LEARNING FOR ALL K-12

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE:
PROGRAM SELECTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT
**Project Context**
Implementation Science is the systematic practice for acquiring and disseminating research-based knowledge regarding implementation endeavors. Learning For All references the Breakthrough concept, which is an implementation science practice. Knowledge mobilization is essentially the same concept. It includes the study of influences on professional and organizational behavior.

All the Boards in the London Region are implementing many aspects of Learning For All. As a result, we are all expanding or introducing new practices or programs.

**Project Learning Goals**
Through this project, RSEC examined three questions that we hoped would assist us in program selection and implementation methodology, and ultimately assessing the effectiveness of the selected programs:

1. Are the programs/practices research-based?
2. How do we know that the programs/practices are having the effect that we want them to have in our local context?
3. Are we able to measure the validity of the implementation? Are we using the best strategies for implementation? How do we measure implementation success or failure?

**Project Success Criteria**
The project involved the development of a framework to enable all boards in the region to evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs no matter the specifics of a board’s project.

A method of measuring the success or failure of a special education program which looks at implementation effectiveness in context may be a better evaluation method than relying on trailing indicators alone, particularly as the specific project may involve the betterment of a program for students for whom the usual trailing indicator measurements (ex., grade level achievement, EQAO, DRA scores) may not be appropriate measures of progress.
PHASE 1: Research

What we did...

- Literature review / Scan of the practice landscape: focus on special education in Canada and The United States - measuring special education programming (evidence-based, implementation, outcomes)
- Consultation with RSEC members: telephone interviews with school board (n=17) and school authority (n=4) representatives; all respondents work in area of special education
- Consultation with London region researchers specializing in special education: telephone interviews (n=6)
- Recommendations for creation of toolkit / framework

What we have found...

Literature and practice landscape very extensive (many links found to interview data)

The framework should be a combination of evidence-based, implementation, and outcome measures; each component needs to be addressed separately when evaluating programming.

Next steps...

- Finalize framework
- Implementation of framework by RSEC members
- Data collected from RSEC members regarding implementation
- Data analysis
- Presentation of finalized framework to RSEC
- Discuss next steps

For more information on the research findings from phase one of this project, please refer to Learning for All: Program Selection, Implementation and Assessment 2011 Research Project Final Report. For a copy of this report, please contact Ann McKerlie at ann.mckerlie@gmail.com

These findings were used to inform the second phase of the project.
PHASE 2: Framework, Development and Implementation

The focus of the second phase of this project was on framework development and implementation. This phase included the following components:

1. Development of a draft framework in consultation with RSEC members, RSOCC members, and other relevant stakeholders. Each of the three sections that phase one research results recommended be included in the framework were thoroughly discussed by RSEC members, either as a whole group or within a working group setting.

2. An implementation pilot for RSEC members, including regular feedback check-ins to determine how the implementation pilot was progressing. This included regular discussions at the RSEC meetings as well as pilot identification and interim reports completed by RSEC members to documents their pilot projects.

3. Reflection on the project process and identification of next steps

This report will describe the phase two journey of the project, through the development and implementation of the framework.
PHASE 3: Reflection

Structure: Overall, RSOCC members like the structure of the framework, with one group describing it as “welcoming.” Specifically, members like the question format, perceived the questions to be good ones, and the three sections are considered to be both “logical” and “applicable”. One group commented that the framework was “overwhelming” at first glance, however, when working through it, it makes sense. The framework gives guidance to conversations and would assist with the allocation of funds.

RSOCC members indicated that the three-dimensional nature of the framework helps in the collection of data. The first section is perceived to be more of a pre-decision making process.

The definitions that are at the beginning of each section and the success criteria laid out at the beginning are helpful in that they focus the conversation. Having the comment/evidence column is a good addition as opposed to yes/no columns.

One group described the framework as a “self-reflective tool” that provides clarity, common language, and more thoughtful questions than most people would think of on their own. It was not considered appropriate for external use.

At the May 2013 Symposium, the framework was introduced to an audience that included the Ministry of Education, mental health practitioners, and program staff, senior administrators, and researchers from school boards in the region. The framework as well as the project journey were shared with the group.

