



ImpleMap: Exploring the Implementation Landscape

National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHAPEL HILL

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About

The mission of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) is to contribute to the best practices and science of implementation, organization change, and system reinvention to improve outcomes across the spectrum of human services.

email: nirn@unc.edu

web: <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu>



When creating implementation capacity in an organization new to active implementation, the first task is to map the current implementation landscape. The ImpleMap interview process assists implementation specialists in collecting information to inform active implementation planning and development in the organization.

Background

Human service provider organizations (e.g. child welfare units, child care settings, community centers, education settings, healthcare clinics, residential care facilities) are attempting to make use of interventions (e.g. evidence-based programs and other innovations) to improve outcomes for children, families, individuals, and communities. For the past few decades policy makers, researchers, and technical assistance providers have focused on *interventions*.

The same attention and support has not been given to *implementation* of interventions. Consequently, in most cases human service organizations have been left to their ingenuity to figure out how to make use of evidence-based programs. In a few instances, evidence-based program developers have created a purveyor group that can provide effective supports for implementation of that intervention. The lack of attention to implementation methods has led to what some have termed the quality chasm: we know what to do, but we are not making use of that knowledge to improve outcomes in human services.

The National Implementation Research Network encourages policy makers, practitioners, and communities to make greater use of evidence-based programs and other innovations (collectively called “interventions” in this document). The United States far outspends any other country on human services yet our outcomes rank near the bottom of the 30 or so most developed countries globally. Evidence-based interventions hold the promise of better outcomes.

Common sense tells us that children, families, individuals, and communities cannot benefit from interventions they do not experience. Thus, the promise of evidence-based interventions will not be realized unless they are used fully and effectively in practice, every day for everyone who could benefit. The growing science of implementation and documentation of implementation best practices provide guidance for effectively and efficiently supporting evidence-based programs in human service provider organizations. To realize benefits on a socially-important scale, policy makers and directors of provider organizations must invest in creating effective implementation supports for practitioners.

Implementation supports for interventions

Implementation capacity is embodied in Implementation Teams. An Implementation Team consists of three or more full-time individuals who know interventions well, are skilled specialists regarding implementation science and best practices, and are well-versed in the many uses of improvement cycles to continually advance practices, organizations, and systems.

Implementation Team members do the work of implementation in organizations and systems. To create an Implementation Team, current positions are re-assigned, functions are re-purposed, team members develop new competencies, and reporting relationships are re-aligned so no new costs are added. Implementation Teams are built into organization and system structures to provide lasting and sustainable supports for using a variety of evidence-based interventions and other innovations fully and effectively. Implementation Team members conduct ImpleMap interviews.

Readers are encouraged to visit the National Implementation Research Network website (<http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu>) and the State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Programs website (<http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu>) for further information about implementation science, Implementation Teams, and infrastructures to support implementation on a large scale.

Purpose: Mapping the Implementation Landscape

Creating implementation supports in human service provider organizations is not done in a vacuum. There already are efforts underway using the do-it-yourself approaches that characterize the vast majority of current attempts to use interventions in human services. Surveys of human service providers conducted by the National Implementation Research Network reveal areas of strength, areas of overlap, gaps, and degrees of integration and fragmentation when assessing current implementation efforts.

When creating implementation capacity in a “new” organization (i.e. developing Implementation Teams to provide supports that are effective, integrated, efficient, and sustainable), the first task is map the current implementation landscape. The goal is built on current strengths and collects information to inform planning the best path toward developing implementation capacity in *this* provider organization. The ImpleMap interview process and sharing of results also helps to create readiness in organizations by highlighting the current strengths and gaps in their implementation activities and the benefits of doing implementation of innovations systematically.

