes:

- **Annual organizational goal:** Every campus and teacher shares the same primary annual goal for CSI: *50% of critical students will close the achievement gap by two years in reading or mathematics in a one-year period of time.* This goal is an IDEA “organizational goal,” included among the core Network goals listed on the bathroom walls in each campus. Teachers who meet or exceed this goal can be eligible to receive a bonus at their annual performance review.
- **Quarterly reports:** Quarterly reports generated by the IDEA research team include benchmark assessment data disaggregated by students, teachers, and campus and that rank campuses according to their progress in meeting student and teacher benchmarks. The reports are reviewed by staff at every level – from Senior VPs and Directors to teacher and interventionists – to track the progress of CSI students. CSI teachers and interventionists do data dives to inform mid-course adjustments, while Senior VPs and Directors conduct quarterly “*step backs*” to review data and plan for the future. IDEA follows a standardized timeline for the collection, analysis, and sharing of assessment data (see figure).

Testing Window	Report Date	TARGET: 50% or higher on track to meet 2.0 year goal
Beginning of year testing window	September 9, 2016	n/a
October 17-19	October 21, 2016	% at .5 year's growth
Middle of year testing window	January 3, 2017	% at 1.0 year's growth
April 3-5	April 7, 2017	% at 1.5 year's growth
End of year testing window	June 2, 2017	% at 2.0 year's growth

Figure 10. CSI Progress Monitoring Schedule.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Step 5: Examine & Reflect

- **Weekly reports:** Each week, the research team summarizes data from NIFDI programs, Renaissance Learning STAR, and Achieve 3000 into one report. The reports include highlights, as well as “glows” (i.e., successes) and “grows” (i.e., challenges). Findings are shared each Thursday on a “schools call” with Senior VPs and principals.
- **Daily data review:** Teachers and interventionists monitor student progress toward their learning objectives on a daily basis. They track daily data on interventions (e.g., fluency scores) and mastery.
- **Review of teacher outcome data:** In addition to student outcomes, IDEA reviews data to monitor if teachers are making progress toward CSI goals on a quarterly basis. IDEA tracks which Network teachers are implementing CSI programs and analyzes student achievement data to rank these teachers within and across campuses according to their effectiveness. As a part of the IDEA Teacher Career Pathway, all IDEA teachers set goals with their managers and are rewarded for meeting these goals. CSI teachers are measured against meeting the Network CSI goal. IDEA uses this teacher data related to meeting goals “not to call out teachers” but for “driving actions” such as:
  - Determining teacher eligibility for performance pay for meeting goals;
  - Identifying effective teachers to schedule observational visits to their classrooms for other teachers to observe and learn from their practice, and;
  - Identifying teachers who need additional support through professional development.

**Spotlight: A Culture of Data Use.** Across all of their data analysis conversations, IDEA promotes a culture of data use based on these guiding questions: *What progress are we seeing? If it is high, why? If it is low, why? What are we going to do about it?*

*“If we don’t monitor it, we don’t know what is happening. Many ideas stay great ideas. We follow through and this increased the fidelity, execution, and sustainability.”*

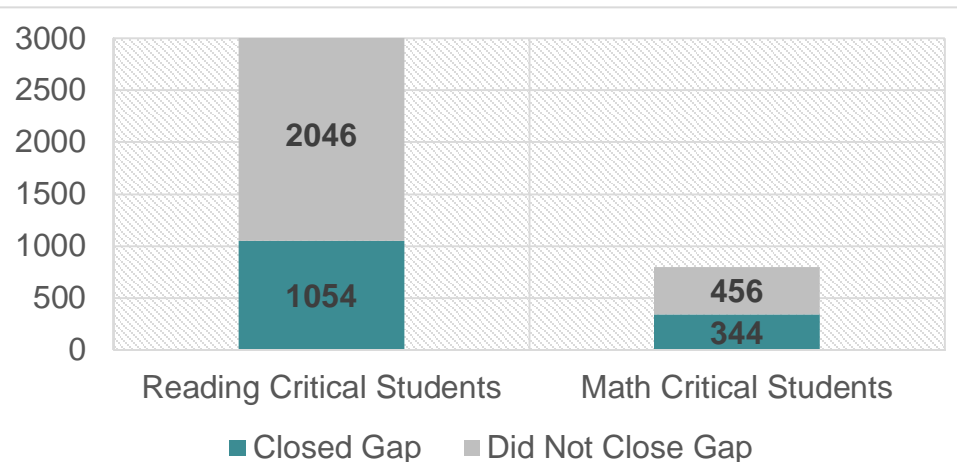
- Principal of IDEA McAllen

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI: Outcomes

Overall CSI data are promising across the Network (see chart below). Current analyses focus on determining if the CSI target is achieved.

The Network plans to conduct additional analysis to explore trends in cohort groups and longitudinal reporting. They also plan to determine the impact of CSI in meeting their long term goals for increasing students' ACT scores and increasing the number of AP tests students pass.