Timeline:

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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>JANUARY 2011</td>
<td>Project discussion began</td>
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<td>MAY - OCTOBER 2011</td>
<td>Information collection phase</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>(report completed October 2011)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER 2011 - JANUARY 2012</td>
<td>Creation of draft Framework</td>
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<td>FEBRUARY - DECEMBER 2012</td>
<td>Pilot and continued refinement</td>
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<tr>
<td>JANUARY - MAY 2013</td>
<td>Continued use of Framework</td>
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Summary: What have we learned...

- Can be used at a system, school or classroom level
- Stimulates discussion, problem-solving; collaborative work and inquiry
- Is educator friendly
- Provides focused direction
- Can be used for both academic and special education programs (cross-panel; system directions)
Implementation Monitoring

The RSEC regional project involves a focus on implementation monitoring, in addition to usual measures of outcome (e.g., student performance indicators).

Implementation monitoring is a relatively new area of focus in education and the social sciences, and has been informed by an emerging scientific literature called Implementation Science. This field of research provides evidence of a relationship between the successful implementation of an intervention and positive (health or educational) outcomes (e.g., Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Mihalic, 2004; Forgatch, Patterson, & DeGarno, 2005). Specifically, it has been determined that when staff demonstrate commitment to using identified strategies, and implement these with attention to the intended program design (e.g., adherence to content, frequency of use, duration of use), then better outcomes are achieved.
Implementation of strategies as intended, and with commitment, is called “intervention fidelity”. Measurement tools to assess fidelity are just beginning to be created and piloted in health and education settings (Algozzine et al., 2010; Carroll et al., 2007; Keith et al., 2010). In recognition of the complexity and sensitivity of measuring implementation fidelity, methods for assessing the quality of implementation include not only traditional observational techniques, but also self-report strategies (e.g., logs, interviews, surveys), and other-referenced focused fidelity checks (e.g., principal walk-throughs, coaching benchmarks of quality).

In addition to measuring “on the ground” fidelity, researchers have also begun to assess the organizational conditions that support strategic execution and implementation of selected evidence-based strategies. The degree to which the process of implementing a program builds in rich communication about the overarching plan and its components, promotes strategic execution, and provides implementation support (leadership engagement, culture, resources, training, ongoing technical/administrative assistance, infrastructure, multi-level teams) can provide key insights into foundational readiness for uptake. Organizational conditions for successful implementation can be monitored through archival process documentation (e.g., minutes and artifacts, policy documents, etc.), and multi-leveled perception data gathered through key informant interviews, focus groups, and/or staff surveys.

- High Fidelity
- Increased program credibility
- More consistent and better student outcomes
### Categories of Measurement Tools Use in Implementation Monitoring

