DOINGWHATWORKS

Scaling-Up Instruction and Technical Assistance Briefs

State Implementation of Scaling-Up Evidence-Based Practices (SISEP) Center

Topic: Response to Intervention in Primary Grade Reading

Practice: RtI Implementation

The SISEP Center at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, helps states establish adequate capacity to carry out effective implementation, organizational change, and systems transformation strategies to maximize student outcomes. The *Scaling-Up Instruction and Technical Assistance Briefs* are produced by the Center to build state capacity for scaling-up effective practices.
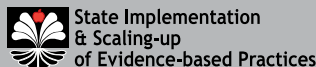
The first brief, *Scaling-Up Evidence-Based Practices in Education,*[1] provides a framework state leadership teams and others can use to develop the capacity to make effective, statewide, and sustained use of evidence-based practices and other innovations.

The second brief, *Intensive Technical Assistance,*[2] defines intensive

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1 Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Horner, R., & Sugai, G. (2009, February). *Scaling-up evidence-based practices in education, Scaling-up brief #1.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG, SISEP. \hhd.##g]gYd"Zd["i bWYXi #fYgci fWg#gWU"]b[!Vf]YZ%gWU"]b[!Yj]XYbWY!VUgYX!dfUW]WgYgYXi WUh]cb

2 Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Horner, R., & Sugai, G. (2009, February). *Intensive technical assistance, Scaling-up brief #2.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG, SISEP. \hhd.##g]gYd"Zd["i bWYXi #fYgci fWg#gWU"]b[!Vf]YZ&!]bhYbg]jj Y!hYW\b]WU!UggghUbW

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technical assistance and briefly illustrates its use in education. Technical assistance builds the capacity of individuals and organizations to achieve desired outcomes. Like many educational initiatives, during the past decade, technical assistance has been reconceptualized as a multi-tiered approach along a continuum from basic to intensive.

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State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices

Scaling-up Brief

Dean L. Fixsen, Karen A. Blase, Rob Horner, & George Sugai   February 2009 | Number 1

Scaling Up Evidence-Based Practices in Education

S tudents 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 developing evidence-based practices and other innovations 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. 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 the capacity to support those practices in education systems in every state.

From a capacity development point of view, we want *education systems* that:

- *Reliably produce* (across schools and generations of teachers and staff)
- *Effective student outcomes* (demonstrable academic, behavior, and social benefits)
- *That improve every year* (curricula, teaching methods, results)
- *For the next 50 years* (new ways of work are built into the system).

To accomplish these goals, states need implementation infrastructures that:

- *Reliably produce* (across regions and generations of leaders, trainers, coaches, staff)
- *Effective teacher and staff outcomes* (demonstrable skills and abilities)
- *That improve every year* (training and coaching methods, leadership, results)
- *For the next 50 years* (infrastructure is built into the system).

Framing the intended *outcomes* in this way means that educators can begin the *process* of scaling up innovations today. The capacity for scaling up innovations statewide is created by capitalizing on every opportunity to develop and institutionalize the 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.

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.

The purpose of the State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center is to help States establish adequate capacity to carry out effective implementation, organizational change, and systems transformation strategies to maximize the academic achievement and behavioral health outcomes of students statewide.

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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 at the practice level, 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 (infrastructure to assure effective use of the intervention). One without the other is not sufficient.

A transformation zone differs from a pilot or demonstration in the following ways:

- The intention from the beginning is to both 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).
- Policy, funding, and regulatory exceptions 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 self-assessment instruments are used 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. Both the iterative collection and reporting of data, and the active use of these data for action planning at multiple, predictable points during the year assist in transforming a broad commitment to change into functional actions.

- Changes in the areas outlined above begin in the first month or two (not a few years later when the "demonstration" has concluded) and continue until critical problems have been solved 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.

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 si-
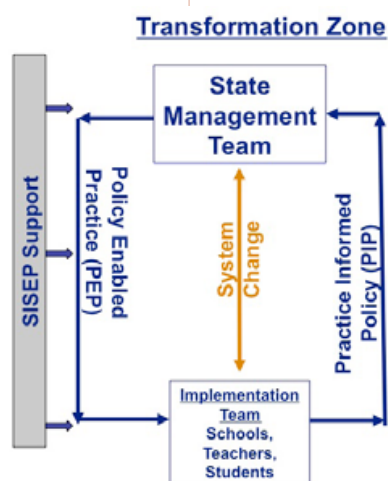
multaneous bottom up and top down manner, every new policy sets the occasion for creating new capacity to effectively implement the policy with demonstrable benefits to students, families, and communities. New practices that are implemented set the occasion for discovering and creating the infrastructure 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 States (Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Virginia) 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

Transformation Zone

SISEP Support → State Management Team ← Policy Enabled Practice (PEP) — System Change — Practice Informed Policy (PIP) → Implementation Team Schools, Teachers, Students

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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 125 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 each of the six states with which SISEP is working. The daily, weekly, and monthly communication and practice-based feedback systems among the various partners and stakeholders (e.g., teachers, build-

ing 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.