ImpleMap Instructions

Identifying Respondents

The following sequence is used to map current implementation efforts in a human service provider organization. Mapping is done by way of a series of interviews. The first interview can be done with a small group (called “respondents”) who know the organization well, has good information about the history of the organization and knowledge of the interventions that have been/ are being tried, and have been involved in making use of one or more interventions “on purpose”. In larger or more diverse organizations one group may not have all the information. In these cases, mapping may require a few meetings with an expanding group of respondents. In other cases, four or five people might be able to provide all of the information below during the course of one meeting.

Access to respondents is set up as part of initial contacts with the organization. Meetings with staff members and leadership groups are held to explain the benefits of implementation and scaling and to invite the participation of the organization in Exploration Stage activities. Only modest agreement is needed to explain the exploratory nature of the ImpleMap interview and how the results might help the organization decide if full participation in implementation capacity development is “worth it” or not. *Any* agreement to proceed with ImpleMapping is good enough and opens the door to ask the organization contact person(s) to assemble the respondents for the interview.

Managers and others often want to sit in on the ImpleMap interview. This is encouraged as a way of educating them about implementation.

Interviewer Instructions

ImpleMap interviews are conducted by at least two people (three preferred). *At least two of the interviewers need to be well versed in the Implementation Drivers.* Interviews tend to wander, and the interviewer needs to know how to capitalize on what is said and ask the next question to elicit information relevant to implementation best practices.

The knowledge base of the interviewers is essential to achieving the goals of the ImpleMap. A goal is to help others view their current work through an implementation lens. For example, it is important to recognize coaching best practices when they arise as part of the interview, ask questions to “drill down” for more specific information about what they do, then summarize what was said and how that relates to coaching best practices at the end of that series of question. This is the beginning of the engagement and implementation education process for respondents in the interview and for other organization staff.

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During the interview, one interviewer facilitates the process, asks the questions, and takes cursory notes. The second interviewer takes detailed notes and occasionally asks questions to fill in gaps. *The detailed notes are organized by Driver.* The third person attends to the process. At what points were people leaning forward and completely engaged, or leaning back and looking bored, or whispering to one another anxiously/sadly/excitedly, or taking notes on what was just said? If there is no third person, the note-taker tries to pay attention to these process dimensions while capturing the content. The process notes are essential to improving the ImpleMap methods over time.

When conducting interviews, the interviewer should be *genuinely curious* about what is being done, how it is being done, and who is doing the work of implementation in an organization. There is much to learn and these interviews provide an opportunity to broaden and deepen our understanding of implementation in practice.

Interviewers are asked to be all positive, all the time. An important goal is to establish good relationships with respondents while eliciting useful information and making the interview interesting and enjoyable. This is not the time to point out gaps or specious reasoning. Constructive work to strengthen implementation capacity in the organization will occur later if the Exploration work (including the ImpleMap interview) goes well.

Some cautions

The steps below are listed one at a time and correspond to the grid shown on the following page. However, the steps are not intended to be carried out in a linear fashion. Conversations with respondents take on a life of their own. Some respondents will volunteer considerable information about one intervention so the questions proceed from left to right on the grid in no particular order. The goal is to arrive at a good “picture” of how implementation has been attempted in the organization. The goal is not to ask each question in some fixed order.

The mapping conversations are *not* intended to assess the *quality* of implementation. The National Implementation Research Network has assessment methods that can provide that information later. The goal of mapping is to find the general strengths, gaps, and overlaps before proceeding with creating the capacity to use implementation Stages and Drivers effectively.

Interviewer Step 1

Ask the respondent to describe the evidence-based programs or other innovations that are being used in the organization to help improve services and outcomes (these are called “interventions” in this document and in the following Table). The name of each intervention is entered in the Intervention column.

Interventions are not just evidence-based programs or evidence-based innovations. Interventions also could be new data systems, new parent inclusion methods, and so on – anything that is new to an organization is an “innovation” from the perspective of that organization.

If the respondent provides a long list of interventions, ask them about the most important or most recent 3 or 4 interventions. To avoid being tedious, ask the following questions about just one or two of their interventions (“focal interventions”).