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| Action Planning Tools                                  | - Structured templates that help with operationalizing and detailing steps in intervention roll-out  
- Assists with effective implementation (clarity of steps, roles, resource mapping, timelines), and promotes accountability  
- Tools need to be revisited often and updated |
| Implementation Logs                                    | - Tracking methods to describe how evidence-based strategies are carried out within the school or department  
- Include information about how the strategy is aligned into daily practice, who is served, issues that arise, enabling factors, etc. |
| Assessment of Implementation Phases                    | - There is a recognition in the literature that implementation takes time, and occurs through a series of phases (e.g., exploration, installation, initial implementation, full implementation, innovation, sustainability)  
- Can be assessed through checklist, interview, focus group formats; rubrics can be used |
| Fidelity Checks                                         | - Methods for ensuring that strategies are delivered the way that they are designed to be implemented  
- Typically identify key benchmarks (necessary active ingredients) and determine if these are met  
- Self-report checklists completed after the strategy is implemented, observational techniques and ratings (walk-throughs, live or taped observations) |
| Implementation Attitudes and Beliefs                   | - Measures of satisfaction, understanding, support, and efficacy  
- Implementation is more likely to be successful when staff members “buy in” to the strategy, feel comfortable with training and support, and feel a sense of efficacy in carrying it out in their school |
| Measurement Feedback Systems (progress monitoring)     | - Battery of assessment tools administered frequently, providing timely feedback about the success of interventions (allowing for in-flight modifications)  
- Need to be brief, psychometrically-sound, and used in everyday practice  
- Provides data on individual students, and can be pulled up to a class or school (or system) view |
| System/Program/Strategy Evaluation                     | - Program evaluation data can be a proxy for implementation monitoring. If outcomes are successful, there is an implication that the strategy has been delivered planfully and effectively  
- This data is strongest if it occurs with detailed implementation tracking logs |
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<td><strong>1) Exploration</strong></td>
<td>Needs assessment, mapping of resources and current practices, review of practices in other jurisdictions, literature review, assessment of organizational/school capacity… <em>resulting in decisions about an evidence-informed course of action.</em></td>
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<td><strong>2) Installation</strong></td>
<td>Ensuring infrastructure (organizational processes, funding streams, human resources, technology), policy development, consultation... <em>resulting in settings that are prepared for implementation.</em></td>
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<td><strong>3) Initial Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Awareness-building, preparation for change, training, small scale piloting of strategies... <em>resulting in introductory use of the evidence-informed strategy.</em></td>
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<td><strong>4) Partial Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Introductory use of a strategy into school/district practices, staff are developing skills for implementing the strategy with fidelity. Different parts of the organization may be more advanced than other parts ...<em>resulting in some use of evidence-informed strategy.</em></td>
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<td><strong>5) Full Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Integration of strategy into school/district practices, alignment with policies and procedures, strategy carried out with proficiency, ongoing coaching to ensure implementation fidelity... <em>resulting in the strategy becoming a regular part of school/district life.</em></td>
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<td><strong>6) Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>Skillful adaptations to new circumstances, succession planning and training to ensure continuity, maintenance of supportive infrastructure... <em>resulting in long-term survival and continued effectiveness of the evidence-informed strategy.</em></td>
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**Mission**

To develop and sustain an active collaborative relationship among universities and school districts in the London Region in order to inspire a culture of inquiry, advance skills, and promote knowledge exchange related to education research.

**Vision**

- A flexible collaborative relationship between universities and school districts that is characterized by:
- Solid understanding and appreciation of each others’ worlds (e.g., language, culture, goals);
- Strong appreciation for research, program evaluation, and the scholarship of discovery at the classroom, school, and district level completed by faculty and/or school board staff;
- Fluent open communication among faculties and districts;
- The identification and fostering of knowledge workers who serve as contacts between the worlds of research and practice;
- Smooth processes for collaboration, facilitation or research, research ethics review;
- Reduce barriers/deterrents to partnership;
- Strong appreciation by faculty for district priorities and by school districts for faculty research;
- Accessible exchange vehicles, like a share point type website, that could include:
  - a searchable history of research conducted in each school district;
  - a listing of faculty members’ areas or research and contact information; consistent application forms for conducting research in school districts;
  - a knowledge exchange discussion forum.
The London Regional Special Education Council is made up of superintendents, principals, and faculty members from the school boards, school authorities, and universities in the Ministry of Education London region.

The group meets three times per school year to:

- share ideas, resources, insights, information
- discuss topics affecting special education
- hear from guest speakers on topics of regional interest
- explore opportunities for collaboration on mutually beneficial initiatives
- provide each other with professional support

Membership includes:

**London Region Special Education Council**
- Avon Maitland District School Board
- Huron Perth Catholic District School Board
- Greater Essex County District School Board
- Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board
- Lambton Kent District School Board
- St. Clair Catholic District School Board
- Thames Valley District School Board
- London District Catholic School Board
- Grand Erie District School Board
- Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic District School Board
- Waterloo Region District School Board
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
- District School Board of Niagara
- Niagara Catholic District School Board
- Conseil Scholaire de District des Ecoles Catholiques du Sud-Ouest
- KidsAbility School Authority
- John McGivney Children’s Centre School Authority
- Niagara Peninsula Children’s Centre School Authority
- Brock University
- Western University
- University of Windsor
- Wilfrid Laurier University
- Provincial Schools Branch
- Ministry of Education: London Regional Office
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