THE NATIONAL CENTER ON SCALING UP EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Leadership in Context: Research and Development Work of the National Center on Scaling Up Effective High Schools

http://www.scalingupcenter.org

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This research was conducted with funding from the Institute of Education Sciences (R305C10023). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the institutions with which they are affiliated or the U.S. Department of Education.

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Considering Context

- Reframing Context: What is context?
- An approach to studying context to develop capacity and scaling up newly develop practices: How do we come to understand context for school improvement?
- An approach to collaboration between researchers, developers and school professionals: How do we work together in context?

Collaboration
Directed by Professor Tom Smith

- Five Research Universities
  - Vanderbilt University, University of North Carolina, Florida State University, University of Wisconsin, Georgia State University
- Developer
  - Education Development Center (EDC)
- Two large urban districts
  - Broward County Public Schools (FL)
  - Fort Worth Independent School District (TX)

What is Context--Essential Components of Effective Schools

- **Rigorous and Aligned Curriculum**
- **Quality Instruction**
- **Learning-centered Leadership**
- **Systematic Use of Data**
- **Personalized Learning Connections**
- **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior**
- **Systemic Performance Accountability**
- **Connections to External Communities**

How do we come to understand and work in Context: Goals of the Center

- Two primary goals
  - Identify **programs, practices, and processes** that help explain the success of some high schools in large urban districts who are particularly effective with low-income, minority, and English language learning students
  - Develop programs in partnership with participating schools that transfer these practices to less effective schools in the same district

AND

- To address the challenges of
  - Scaling Up
  - Linking education research to education improvement

Big Question:

How can the capacity and context of school districts be enhanced so that they can

- identify effective practices
- adapt them to the contexts of schools and their communities, and then
- Scale and implement them in ways that will lead to an increase in learning for all children?

Some challenges to scaling up effective programs in education

- **Lack of teacher buy-in and participation** (Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002; Glennan, Bodilly, Galegher, & Kerr, 2004; Nunnery 1998)
- **Inadequate attention to the organizational context in which the practices are to be implemented** (Bodilly et al., 1998; Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Stringfield & Datnow, 1998)
- **Conflicts between designs and other district programs or mandates** (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; Datnow, McHugh et al., 1998; Stringfield, Datnow et al., 2000).

Our approach

- Use value added models of student achievement to identify schools that "beat the odds" for minority, ELL, and low income students
- Study both high and low value added schools to understand how they are enacting what research suggests are essential components of effective schools
- Facilitate district participation in conducting needs analyses, then designing innovations that capture systematic differences between high and low value added schools
- Support district and school design teams in adapting to local context and implementing interventions
- Gradually withdraw support as the districts take ownership of scaling up

Case Study Data Collection

- 3 weeklong visits to 4 case study high schools in the fall, winter, and spring of 2010-2011 school year in 2011-12 (Ft. Worth)
- Data in each school collection included
  - observations of meetings by full faculty and professional learning community teams
  - semi-structured interviews with principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors, department heads of English, Language arts, mathematics and science
  - Semi-structured interviews with eighteen 10th grade teachers who taught Mathematics and English/Language Arts (ELA) in regular and upper-level classes
  - Observations of teaching with CLASS
  - Student shadowing and focus groups
- Interview questions focused on the presence of the **Essential Components** in these schools

Research Lens: Context--Essential Components of Effective Schools

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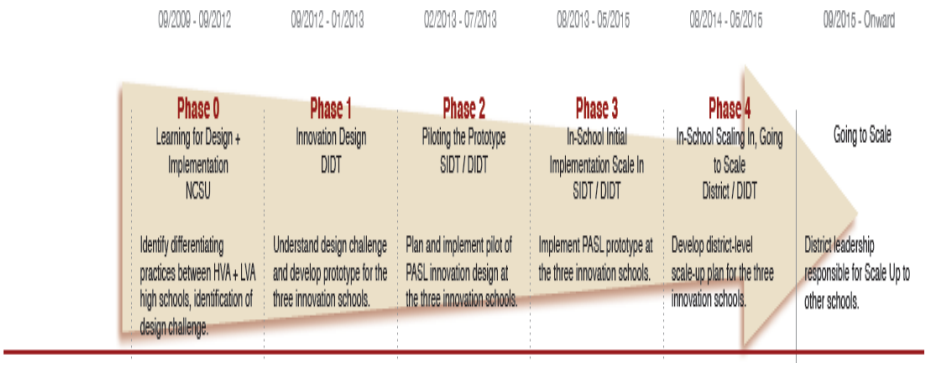
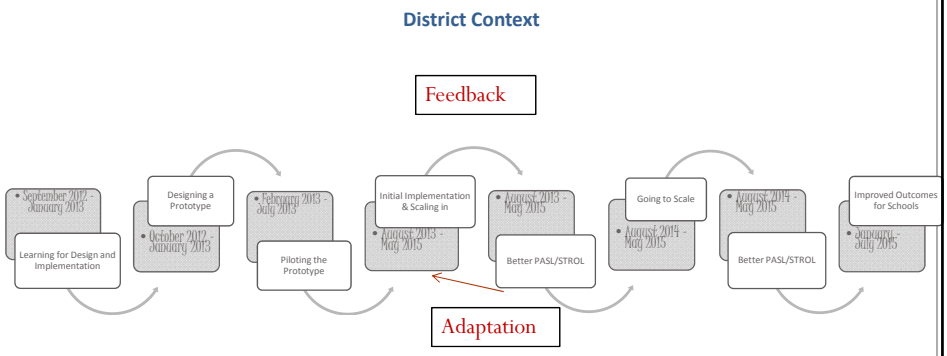
How do the practices that high schools implement create and sustain these components?