Ask how the organization decided to use the focal interventions. Do they have a process for considering needs, matching interventions to needs, considering the fit of a prospective intervention with current practices, and so on. If there is a process, how does it work and how standardized has it become? The vetting process is an important bit of information to extract from the interview.

Interviewer Step 2

For each focal intervention, ask WHAT defines that intervention. Interventions are defined by their essential ingredients, but sometimes the essential components are not well known or understood. Thus, ask the question and ask a few clarifying questions as needed. Common questions are: What are the critical elements of this intervention? What do you look for when someone is using this intervention? Don’t press for too much detail when that detail is not forthcoming. If someone else might know the core intervention components, ask to speak to that person later.

Interviewer Step 3

For each focal intervention, ask HOW practitioners are supported in their use of the intervention. Are there methods in place for selecting clinicians to do this work? Is training provided to help foster parents learn how to use the intervention? Is coaching provided to help teachers use the intervention in the classroom? Continue these questions in a conversational manner as you work through all of the Implementation Drivers.

Interviewer Step 4

For each intervention, ask WHO provides support for the practitioners who are intended to use the intervention. Are all teachers using the intervention, or just some teachers? How were they selected? Who did the selection? Interventions represent new ways of work. Were the

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clinicians trained? Who did the training? Is supervision and coaching provided after training to help foster parents use the intervention? Who provides that supervision and coaching? Continue these questions in a conversational manner as you work through all of the Implementation Drivers.

An important thing here is to record the name, position, and location of each person who provides one or more of the Implementation Drivers. Are they embedded in the organization, members of related organizations, contracted employees or organization staff members, and so on?

An ImpleMap Grid

(Interviewers may want to consider printing this table to guide your conversation)

INTERVENTION	WHAT	HOW	WHO
Enter the name of each intervention provided by the respondent.	Ask about the “core intervention components” as they are described by the respondent.	Ask about the Implementation Drivers.	Ask about the person accountable for providing each Implementation Driver.
You may know the intervention by another name, but record the name used in this provider organization.	Core intervention components are the critical functions that define an intervention.	Implementation Drivers are components related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• developing staff competency (selection, training, coaching, performance assessments);• organization supports (decision support data systems, facilitative administration, systems interventions); and• leadership supports (technical and adaptive).	Record the name, position, and physical location of each person.
Ask questions to get information about the vetting process.			

Appendix A: ImpleMap Interview Video Examples

There are ImpleMap video clips on YouTube. They are in 10 minute increments. These were done in a child welfare context but we are most interested in the behavior of the interviewer, so the videos can be helpful in using ImpleMapping in any content domain. Because these were filmed in actual service settings, we have tried to make your viewing time “efficient” by noting when key aspects of the ImpleMapping are being demonstrated. These key aspects are noted in the timed segments that appear in each table for each 10 minute segment. Pay particular attention to how the interviewer is responding to the information being provided and the tone and engagement with the participants. Notice how the interviewer takes advantage of openings to highlight implementation and where we are going together in this journey. Finally, notice how the interviewer is beginning to develop a positive working relationship with the group (potential future members of the first Implementation Team) by admiring what they do and engaging in banter.

The following videos are available [here](#).

ImpleMap Segment 1

This segment demonstrates the inquiry process related to the “what” – we want to learn which interventions, programs, frameworks, or practices they are purposefully attempting to implement well. And we want to know on what basis they selected them. In particular, we are finding out if there is a purposeful vetting process for determining the characteristics of programs that they are willing to “invest in” and what the dimensions of that vetting process might be. Our work asks leadership and implementation teams to consider the conditions under which a particular innovation is supported (e.g. need, evidence, readiness for implementation, capacity to implement, fit, resources).