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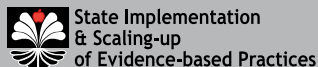
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State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices, or visit www.scalingup.org

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State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices

Scaling-up Brief

Dean L. Fixsen, Karen A. Blase, Rob Horner, & George Sugai   February 2009 | Number 2

Intensive Technical Assistance

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) is designed to build the capacity of individuals and organizations to achieve desired outcomes. During the past decade technical assistance, like many educational initiatives, has been reconceptualized as a multi-tiered approach along a continuum from basic to intensive. Basic technical assistance is the most efficient foundation for facilitating change, and includes providing documentation of evidence-based options, disseminating both examples of success and materials that facilitate success, and providing overview workshops that may assist others in the planning, implementation and use of existing tools to achieve desired change. Basic TA is effective in many contexts, but like other multi-tiered models is recognized as insufficient to achieve systems change in all contexts. When the scale or depth of change is more extensive, Basic TA efforts need to be supplemented with more Intensive Technical Assistance.

A key distinction between Basic TA and Intensive TA is the degree to which the TA providers take responsibility for outcomes. Basic TA relies upon recipients to make good and effective use of the information and training provided to them. Intensive TA takes responsibility for providing information and necessary supports and for doing whatever it takes to assure intended outcomes occur in a timely and effective manner.

The purpose of the State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center is to help States establish adequate capacity to carry out effective implementation, organizational change, and systems transformation strategies to maximize the academic achievement and behavioral health outcomes of students statewide.

The purpose of this *Brief* is to define "Intensive Technical Assistance (ITA)" and briefly illustrate its use in education. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs defines Intensive TA as: Technical assistance services that require a stable, on-going negotiated relationship between the TA Center staff and the TA recipient, and should include a purposeful, planned series of activities designed to reach an outcome that is valued by the host organization. Intensive TA typically results in changes to policy, program, practice, or operations that support increased recipient capacity and/or improved outcomes at one or more systems levels. Iterative evaluation and feedback strategies are a requisite of Intensive/ Sustained TA. Using the federal definition as a foundation, "Intensive TA" means TA done with a sharp focus on purpose and outcomes as well as considerable depth, breadth, coherence, and energy in relation to achieving those outcomes.

Basic TA

Many issues encountered in education can be solved by providing Basic TA via information and supports to already knowledgeable and skilled teachers, administrators, and policy makers. Basic TA efforts to improve education practices are useful when the capacity to achieve such improvements is within the current skills and abilities of educators and when structures and policies already are in place to support the improvements. That is, once educators know WHAT needs to be done, they are ABLE to do it. Basic Technical Assistance (TA) is most useful under these circumstances, and these circumstances are encountered frequently in education.

Intensive TA

There are other innovations (e.g. use of science-based programs; use of whole new approaches to solve persistent problems) that are a poor fit with current skills of educators and current system configurations. Full, effective, and continued use of these innovations requires more Intensive Technical Assistance. More extensive and novel changes in education typically require new knowledge, skills, and abilities among educators and require related changes in school, district, state, and federal education systems to support educators. That is, educators need to learn **what** to do and **how** to do it, *and* structures and functions in schools and education systems need to be **aligned** to support the new educational methods. Intensive TA includes all elements of Basic TA, but adds considerable on-site direction, collaboration, coaching, and evaluation strategies needed to achieve systemic changes.

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Another key distinction between Basic TA and Intensive TA is the degree to which the TA providers take responsibility for outcomes. Basic TA relies upon recipients to make good and effective use of the information and training provided to them. Intensive TA takes responsibility for providing information and necessary supports and for doing whatever it takes to assure intended outcomes occur in a timely and effective manner. Intensive TA starts with the end in mind and works persistently to assure desired outcomes. Some core features of Intensive Technical Assistance are the clarity, frequency, intensity, duration, integrity and accountability with which technical assistance is provided.

Core Features of Intensive Technical Assistance

1. **Clarity**

    a. Purposeful activity to understand, but not be "consumed by," the current context
    (e.g., reviews of system strengths, stressors, policies, regulations, data)

    b. Mutually established clear needs, roles, and responsibilities among the TA entity, the TA recipients, and other partners

    c. Agreement about how to create the new structures needed to support educators employing the new methods
    (e.g., points of contact, communication routines, feedback methods, workgroups)

2. **Frequency**

    a. Regular (daily, weekly, monthly) on-site and in-person communication and shared activities to initiate and mange change

    b. Regular (daily, weekly, monthly) use of planning, execution, evaluation, and next step cycles to quickly correct errors and solve problems

3. **Intensity**

    a. Prompting and creating opportunities for collective reflection to inform and guide "next steps"
    (e.g., planning retreats; use of learning communities)

    b. Creating opportunities to infuse into the system relevant skills (e.g., training and coaching events) and knowledge
    (e.g., use of technology to provide didactic information)

    c. Regular on-site coaching and assessments of skill development and overall progress based on active participation and direct observations supplemented with long-distance planning and work sessions (e.g., video and telephone meetings)