Center Phases for Scaling Up





What is unique about this approach?

- Not just about the what—it is also about the how
- District and school participation in the design work will help ensure that design innovations are aligned with the goals, strengths and initiatives already under way in each district.
- Leveraging teachers and school leader's unique expertise in the design and implementation process will design innovations address the needs of their respective schools and help bring legitimacy when it comes to implementation and scale up.

Main differentiating characteristic between our HVA and LVA schools in Broward CPS

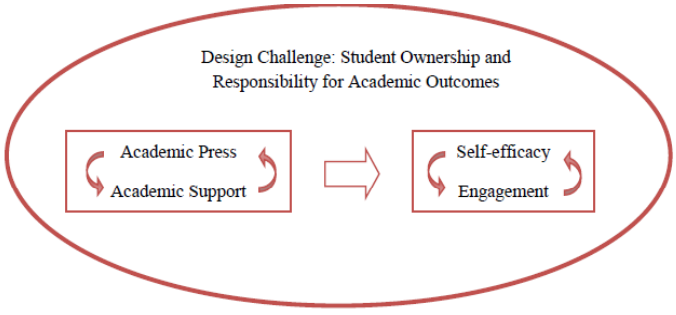
Personalization for Social and Academic Learning

- Systematic structures to promote strong relationships between adults and students
- Strong and reliable disciplinary and support systems for students that engendered feelings of caring and trust
- Used data to individualize instruction
- Instructional activities that drew on students' experiences and interests
- Encouraged stronger linkages with parents.

Main differentiating characteristic between our HVA and LVA schools in FWISD

Increased Rigor by Students Taking Increased Responsibility for their own Learning

- Students' responsibility to understand material or ask a question
- Teachers' responsibility to check students' understanding through questioning
- Daily "learning time" where students struggling or falling behind can get assistance
- Intervention committee composed of administrators, counselors, teachers to investigate root cause of students' academic and behavioral problems

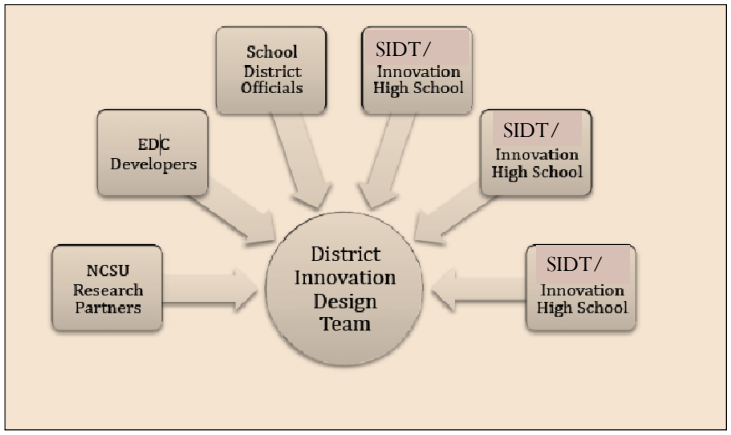


School-wide Facilitating Conditions

- Shared vision
- Aligned and coherent structures
- Trust
- Faculty and student stability
- Care and relationships between students and teachers
- Teacher accountability
- Individual and collective teacher efficacy
- Safe and orderly environment

Figure 1: Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility for Academic Outcomes

Phase 2—Collaboration to develop an intervention



Design team includes researchers, developers, district and school leaders, and teachers in the design of innovations focused on the distinguishing characteristics