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 0:00 | Introduction to the idea of an implementation infrastructure and why we are there asking questions |
| 0:40 | Preparation for the style of discussion – the interviewer will ask questions, interrupt to ask more questions, get at clarity – more informal and discussion and less a question-response format |
| 1:50 – 2:28 | Ask about WHAT they are doing on purpose to improve outcomes |
| 3:10-3:20 | Reminder that we will settle on one or two interventions to discuss later on |
| 6:24-7:15 | Quick summary of intervention candidates, then ask about the process for vetting |

- the interventions they have described
- 7:37-7:50 Summarize what they have said about vetting – my words about the vetting process as they have described it
- 8:30-8:45 Ask about who does the vetting – who decides what interventions will be used
- 9:20- Drill down questions – more direct questions about the vetting process

ImpleMap Segment 2

As the two or three interventions are identified and more is known about the vetting process and how it occurs, we want to understand “who” is involved. This will inform our future work with them related to membership and activities of Leadership and Implementation Teams. This segment also demonstrates how to check in on process and how to make summative statements before moving on. The end of the segment demonstrates a discussion on how to arrive at the one or two interventions they want to focus on. This is the pre-work to engaging in a reflective and guided discussion about the Implementation Drivers.

- 1:22-1:40 Probe further on WHO does the vetting process
- 2:40-3:05 Summary statement in attempt to clarify WHO does the vetting
- 3:50-4:10 Last probe on WHO does the vetting
- 4:10-4:20 Process check – OK to discuss things this way?
- 4:20-4:40 Summary of vetting criteria – looking for agreement with the statement
- 5:25-5:50 Ask questions to clarify the vetting process to get the last bits of information
- 6:05-7:20 Statement about what we learned from them about the vetting process and a statement about the importance of vetting for implementation and scaling (get them ready for the work ahead)
- 7:20-7:55 SHIFT to choose the one or two interventions that will be the focus of the rest of the interview
- 8:18-8:55 Make statements and ask questions to get agreement of what we will call the interventions for the rest of the interview
- 8:55-9:35 Statement to set up the next section that focuses on Drivers

ImpleMap Segment 3

This segment is a discussion about the Drivers, starting with selection. Notice how the interviewer followed the group as they clearly were focused on “units” and not practitioners. This still produced useful information (recast as Stages) about how they think about implementation. Notice that because they focused on “units” rather than practitioners, this was a good opportunity to offer some information about the Exploration and Installation Stages of implementation.

- 0:25-0:45 Summarize their comments – look for agreement/ clarification
- 1:05-1:40 Focus attention on the practitioners and their preparation
- 3:03-3:15 Go with their flow – focus on selection of units (not practitioners) – ask questions to clarify their process of selecting units
- 4:42-5:05 Probes: questions/ comments to clarify unit selection process
- 5:25-5:35 Redirect: questions/ comments to refocus on unit selection
- 6:44-7:40 Summarize: Make summary statement and look for agreement/ clarification
- 8:09-9:29 Statement about what we learned from them about the Exploration Stage and Installation Stage of implementation (since they chose to focus on units instead of practitioners) and quick comments about the importance of these Stages to the work ahead

ImpleMap Segment 4

After identifying target interventions and the vetting process, the questions shift to how they operationalize interventions and use the Drivers to prepare practitioners. Notice that the interviewer finds opportunities based on what the participants are saying to weave in information about any driver that they mention. Of course, they will not label it as a driver or use implementation-informed language. But these are great opportunities to recognize their current thoughtful approaches and begin to introduce new language.

- 0:06-0:52 Shift to asking about how they operationalize interventions
- 4:35-4:50 Probe to see if we can focus on HOW practitioners are prepared to do the

intervention

4:50-9:59 Listen for the information that is volunteered about Decision Support Data Systems, Systems Interventions (organization, system change in response to debrief meetings and uses of data), etc. It is OK for folks to volunteer relevant information without us directly asking questions about those topics.

ImpleMap Segment 5

This segment demonstrates asking questions, in a conversational style, about current practices related to supervision, coaching, and performance assessments. The vocal members of this group are very smart and conceptual. In this segment the interviewer asks questions to get at the details without pushing too hard.

