

Activity 1.7

Capstone: A tale of two districts



For the 1.7 Capstone activity, you will read the two district scenarios provided. Once read, answer the reflection questions to meet the learning objectives for Module 1. Once completed, click on the NIRN Feedback Link.

Background

Two similar districts, District 1 and District 2, are both in the Installation Stage for implementing the same middle school mathematics program. The districts receive support and guidance from their Regional Support Agency to plan for implementation and train teachers on the new program.

District 1: Fruit City School District

In April of this school year, Fruit City School District created a District Implementation Team with the assistance of their Regional Implementation Team. The team was made up of the Superintendent, Curriculum Director, and Building Principals. The team, knowing their district math scores were low, jumped on board with the idea of a new math program at the middle school. After the school year ended in June, the district implementation team began making plans to implement the math program in the fall of the next school year.

Once the decision was made to focus on middle school math, the High School and Elementary Principals stopped attending the planning meetings. The Superintendent, Middle School Principals, and Curriculum Director worked with their regional agency to plan for training in August.

The Curriculum Director sent a communication to the Middle School Math teachers that they would be required to attend a two-day training in August before school started.

The Middle School Math Teachers attended the training in August. Unfortunately, they discovered that some of the required materials for implementation had not been purchased which meant resources to support alignment with elementary and high school math curricula were unavailable. As a result, teachers from both the High School and Elementary Schools, who should have been in attendance for the vertical alignment discussion, were not notified and middle school teachers were unable to make those connections. When they expressed their concerns to their principals, they were told that administrators did not know materials were required and would connect with the Curriculum Director.

The Middle School Math teachers began to implement the new program in the fall. They noticed some alignment issues with the program that would impact both the elementary and high school math curriculum. They also did not receive the missing materials that they needed. The principals completed a walkthrough of the teachers using the program and indicated concerns on the teacher observation tool.

By the end of the first year, the middle school teachers were still having challenges with the program, and the High School Teachers were becoming concerned about what was taught to the incoming Freshman.

District 2: Tree Tops Public Schools

At the beginning of the school year, the Tree Tops Public Schools worked with their Regional Implementation Team to redefine their School Improvement Team into a District Implementation Team. The team leads worked with the superintendent to define what criteria they needed for membership to ensure diverse perspectives. The result was a recreated team with a few administrators but more teaching staff and community members.

Once the team was developed, the members took a look at their district data and raised concerns over the dip in math scores at the middle school level. That discussion led to completing a root cause analysis which revealed that a wide variety of approaches to teaching math were used across the district middle schools. The team discussed all of the math programs and practices they had in the district and noticed that some schools used multiple programs with opposing math philosophies. The Regional Implementation Team provided the district implementation team with a potential new program for middle school mathematics that included evidence-based practices in math. Finally, the team completed a Hexagon Tool and decided to move forward with implementation.

In April, the team began planning for implementation to start in the Fall of the next school year. Per the communication plan, an email was shared with all of the teachers in the district regarding the core components of the new middle school math program. The team collected data and feedback from the staff to ensure that any concerns were addressed in training.

The team selected the middle school math teachers, high school math teachers, and one teacher from each grade level at the elementary level to attend the math training. The team felt it was important as staffing can shift to and from the middle school at any given year, and it would help with vertical alignment. The team also decided to hire a district-level math coach to assist with implementing the program and examine mathematics instruction at the elementary and high school levels.

The teachers, designated administrators, and new district math coach attended a two-day training in August at the regional agency. They connected with the other districts implementing the program and discussed further implementation plans for when school starts. The feedback and information were shared with the District Implementation team to finalize their coaching service plans, fidelity measures, and additional training that is needed.

As the math program moved through Initial Implementation, the team provided surveys for staff to complete and completed walkthroughs to collect data. The next step is to examine what is not going well by completing a PDSA Cycle.

Discussion: Individually or with a team discuss the questions on the next page.

Compare the two district scenarios provided, identify key implementation activities that are missing in District 1 that are present in District 2, and explain which Active Implementation Framework they fall under?

Sample Responses:

Selection, Training, & Coaching - AIF Drivers

Team Membership - AIF Teams

Fidelity Measure - AIF Drivers

Core Components of a Program - AIF Usable Innovation

What should District 1 do to address those gaps identified in question 1?

Sample Response:

District 1 should return to exploration. They need to revisit the makeup of their team members to include those stakeholders that will be impacted by the decision to adopt and implement a new math program. The team should make sure everyone understands the need and core components of the Usable Innovation. Once they properly communicate the decision, they can create a solid plan to implement that includes selection, training, coaching, fidelity assessment, processes for data use and systems for resolving implementation issues as they arise.

Reflecting on your learning from Module 1, what predictions would you make about fidelity of implementation of the Math program and changes in student achievement?

Sample Response:

While neither district has moved beyond initial implementation, District 2 is moving through improvement cycles to improve upon the implementation. District 1 may lose any buy-in they had for the new program and will have to go back to their initial planning.

NIRN Reflection:

When comparing the two districts, Fruit City School District and Tree Tops Public Schools, you can see how different approaches to implementing the same program ultimately leads to various challenges and barriers. Let's take a look at your responses to the questions in the capstone activity.

Fruit City School District had a few gaps that we can examine a little bit closer. Their team membership was lacking diversity and different perspectives creating some gaps within the Active Implementation Framework of Teams. Not having the right people at the table can lead to poor attendance, lack of understanding, selecting practices that do not address the identified need and a negative impact on staff buy-in.

It was also clear that the team members did not understand the core components of the middle school math program they were going to implement. This is an important feature of the Active Implementation Framework, Usable Innovations. By not understanding the materials needed nor that vertical alignment in the curriculum was necessary, it made it very difficult for the middle school teachers to use the program correctly.

Finally, there was not a solid plan in place for the training and coaching supports for the new math program. It was also missing a fidelity measurement which is part of the Active Implementation Framework of Drivers. The gaps listed here would create a difficult scenario to move into initial implementation.

Now that we have identified the gaps, what can be done to address them? As is often with implementation, the stages are not linear, and teams move back and forth as needed to address challenges or gaps. For the Fruit City School District, they will want to move back to exploration to address the team make-up. By including teachers and community members, the team will be able to gain a greater level of collaborative consensus around the new program. It is also important to ensure that everyone understands the core components of the program and that it meets the need of the district.

Once they are back in installation, the team will want to spend a little extra time planning for implementation and ensure coaching supports are in place as well as a solid fidelity measurement.

While the TreeTops Public School's plan was not perfect, they are approaching the work with a continuous improvement lens. By taking the time to plan accordingly, continue to bust barriers, and move through the stages of implementation, they should begin to see the results they are looking for in middle school math. If Fruit City School District continues down the current path without addressing the gaps, they will most likely not impact student outcomes in mathematics as they had hoped.

Now it is your turn. Think about a program or practice you are implementing. Complete the Module 1 survey to tell us what gaps you potentially have identified based on your learning, how you plan to address them, and what changes you hope to see. Good Luck on your implementation journey and be sure to review the additional modules on the Active Implementation Hub.