Scaling-up Brief

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Introduction

Effective implementation capacity is essential to improving education. The State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center supports education systems in creating implementation capacity for evidence-based practices benefitting students, especially those with disabilities.

Students cannot benefit from education practices they do not experience. While this seems obvious (and it is), education systems have yet to develop the capacity to help all teachers learn to make good use of evidence-based practices that enhance the quality of education for all students. The purpose of this Brief is to provide a framework that state leadership teams and others can use to develop the capacity to make effective, statewide, and sustained use of evidence-based practices and other innovations.

Scaling Up

The significant investment in attempts to improve education will be "worth it" if it helps further the education of students and benefit their families and communities. As a benchmark, "scaling up" innovations in education means that at least 60% of the students who could benefit from an innovation are experiencing that innovation in their education setting. For example, 60% of all K-3 teachers in schools in a district are using an effective approach to teaching reading. To purposefully achieve educationally and socially significant outcomes for at least 60% of the millions of students in the USA requires changes in education practices and the development of implementation capacity to support those practices in education systems in every state. Scaling relies on the knowledge base for implementation science, a field that has grown exponentially in recent decades. Implementation science helps to explain why only some education improvement efforts succeed and why only some improvements are sustained.

The Formula for Success reflects the growing science of implementation:

Effective Instruction ✖ **Effective Implementation** ✖ **Enabling Contexts** ＝ **Educationally Significant Outcomes**

The Formula points to three components that interact over time to produce intended outcomes. In an extreme case where Effective Implementation is zero, the Educationally Significant Outcomes will be zero. Similarly, if instruction methods are ineffective the outcomes will be zero no matter how well implemented, they are. In addition, well-implemented effective instruction methods are not sustained in the absence of engaged leadership in schools, districts, and the state. Thus, attention to any one or two components is insufficient. A substantial literature on student learning has accumulated over the decades to inform Effective Instruction. Efforts to create Enabling Contexts have been the focus of federal and state legislation for decades, especially since the advent of No Child Left Behind and the dramatic increases in federal funding for education.

Understanding of the implementation component has increased dramatically. Since the 1960s, implementation specialists and researchers have produced a deeper and more complete understanding of what it takes to purposefully produce significant outcomes on a useful scale. Implementation Teams bring expertise to support teachers' use of Effective Instruction, support administrators' efforts to establish hospitable environments for teacher instruction and student learning, and support leaders who engage in organization and system change specifically designed to create adaptive learning organizations. To reach all schools and teachers, Implementation Teams help create readiness to change among staff, leaders, and administrators. Implementation Teams help establish data and communication links to bring about greater alignment and coherence among policies and practices. Eventually, every region in each state will have implementation specialists to augment the current work of curriculum and instruction specialists and administrative specialists to purposefully and proactively

support effective instruction in each classroom, school, and district. The capacity for scaling up innovations statewide is created by capitalizing on every opportunity to develop and institutionalize the implementation infrastructure needed to support the full and effective use of innovations. This brief outlines two key concepts, Transformation Zones and Implementation Teams, and the relationship of these structures and their attendant functions to successful scaling-up endeavors.

Transformation Zones

States currently dabble in the use of evidence-based practices and other innovations, often by funding pilots and demonstration projects. While pilot and demonstration projects are a necessary part of system change efforts, unfortunately they rarely lead to widespread or sustainable use. Part of the reason for these unfortunate outcomes is that most demonstration projects are focused only on interventions. They do not include making system changes (e.g., policy, funding, regulatory) or establishing implementation capacity to allow innovations and demonstrations to be deployed effectively Better outcomes can be achieved by establishing innovations in designated "transformation zones" that focus on innovations and infrastructure development.

A transformation zone can be thought of as a "vertical slice" of the education system. The "slice" is small enough to be manageable but large enough to include all aspects of the system. A transformation zone includes teachers and staff, important stakeholders and partners, key policy makers at the state level, and all components of the bureaucracy in between. The figure below provides a visual representation of the continual feedback loop that exists between policy and practice in a transformation zone. Transformation zones

are used to establish simultaneously new ways of work (the intervention) and the capacity to support the new ways of work (the implementation infrastructure to assure effective use of the intervention). One without the other is not sufficient.

In a transformation zone, the intention from the beginning is to rapidly establish the operational value of the innovation and determine the infrastructure supports necessary for widespread use.

- The dual intention (innovation and infrastructure development) is fully understood and agreed upon at all levels (LEA, parent groups, schools, district administrators, state leaders).

- From the beginning, issues related to sustainability, quality improvement, and scalability are considered and decisions are made with the future in mind (i.e., capacity development is part of every decision and part of every solution).