0:40-1:45 Questions about who the practitioners are and how they are prepared to do the new ways of work

3:04-3:39 Probe: refocus on preparation of practitioners

8:33-8:55 Probe: re: supervision, coaching, performance assessments

ImpleMap Segment 6

This segment focuses primarily on coaching and performance assessments and loops back to talking about preparation (e.g. selection, training) of coaches and supervisors. Notice that even though the interviewer is trying to get more specific information about the Drivers, he continues to look for opportunities to capture more information about earlier topics (vetting, operationalizing).

0:00-0:23 Question about coaching and performance assessments

2:20-2:35 Question about preparation of supervisor/coach

3:45-5:35 Summary statement leading to question about help from others (region/State) to support the development/ use of new ways of work

8:10-9:59 Probe: another attempt to get at if/how they operationalize the intervention

ImpleMap Segment 7

This particular example of ImpleMapping involves a group that discusses the intervention and implementation processes at a more conceptual level. Notice the interviewer's attempt to "drill down" by asking specific questions to elicit more detail. Also notice that it is important not to "interrogate" people or make them uncomfortable once you are relatively sure that a process, intervention, Stage, or Driver is not yet operationalized or perhaps not known in sufficient detail by the group you are interviewing. There will be many more opportunities in the future. The ImpleMap interview is just the beginning of a long process of implementation infrastructure development.

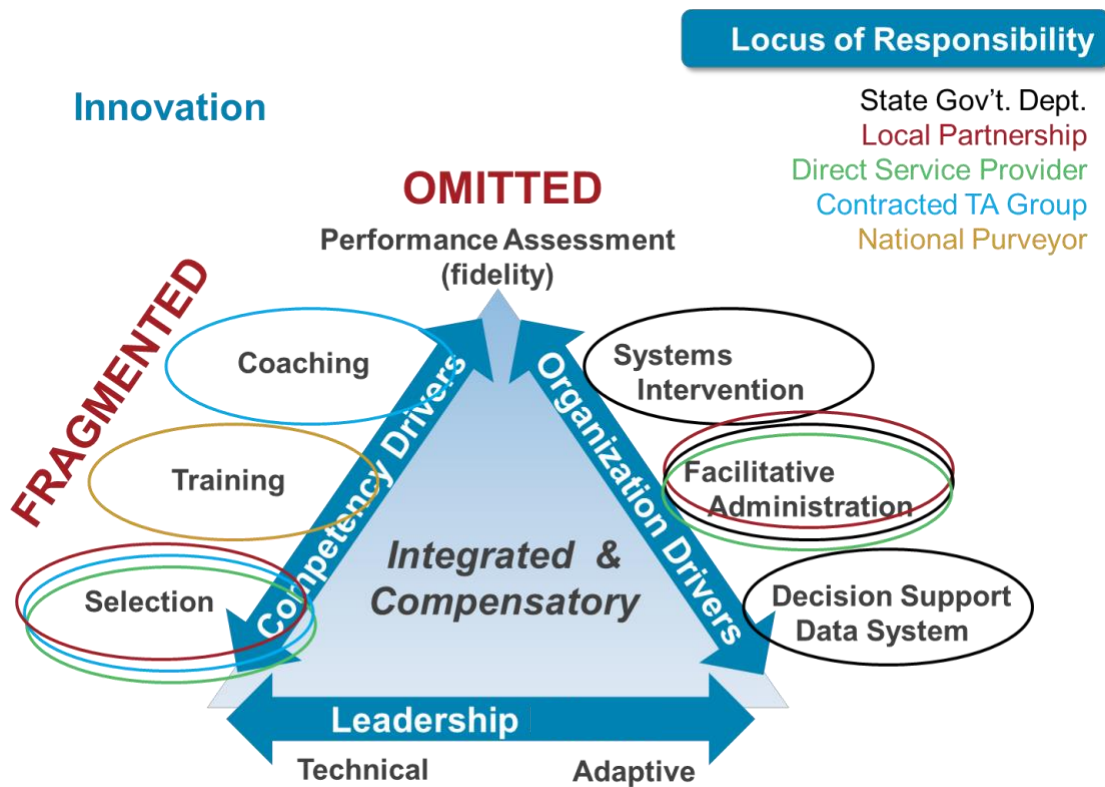
0:25-3:10 Drill down: Questions and prompts to get at if/how they operationalize the intervention; drill down questions to try to get behavioral specification of concepts