Chart 6. Number of students effectively closing reading and/or math gaps of two years or more, as measured by Renaissance STAR (SY 2015-16)



*"We have students who have not passed the STAAR assessments in elementary, in 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Then they come here; we give them the foundation in reading and math, and they pass STAAR sometimes for the very first time. That tells me this is working. They go up in Renaissance scores, advancing to grade level or one level below. They are proud and say 'I can do it.'"*

- Special education teacher, describing what success looks like at the student level

**Spotlight: Video features CSI Success.** In a recent [video](#), the IDEA CEO acknowledges Network-wide positive outcomes for CSI. The CEO indicates that by the middle of the 2016 school year, 58% of critical students were on track to make 2 years of growth in math and 45% were on track to make 2 years of growth in reading. In addition, by January of 2016, 17% of critical students were on track to make 4 years of growth in math and 10% to make 4 years of growth in reading.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Summary of Strengths

IDEA demonstrates the following key strengths in their approach to evidence-based decision making for school improvement:

- **A strong framework:** Because CSI has a framework with a set of non-negotiables and structures, principals and campus leaders do not have to “*reinvent the wheel*.” This has been helpful, particularly for busy principals and campus leaders and for those who are new to IDEA. It also supports the Network in ensuring quality of implementation across the Network.
- **Culture of data use:** Consistent with the Network’s culture, CSI has high expectations for data use at every level. Their ongoing review of the data drives much of their decision making. When IDEA sees a challenge in the data, they ask “*What are we going to do about it?*” This focus on the data supports a “no excuses” mindset at the classroom, school, and Network-levels that has shaped successful implementation and ongoing improvement of CSI.
- **Progress monitoring processes and tools:** IDEA has created and continues to refine a set of data collection tools and processes that the research and evaluation director describe as “*very simple*” and “*transparent*.” Processes and tools, such as the quarterly support and re-occurring meetings, support ongoing communication between campuses and the Network about CSI. Progress monitoring has been standardized to the point that IDEA has been able to increase its frequency, supporting valuable learning at the campus and Network levels.



# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Summary of Challenges

IDEA continues to address these challenges in using evidence for school improvement:

- **Balancing non-negotiables and innovation:** While IDEA's model supports fidelity of implementation, it can also make innovation more challenging, particularly for newer campuses. CSI leadership is closely monitoring the progress of more established campuses that are innovating, while still achieving results. Innovation from these campuses can support the Network in improving CSI.
- **Communication:** IDEA serves four regions, and communicating out early enough, clearly enough, and following up on all communications can be challenging. Over time, IDEA is learning the most effective ways to communicate with various audiences. They have developed a strategic communication plan and timeline to ensure effective communication with all stakeholders.
- **Rapid growth:** IDEA is growing by 6-8 campuses each year, meaning that new teachers and campus leaders must be trained in CSI on a regular basis. IDEA's model supports new campuses in implementing CSI effectively from the beginning. In response to this growth, the Network has now instituted quarterly trainings for new teachers.



# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Lessons Learned

The Network identified lessons learned throughout the evidence-based decision-making cycle. These lessons learned may benefit other districts or schools seeking to implement evidence-based interventions:

- **Identify Local Needs:**
  - Monitor innovation at the local level in order to understand what is working and why it works and share this learning with others, using multiple sources of evidence.
- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**
  - Partner with established organizations that have proven frameworks and approaches.
  - Analyze school and district data to identify sites as case studies of successful interventions that may hold promise for the rest of the district.
  - Identify, examine, and document what is working within the school or district. If necessary, reach out to other schools, districts, or states who have been successful.
- **Plan for Implementation:**
  - Take the time to plan for implementation; ideally, six to twelve months.
  - Start with a strategic communication plan and timeline.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Lessons Learned continued:

- **Implement:**
  - Match the intervention framework to local needs to increase the likelihood of effective implementation. For example, identify non-negotiables and what can be flexible without losing fidelity to the core components of the intervention.
  - Ensure a strong model supporting implementation, particularly in contexts of rapid expansion.
  - Schedule professional development and support as much as one year in advance in order to support coordination across the district.
- **Examine and Reflect:**
  - Use data to drive decision making every step of the way: from identification and selection of services for students to analyzing the effectiveness of the intervention.

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Appendix of Resources Used

The following resources and tools were identified in the process of developing this profile and may be helpful to states or districts using evidence-based interventions:

- **Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions:**

- IDEA Public Schools. (2012). What Works Right with Special Populations: IDEA McAllen College Prep as the Model.
- History of the Research on Direct Instruction: <http://nifdi.org/research/history-of-di-research/over-40-years-of-research>
- Bibliography on Direct Instruction: <http://nifdi.org/research/di-bibliographies/comprehensive-bibliography>

- **Plan for Implementation:**

- Partnership Websites:
  - National Institute for Direct Instruction: <http://www.nifdi.org/>
  - Imagine Learning: <http://www.imaginelearning.com/>
  - Rosetta Stone: <http://www.rosettastone.com/k12/ell-learning>
  - Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: <http://www.hmhco.com/products/do-the-math>

# IDEA Public Schools: CSI:

## Appendix of Resources Used continued:

The following resources and tools were identified in the process of developing this profile and may be helpful to states or districts using evidence-based interventions:

- **Implement:**
  - Teach Boost Rubric: <https://teachboost.com/>
- **Examine and Reflect:**
  - IDEA Public Schools. (2016). Critical Student Intervention: 2016-17 Focus Areas.
  - CEO Video of CSI: <https://vimeo.com/160612490>

# Acknowledgements

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