4. **Duration**

    a. Doing whatever it takes to create desired changes and resolve issues in ways that help to develop and expand capacity

    b. Systematic, focused, and sustained change efforts carried out over a period of several years (2 to 5 years may be typical)

5. **Integrity**

    a. Focus on integrating current activities, roles, and functions to create more effective and efficient education systems

    b. Comprehensive work with whole systems instead of piecemeal activities that may contribute to further fragmentation

    c. Collecting and using reliable and accessible data for decision-making at local and system levels

6. **Accountability**

    a. Responsibility for actively providing information and necessary supports for assuring that intended outcomes occur in a timely and effective manner

    b. Using negative feedback and setbacks as opportunities to create new methods, bring in new partners, and develop new knowledge, skills, and abilities to adapt to challenges and continue to make progress toward agreed-upon goals

    c. Benefits to students, families, teachers, and education systems define the success of an Intensive TA effort

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Intensive TA Assumes:

1. The work will be done only if there is well-informed agreement about the need, vision for change, and methods to initiate and manage the change process. Intensive TA only makes sense when the recipient and the TA provider have had the opportunity to fully explore the relationship to assure that the task is within the abilities of the Intensive TA provider, the intended strategies and activities are aligned with the recipients' goals, and that there is a good chance that the strategies and activities will help achieve desired outcomes.

2. The goal is to help education systems "make changes that break with the past, operate outside of existing paradigms, and conflict with prevailing values and norms," and conduct TA activities that are "emergent, unbounded, and complex" (see www.centerii.org).

3. The work will be done in conjunction with a variety of people who are proponents, opponents, and interested observers of the intended changes that are envisioned for the education system. Surprises are expected and valued as part of the process.

4. Planning and preparation are always required and always entail working with and through a variety of people inside and outside the particular component of the education system that is the subject of change.

5. The use of any innovation is not only a design effort but an organization and system re-design effort from the beginning, involving changes in policies, practices, and system functioning.

6. System capacity purposefully must be developed to reach a significant proportion of those who can benefit (e.g., at least 60% of all intended beneficiaries; students, teachers, building administrators, parents) in order to achieve academically and socially significant benefits to students and society.

7. Comprehensive assistance will be provided for an extended period of time (e.g., 2–5 years) to help bring about change

and install and stabilize the new ways of work as standard practice in education organizations and systems.

An Illustration

The current work 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 makes use of Intensive TA methods. The goal of this work currently is to help six States develop the capacity to scale-up evidence-based practices. Basic TA within SISEP has included publication of a meta-analysis of successful demonstrations of large-scale implementation efforts, a summary of organization features needed to scale-up evidence-based practices in education, the development of an information rich website, and dissemination of tools and strategies that have been recommended to facilitate scaling up efforts. Because the scaling-up of educational innovations is not well documented, requires systemic change, and is a high-risk (e.g. large investment) endeavor, it is an appropriate content area for the use of Intensive TA practices. Barely a year into the process, the SISEP organization for Intensive TA has focused on the following:

Clarity: A seven-month process was used to facilitate state decision-making about the current "fit" of the initiative with the goals of States. Communications and on-site visits during this time provided opportunities for SISEP and the States to assess current efforts and establish mutually informed agreements to move into capacity building.

Frequency: To carry out Intensive TA, one or two SISEP staff members visit each State each month for meetings with the State Management Team and with leadership and stakeholder groups. Between visit communication and activities help to maintain focus and activities.

Intensity: Key individuals participating in the capacity development process are mutually selected by the State and SISEP, and trained, coached, and evaluated by SISEP and the State to establish key linkages between policy and

practice and between implementation infrastructures, schools, and teachers.

Duration: Over a four-year period, SISEP staff work simultaneously at policy, practice, organization, system, and political levels.

Integrity: The goal is to establish expectations, skills, infrastructure, oganizational and system alignment, roles, and functions to create effective and sustainable methods to achieve important education goals. Integrating education system initiatives, integrating current (multiple) implementation efforts, systematizing initiatives (less person-dependent), and improving overall effectiveness and efficiency are side benefits of SISEP's work to help States scale up evidence-based practices.

Accountability: State leadership teams are provided with fidelity measures to assess (a) SISEP activities and outcomes each month, (b) implementation of evidence-based practices at the school level, (c) implementation of support systems at the district level, and (d) implementation of policy and quality improvement systems at the state level. These measures are used within a progress monitoring framework to hold SISEP accountable. In addition, they provide information on the extent to which Intensive TA efforts are producing change in the breadth, quality and efficiency with which evidence-based practices are being implemented. The use of these quality practices is then evaluated in terms of functional educational outcomes for children.

Conclusion

In this time of high-stakes testing, declining resources, and rising expectations, Intensive TA is needed to help States make more comprehensive and meaningful changes in education practices and education systems to support those practices. The definition, dimensions, and assumptions underlying effective Intensive TA have only recently been revealed in a growing literature across education and human services. Armed with this bank of new knowledge, skills, and abilities, Intensive TA Centers can more reliably help States create their capacity for academically and socially significant improvements in education statewide.

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