TWO LEARNING AGENDAS	
1. Build team capacity for innovation design, transfer, implementation, and scale-up	2. Deepen teams understanding of the differentiating practices of effective high schools
Content/Process	**Content/Process**
• Effective Use of Data • Innovation Design • Managing Change • Shared Leadership • Implementation & Transfer • Accountability & Evaluation	• Components of Effective High Schools • Differentiating practices • Evidence base from the literature • Evidence from the local setting • Key components of the innovation • Supporting and/or hindering contextual factors

Leadership in Context: District 1

- Focus on Curriculum and Instruction
- Context of Feedback to Teachers
- Developing Personalized Learning Connections

Contrasting Cases: Leaders' Routines to Support Curriculum & Instruction

Evidence from teachers in low value-added schools regarding their leaders' limited/unclear views of their roles

- Adams teacher: "I am not exactly sure what his particular goals are, like when it comes to figures and statistics. I know he wants us to start to really get the kids to pass the FCAT, more of the kids to pass the FCAT, because I think we were a little bit below last year…I don't know what the standard is, how many kids are supposed to pass it within a school, but I think I was told that we weren't making the standard."
- Branner teacher: "lip service is paid to higher order thinking and high levels of thinking…(but) I'm not sure it's supported… I think the attempt of what we want to do is there. I don't think we are in sync with everyone doing what we should be doing."

Contrasting Cases: Leaders' Routines to Support Curriculum & Instruction

Evidence from leaders in high value-added schools regarding their more complex conceptions of their roles

- Donner principal: elaborated on observing for "high level of rigor" comprised of "ambitious content, high cognitive demand that students are carrying" in their classes
- Donner department chair: saw herself as "first line of defense" to provide help to struggling teacher
- Donner department chair: focused on new teachers "who don't know how to teach" and others by a) reviewing their lesson plans with them, b) discussing additional support to be provided by assistant principals and/or c) offering various "techniques to engage students"

Contrasting Cases: Leaders' Routines to Support Feedback

Evidence from faculty in low value-added schools regarding leaders' less consistent feedback based primarily on student data

- Adams faculty: feedback provided primarily as various "issues" arose (they did not specificy) and as part of annual evaluation
  - most of the feedback was based on student data, not observations
- Branner faculty criticized leaders for providing little/no feedback
  - little follow-through to provide training the principal had recommended
  - "at least you got feedback. I have never gotten feedback."

Contrasting Cases: Leaders' Routines to Support Feedback

Evidence that leaders in high value-added schools regarding leaders' more consistent feedback based on student data and observational data

- Crothers High School teachers reported receiving both formal and informal feedback back on their performance from administration and department heads through annual reviews, classroom walkthroughs, data chats and memos
- Donner High School administrators each year scheduled quarterly "one on one" data chats with teachers; in these they reviewed teachers' student performance data, what they had seen in walk-throughs and longer observations, and their lesson plans

Differences in Leaders' Systemic, Structured Routines to Develop Personalized Learning Connections

Leadership in high value-added high schools more often focused on more systemic routines and programs to build student-adult connections

- Crothers principal: "And, the reason we have made the A's is because of the sense of personalization…They loop. 9th and 10th loop…An administrator, guidance counselor, and two academic teachers, an English and social studies teacher, are looping with these kids…So this whole idea-- I keep coming back to personalization, knowing the kids, knowing their background, and creating a sense of family I think goes a long way…"
  - he detailed changes to schedules and classroom/office locations

Differences in Leaders' Systemic, Structured Routines to Develop Personalized Learning Connections

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- Crothers teacher's reflection on 9th and 10th grade small learning communities: "I find them critical to our success here…Speaking about the strength (of the school) question, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the way that we personalize education here I think is amazing. There is the sense of community here that is palpable. You can feel it."

Differences in Leaders' Systemic, Structured Routines to Develop Personalized Learning Connections

Leadership in low value-added high schools more often emphasized their own or others' individualized efforts to connect with students

- Adams principal elaborated on need to be "out and about" to talk with students in the halls and to participate in events such as dress-up days
- Adams assistant principal discussed importance of "being out there so students see me, knowing that we are just not people that sit in our office."

Challenges: The approach to implementation and scaling up

- Time frame
- Base line –unit of analyses
- Not all ideas are created equal
- Holding interest
- Developing expertise
- What are standards of evidence
- Not all ideas are created equal
- Each school has 'it' or same 'it' or themes
- Non –negotiable
- Collaborations districts, developers and researchers