- Exceptions to current policy, funding, and regulatory requirements are anticipated, welcomed, and tested at the practice level with respect to enhancing capacity building.

- Practice-level feedback loops at each policy level (e.g., school, district, state) are formalized and built into communication protocols. Formal assessment instruments are used frequently and repeatedly to assess the fidelity of the practices at the school level, the fidelity of the implementation supports at the district level, and the fidelity of the policy and continuous improvement systems at the state level.

- Assessment data are used immediately to assess progress and to inform action planning at each level.

- Changes in the areas outlined above begin in the first month or two (not a few years later when a "demonstration" or "pilot" has concluded) and continue until critical problems have been solved, capacity has been built, and system alignment within the transformation zone has been achieved.

- As the work in a transformation zone becomes successful, the zone is broadened to include a larger "slice" of the overall system. Within four or five years the entire system is in the transformation zone, and the innovation and the implementation infrastructure are embedded as standard practice in education.

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Capacity Development

As the value of an innovation is demonstrated in a transformation zone, the State actively supports capacity expansion and aligns current policies, structures, roles, and functions. As the transformation zone expands, the infrastructure expands to better support the effective use of the innovation in schools and districts in larger portions of the state. In a simultaneous bottom up and top down manner, every new policy sets the occasion for creating new capacity to effectively implement the policy with demonstrable benefits to students, families, and communities. New practices that are implemented set the occasion for discovering and creating the infrastructure supports, policy revisions, and funding streams needed to further develop and expand capacity. This leads to a never ending cycle to sustain and improve both the innovation and the infrastructure supports for the innovation for years to come.

Successful scaling-up of evidence-based practices and effective innovations requires keeping the entire system in mind; directing capacity development efforts to appropriate levels; and connecting communication and data systems across these levels so a transformed system can emerge. State education capacity development for sustainable, quality implementation is the goal of the State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). In the SISEP active scaling states, innovations already are in use to further literacy and social and emotional well-being. The scale-up efforts are focused on these well-established innovations that were initiated by the states based on their needs and desires for their students. SISEP's role is to help the states develop the capacity to make full and effective use of those innovations in classrooms across the entire state. Thus, the purpose of "scaling up" is to build on the good work that already has been initiated in each state in order to establish a general capacity for implementing a variety of evidence-based programs and other innovations with fidelity and good outcomes for students, families, and communities. While the work is funded by OSEP, capacity development is focused on the entire education system (general and special education).

Implementation Teams

The SISEP approach begins with a clear understanding that teachers and education staff members who interact with students are the key agents of quality education. This is where "education happens." Teacher and staff competency to "make education happen" relies upon initial and ongoing teacher preparation and professional development (e.g. , selection, training, coaching, performance assessments) and organizational supports (e.g., decision support data systems, facilitative administration, system interventions) that are focused on making effective use of innovations and creating schools as learning organizations. How can the capacity for professional development and practice improvement be developed, sustained, and improved over time? The SISEP vision for developing state capacity is focused, in part, on creating Implementation Teams that each concentrate on about 100 schools within a manageable geographic region to assure high-quality supports for teacher preparation and professional development and supportive administrative practices in every school. The goals of Implementation Teams are to provide the infrastructure needed to use best practices in implementation and systems

change in order to support the widespread use of effective educational interventions selected by districts, schools, and communities. The intent is to establish a core infrastructure that can help integrate practice improvement initiatives and that can both take advantage of local and district strengths as well as anticipate and react appropriately to the multiple challenges faced by any scale-up effort. About 10 to 15 Implementation Teams will be needed to establish an adequate implementation infrastructure in the education systems in typical states. The daily, weekly, and monthly communication and practice-based feedback systems among the various partners and stakeholders (e.g., teachers, building administrators, district superintendents and staff, unions, parents, advocacy groups, and State leaders) help to create an on-going capacity for surfacing local, district, and system issues, and solve problems by re-aligning resources in the education system as a whole. These feedback systems help to assure the continuing functional components of the Implementation Teams over generations of staff members providing education in the midst of continual changes in society.

Conclusion

Organized transformation zones and implementation teams currently do not exist in States. Thus, the capacity for making full and effective use of evidence-based programs and other innovations does not exist in State systems of education or other human services. The science of implementation, organization change, and system transformation is growing and applied "best practices" have been identified.

Given the recent advances in knowledge, it is now possible for States to deliberately and systematically develop and make effective use of an implementation infrastructure to accomplish educationally and socially significant outcomes for children statewide.

About SISEP

Effective implementation capacity is essential to improving education. The State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center supports education systems in creating implementation capacity for evidence-based practices benefitting students, especially those with disabilities. For more Information visit us on the web at: https://sisep.fpg.unc.edu