District Readiness

District Implementation Teams are responsible for creating readiness for and managing systemic change with **district executive leaders, governing boards, school implementation teams, and staff**. To do so effectively, the district implementation team establishes reliable and enduring indicators of progress.

"As teachers, staff, administrators, policy makers, and leaders come and go, creating readiness for change is an on-going activity if evidence-based innovations are to be scaled-up and sustained to benefit students for decades to come" (Fixsen et al., 2013).

Assessing and developing district readiness requires the use of *Practice-Policy Communication Cycles*

Practice-Policy Feedback Loop

"Americans have long been trained to see the deficiencies of people rather than policy. It's a pretty easy mistake to make:
-People are in our face.
-Policies are distant.
We are particularly poor at seeing the policies lurking behind the struggle of people."

(Kendi, 2019, p. 30)

Practice Informs Policy

Information and data from the successes and barriers raised at the practice level are part of regular feedback to executive leaders, boards, and stakeholders.

Policy Enables Practice

Policy makers use the information and data to align, leverage, and cohere resources and systems with the roles and functions of executive leaders and District and School Implementation Team members to effectively support teacher practice. Eventually, policy and procedures are established to sustain practice.

Most always, district engagement in Practice-Policy Improvement Cycles is adaptive and *"adaptive work involves, and adaptive solutions demand, all members of an organization taking responsibility for the situations that face them. The leadership role is to engage people in the adaptive process, and it is a leader's role from whatever position in the organization to adjust values, change perspectives and learn new habits; raise contentious issues and ask the question 'is there something we are missing'?"* (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

If the District and Building Implementation Team is trained and coached to use PDSA Cycles and effective communication processes, then the district leaders have the data required to engage in Practice-Policy Feedback Loops.

- If the district improves capacity (i.e., Capacity Assessment data),
- then the district should improve fidelity of practice (i.e., OTISS), and
- then should improve outcomes and reduce the opportunity and achievement gaps (e.g., use of interim and summative data).

Examples from Practice

Click the button below for two examples of assessing and creating district readiness:

1. How district leadership uses data to assess readiness for effective use of innovations in a large urban district.
2. How district leadership uses Practice-Policy Feedback Loops to create readiness, scale, and sustain Effective Innovations for decades in a mid-size suburban district.

View Examples from Practice

*"As you focus on innovation, don't get fixated on gimmicks.It always comes down to the basic ingredients. If you don't have a coherent curriculum, and if you are not clear on how to teach that curriculum to the children, chances are you are going to see kids not performing, because, **if you don't close the gap between the skills of staff and the needs of kids, nothing changes.**"*
(Noguera, 2019)

Using data to engage in Practice-Policy Improvement Cycles

Using multiple forms of data - quantitative hard numbers and qualitative voices of the people - allows leaders and stakeholders at all levels of a system to engage in Practice-Policy Improvement Cycles.

Kendi (2019) compels us to *"see the policies lurking behind the struggle of people"* (p. 30) and Villanueva (2018) suggests *"whomever directs the flow of money has the power to heal, they understand the time-tested wisdom found close to the ground where communities have direct experience of an issue"* (p. 16) or they can *"watch Rome burn and fiddle with another survey on strategies, or another study on impact"* (p. 18).

Learn More:

- Practice-Policy Feedback Loops
- District Capacity Assessment: Capacity Assessment Administration Course
- District Implementation Team Handout

References:

- Fixsen, D., Blase, K., Horner, R., Sims, B., & Sugai, G. (2013). *Scaling-up brief: Readiness for change*. National Implementation Research Network at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Kendi, I. (2019). How to be an Antiracist. Penguin Random House LLC: New York, NY.
- Noguera, P. (2019). *The role of leadership in building the capacity of schools to meet student needs* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc81Dy8sSjs
- Villaneuva, E. (2018). *Decolonizing wealth*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc: Oakland, CA.

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