3:12-4:00 Summarize: No need to press the issue once it is clear that operationalizing interventions is not their way of work; Summarize the need to specify/ operationalize interventions that are effective so others can learn them efficiently and do them effectively

Appendix B: Results of ImpleMap Interviews and Summaries of the Information

An Example of Mapping in Early Childhood Prevention/Intervention

The Figure below shows an example of the results of one set of ImpleMap interviews (view/print this page in color to see the WHO and HOW). WHAT is being done, in this case, is one evidence-based program (the “Innovation”). In this case, HOW implementation work is done was divided among several groups WHO do the work (listed under “Locus of Responsibility”). The ImpleMap shows areas of overlap, areas of fragmentation, and a key implementation component (performance assessment/ fidelity) that was omitted. This map was created before the Leadership dimension was added to the Implementation Drivers framework. The ImpleMap is used to inform planning for developing capacity in the form of Implementation Teams. Harmonizing activities and resources likely will improve outcomes and improve efficiency at the same time.



An Example of Mapping in Education

Exploration Stage 90-minute interviews are designed to establish working relationships with district staff, focus attention on the implementation work already underway in the district, and produce a preliminary view of the strengths, gaps, and overlaps in implementation practices. For some districts, an Installation Stage assessment subsequently will be done to provide a more detailed analysis of implementation activities to inform a district implementation action plan.

The scores in this table were based on impressions of the interviewer who facilitated each of the 7 interviews and carefully reviewed the combined notes from the 3 interviewers present at each.

Scoring: 0=None, 1=Some, 2=Basic, 3=Advanced	Districts						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Initiatives</i>							
System for Vetting Initiatives	2	1	2	3	3	3	3
Operationalized Initiatives	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
<i>Competency Development</i>							
Selection (Teachers, Principals)	0	3	2	1	3	3	3
Training (Teachers, Principals)	1	1	2	2	2	3	3
Coaching (Teachers, Principals)	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
Performance Assessments	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
<i>Organization Supports</i>							
Decision Support Data Systems	1	2	2	3	2	3	3
Facilitative Administration	1	2	2	1	2	3	3

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Leadership							
District Superintendent	2	1	2	3	3	3	3
Building Principals	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
District Implementation Capacity	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Regional Supports	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
State Supports (contracted initiatives)	1	2	3	2	3	3	3

Appendix C: District Best Practices Summary

The following are implementation best practices detected during the ImpleMap interviews. These best practices currently are in place in one or more of seven districts that participated in the implementation mapping interviews. In the future, these are the implementation activities a Regional Implementation Team would help staff learn in each district.

Implementation Driver Best Practices Among the Districts

<i>Initiatives</i>	
System for Vetting Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District leadership team decides – big vision, what will benefit students for the next decade (academics, safety, and equity are major criteria) • District team that continually looks at data, sees needs, searches for data-based interventions to meet those needs, vets interventions, conducts reviews/renewal of curriculum materials every 7 years as mandated by the State • Curriculum and instruction teams meet 2-3 times a month, identify needs, search for innovations, align with grades • Any new initiative or mandate is considered for its contribution to student learning and its fit with specified interventions already in classrooms and buildings; applicable to all buildings in the district • Mandate language and requirements examined and re-interpreted to fit current specified C&I to avoid confusion in the classroom and assure meeting the mandate • Vetting based on research base, availability of a fidelity assessment, fit with time/ scheduling/ • Avoid layering, initiative overload, initiative competition
Operationalize Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 pages of non-negotiable education framework components • Two 50-page handouts to operationalize the frameworks • Methods to adapt specific methods to specific issues/ student problems • The intervention Blueprint is followed in detail

Competency Development

Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job descriptions for teachers and principals modified to include district-specified competencies (e.g. literacy, behavior)• Principal and future colleagues of the applicant do the interviews; same process for teachers and Principals• Interview done by those who know the interventions and C&I well and will work with the candidate if hired (e.g. Principal, literacy coach, district coordinator)• Interview includes questions about literacy, behavior, etc. and role plays (watch video lesson, coach, design intervention) – maybe 3 of 10 applicants make it to the role play part of the interview• Respect union rules – credit for years of experience, but hire on the basis of willingness to do the work as prescribed by the district
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial and on-going training for Principals and administrators• Teacher training takes 3 years – active participation in group training for new teachers led by staff specially prepared to do teacher training; 20-40 hours of instruction, video demonstrations, class co-visits, and other district support• For Special Ed teachers and staff – more time spent here as needed
Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaching for Principals (one hour per month)• Coaches work across buildings – learn and share• Coaches for teachers K-12; NOT part of teacher evaluation• Meet with new teachers 1-2 times a month for coaching; pre-meeting with Principal re: any areas that need special attention during coaching session;• Half day follow up coaching for a newly trained teacher, continuing coaching re: ways of work• For persistent issues, the district folks step up their coaching/ interactions with the building staff and teacher
Performance Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal’s secretary schedules walk throughs – 3 times per year for each classroom at a minimum, more if needed – done for all teachers• Do more walk through and feedback with new teachers, less with mid and senior teachers (but all have some)• New teachers, three years of observation and feedback by the Principal• Principal walk through to assess instruction and culture; lot of time in classroom by coaches and Principal; cross building walk throughs to “pollinate” best practices• Prompt feedback to teachers after walk through• Use intervention-specific fidelity assessments where available

Organization Supports

Decision Support Data System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lots of data collection on a regular schedule; data reviews built into nearly all meetings; action planning based on data and progress assessed by data• Data reviews are a standing agenda item for weekly Principal meetings• All meetings with Principals are all about data; have laptop; dig into data; let peer decision making happen or help it along• Monthly meeting to review data from behavior and literacy such as ODRs, OAKS, DIBELS, data on fidelity, etc. to inform coaching and administration• Use data to challenge the status quo: systems view, integration of functions, facilitating change
Facilitative Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continual district and building changes (e.g. scheduling, staff assignments, meeting agendas) to support the intervention and to assure effective implementation supports• Scheduling times for literacy/math sessions – administration defines times and does problem solving• Building teams meet monthly• Grade level teams meet twice monthly in elementary schools• Principals take any corrective action deemed necessary by any of the trainers or coaches• Arrange more help for the teacher so he/she can meet the established standards for performance• Teacher (other) leaving is OK – the focus is on what is best for student achievement• Work toward a common infrastructure in each building (teaming structures); to provide support we have to know what they are supposed to be doing• Roll out new initiatives in cohorts of buildings – cannot do a good job with so many all at once – build district capacity to support buildings in the first cohort and expand with each successive cohort

Leadership

District Superintendents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal and Superintendent are strong leaders and “accept no substitutes”• Better uses of resources when each teacher/building is not doing its own thing – common methods, common language, common supports = more frugal uses of resources• Need clear vision• Strong leadership support• Good communication plan with consistent messages• Effective supports need to be in place to help teachers and Principals follow through and do it• District oriented decision making to provide consistent support to every building and better outcomes for every student• District decision making applied to all buildings; lots of discussion in various meetings, consideration of implications (not options), staff feel heard and prepared• District has one point person per school to develop relationships, 10:1 ratio of positives to correctives for adults, help solve problems, relieve stressors, and create readiness for using literacy and behavior fully and effectively
Building Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principals are instructional leaders first; all eyes on the data; creators of common methods (e.g. RtI) across buildings with team structures in place to assure common practices; create a culture to support all of this